

Intergenerational Trauma and Stories of Healing Through Jesus

by

Dionne A. Mohammed

B.S.W., Thompson Rivers University, 2016

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

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

in the School of Social Work

©Dionne A. Mohammed, 2021

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part,  
by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the  
university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical  
relationships with the land continue to this day.

Intergenerational Trauma and Stories of Healing Through Jesus

by

Dionne A. Mohammed  
B.S.W., Thompson Rivers University, 2016

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Billie Allan, School of Social Work  
Supervisor

Dr. V. C. Rhonda Hackett, School of Social Work  
Co-Supervisor

## Abstract

Through a storytelling/yarning methodology (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) and experience centered narrative research (Patterson, 2008), three Indigenous followers of Jesus and original inhabitants of the lands currently known as Canada, shared their stories of healing. The storytelling/ yarning method (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) is rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and fit seamlessly with the participants diverse Indigenous backgrounds and shared oral traditions. Through the experience centered research model, each participant engaged in meaning making of their personal narratives, reconstructed and presented their stories as their human lived experience, and finally, revealed their metamorphosis (Patterson, 2008) and contributions to Indigenous knowledges. The experience centered research framework utilized for knowledge gathering worked concertedly with the storytelling/yarning methodology as the healing stories presented here evolved not as stories of defeat, but of strength (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). Some key teachings and themes arising from their stories include trauma, forgiveness, resilience, family, healing, and hope.

This study aims to reveal Indigenous stories of healing and cease the perpetuation of harm to Indigenous peoples who have declared Jesus as their source of healing. Furthermore, this study aims to situate the knowledges gathered through these healing stories within the academic body of Indigenous knowledges.

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
Dedication.....	x
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Self-Location.....	5
1.2 Critical Analysis.....	7
Chapter Two: Background.....	17
2.1 Assessing the Landscape of Knowledge.....	17
2.2 Literature Review.....	18
2.3 Insider/Outsider.....	20
2.4 Trends.....	25
2.5 Known and Unknown.....	30
2.6 Honouring the Work that Has Come Before Me.....	31
Chapter Three: Personal Framework of Knowing and Researching.....	37
3.1 Image 1: Personal Framework of Knowing and Researching.....	36
3.2 Situating Self.....	36
3.3 Ways of Knowing.....	38
3.4 Voice, Space, and Place.....	39
3.5 Image 2: One's Journey.....	41
3.6 In Service To.....	42

Chapter Four: Methodology.....	45
4.1 Ethics Informing My Research Methodology.....	47
4.2 Values and Beliefs.....	48
4.3 The Seven Sacred Teachings.....	49
4.4 From an Ethical Place.....	50
4.5 Moving Away from Individualism.....	51
4.6 Relationships.....	53
4.7 Learning I Brought into Research.....	55
4.8 Recruitment and Participants.....	57
4.9 Data Collection Method.....	59
4.10 Data Analysis and Meaning Making.....	62
4.11 Ethical Considerations/Risks to Participants.....	64
4.12 Limitations and Significance.....	66
Chapter Five: Intergenerational Trauma and Stories of Healing Through Jesus.....	68
5.1 Lydia’s Story.....	70
5.2 Esther’s Story.....	86
5.3 Vivian’s Story.....	103
Chapter Six: Findings.....	109
6.1 Indigenous Knowledges Located within the Yarning and Stories.....	109
6.2 Vivian’s Wisdom, Knowledges, and Teachings.....	110
6.3 Esther’s Wisdom, Knowledges, and Teachings.....	113
6.4 Lydia’s Wisdom, Knowledges, and Teachings.....	115
6.5 Image 3: Indigenous Knowledges and Offerings.....	118
6.6 Discussion.....	118
6.7 Conclusion.....	130

References.....	132
Appendix A.....	140
Appendix B.....	141

**List of Figures**

Figure 1: Fireside.....viii  
Figure 2: Perpetual Flame of Indigenous Knowledges.....41

## Acknowledgements

My journey's trail was often bumpy and my steps uncertain. Along my path were many fires where I was invited by family, knowledge keepers, helpers, friends, mentors, and Elders who spoke forth their stories and teachings allowing me to take in their offerings to strengthen my journey. I would like to take the time to thank these kindreds:

First, to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who found me as a wounded child, pieced me back together, and showed me the meaning of love. Thank you for carrying me when I was too tired and overwhelmed to take another step. My Abba Father, the Creator of the heavens and earth, thank you for your protection, guiding my path, and allowing me to cry at your footstool. Your breath is the breath that I breathe. My love for you is infinite. Holy Spirit, you are the calm and peace in the midst of my storms. Thank you for wrapping me in Your blanket of warmth and filling my heart with joy and strength when I could find no reason to feel it.

To my husband, Sonny. God knew I needed you. I could not have taken this journey without your constant love, encouragement, and willingness to parent our children while I focussed on my studies. You are my everything. I love you.

To my babies who sacrificed my time. Trey, Malik, Maya, and Asha – my gifts from the Creator - the cycle of intergenerational trauma stopped with me through the power of Jesus freeing you to be all that God planned for you to be. I love you more than you will ever know.

To my mom and dad who spent hours in intercession for me as I faced the challenges that this process brought. My sweet, gentle mama, all you've endured was for a purpose. Jesus gave you back to me and I am never letting go. My daddy, you taught me about race-based crimes against humanity and how one voice can make a difference. You ignited the spark, and God

never allowed it to be extinguished. You are a true man of God and I know your reward will be great. I love you both beyond measure.

To Elder Uncle Mike Arnouse, I could sit at your fireside for hours taking in your stories. Your gentleness, knowledge, and wisdom were a touching stone for me throughout this journey. I am forever thankful.

To Dr. Billie Allan, Dr. Donna Jeffery, Dr. Rhonda Hackett, and Dr. Jackie Stokes, your guidance, support, and teachings have brought me to this very day. I am filled with immense gratitude that God guided me to your firesides. You have left an impression upon my heart that will continue to remind me that Indigenous knowledges matter, my people matter – our stories matter.

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my grandfather and grandmother,  
William and Margarett Payne.  
I can't wait to be reunited with you in our Saviour's presence.  
I hope I have made you proud.



*Figure 1.* "Fireside" by Kelsey Jules,  
Secwepemc Nation Artist, Kamloops, B.C., February, 2021

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Choosing an Indigenous knowledge gathering path has profoundly altered my life. While offering myself as a vessel to bring the quieted voices of my people outside their sacred places, I became transformed. As the embers of their painful, courageous stories stirred, flames ignited reaching towards the heavens through the darkness. Orange and yellow sparks flitted about, performing a freedom dance as imprisoned sacred teachings were set free.

For clarification, the names God, Father, Great Spirit, Creator, Jesus, Son of God, Saviour, and Holy Spirit are used interchangeably. God (Father/Great Spirit/Creator), Jesus (Son of God/Saviour/Christ Jesus), and the Holy Spirit (the Spirit) are three in one (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, Mathew 28:19) each equal with one another, each eternal, and each representing one God existing in three persons (Payne, 2020). The pronouns Him, He, and His also refer to the aforementioned and are capitalized in reverence to God as the creator of all things, Jesus as the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of God. God is also referred to throughout as gendered "Him" and "His" in alignment with the teachings of the Holy Bible and my faith in the scriptures within. I also make a conscious choice to capitalize "Elders" in reverence to their esteemed role within Indigenous communities as Knowledge Keepers, Wisdom Holders, leaders, healers, educators, experts in our ways of knowing and being, and their attainment of the sacred tenets of our peoples.

For further clarification, I do not refer to myself as a Christian, but as a follower of Christ Jesus. For many of my people, "the word Christianity has come to mean only the abusive religion of the white man" (Twiss, 2000, p.35). Along with this and my understanding that a perverse version of Christianity was used as a tool of domination and oppression by our

colonizer, I choose to not call myself a Christian. However, I acknowledge that the Holy Bible used the term Christian *before* the spread of the gospel to western nations by Jesus' disciples. The first time the word "Christians" was used was in reference to Jesus' disciples in Acts 11:22 (Today's New International Version Bible, 2001/2005) when they began to spread the gospel. At this time, to be called a Christian simply meant that you were a follower of Jesus, believed in and lived out His teachings, and had faith in what He accomplished on the cross for all humankind.

Unfortunately, during the colonization of Turtle Island, there were missionaries who "equated Christianity with western culture and its apparent superiority over other cultural forms and expressions – a supposition not necessarily based on truth but on the 'progress' of industry, science and commerce" (Twiss, 2005, p.27). In short, and according to the Holy Bible, Jesus opposed His gift of salvation and His teachings becoming fragmented by the formation of Christian denominations and subjugating self-serving religious dogma (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, Mathew 12:25, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Romans 16:17, John 17:20).

Christianity has been painted with one brush stroke. Sadly, those who are sincerely devoted to their walk with Jesus and those who use the word of God to justify self-serving agendas, personally and politically, are often deemed one in the same. To be clear, I carry no judgment towards anyone using the term Christian as their chosen identity in Christ Jesus and *do not by any means* intend to cause harm to someone's heart by stating why I have chosen not to refer to myself as a Christian. I decided long ago to place importance on my personal relationship with my Saviour and His purpose for my life, and less on titles. This is purely a personal choice with no underlying message of criticism intended.

The stories gathered herein have been told and authored by Indigenous peoples who have experienced healing from intergenerational trauma through Jesus Christ. Typically, personal Indigenous narratives of finding healing through Jesus are viewed as “conversion to the white man religion testimonials”. This misconception has isolated Indigenous gospel believers from their identity as Indigenous peoples, creates a chasm between themselves and the Creator, and fragments our communities. Within the fibres of these healing stories, authentic Indigenous knowledges are located, but rarely given light. Thus, there are vast invaluable treasures of Indigenous teachings and ways of knowing and being detained by fear. These stories hold powerful Indigenous restoration knowledges. Embedded within the strands of these personal narratives are authentic teachings necessary to overcoming the destructive assaults of intergenerational trauma and colonization, for the teachings of Jesus and the mission He fulfilled in obedience to His Father, the Creator, took place for every tribe and nation on the face of the earth (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, Daniel 7:14, 1 John 2:2, Revelation 7:9).

As Indigenous peoples, our stories are intentional, hold healing properties and transformative medicines. Like the 80 books compiling the Holy Bible were written by the Creator Himself through the Holy Spirit as the word of God (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, 2 Peter 1:20-21), it is of little wonder where the traditional practice of Indigenous stories passed down over thousands of years have their origins. As the Creator ensured the preservation of His word from the beginning of time, Indigenous oral traditions continue to teach, inspire, heal, and have remained a necessity to my people's survival. The Creator gifted my people the power of word, oral tradition, and story as He provided visions, dreams, proverbs, analogies, psalms, parables, songs, dance, celebration, and ceremony to our

ancestors from time immemorial. Our stories are how my people learn, how we view the world, how we teach, how we record history and genealogies, and how we heal.

Stories reunite us with our identity and help us find our way home (Kovach, 2009). The “fireside” is both physically and metaphorically where my people share our stories. Our stories are clear and concise, but complex and multifaceted in that they offer knowledge and wisdom meant for only the ear of the listener at that moment in time – no two people will hear a story the same, thus the knowledge and wisdom offered are infinite in how it is received and passed on. “Stories are vessels for passing along teachings, medicines, and practices that can assist members of the collective,” (Kovach, 2009, p. 95). Indigenous knowledges are not monocentric and do not subscribe to western ideologies. In contrast, reigning Neoliberal perspectives impose one privileged discourse as the absolute truth (Strega & Brown, 2015). As an anti-oppressive knowledge gatherer, I seek to resist presiding research concepts and commit to ethical research practice (Strega & Brown, 2015) through a lens of decolonization.

Gathering stories of intergenerational trauma and healing through Jesus is essential to contributing to the rigour, robustness, and comprehensiveness of Indigenous sacred knowledges as the literature reveals limited engagement with this topic. Through the gathering and authoring of their own healing stories, my people have embraced the opportunity to deepen their self-worth, become empowered, grow closer to their Indigenous communities, and attain a greater sense of Indigenous identity. Accomplishing this endeavour has aided in validating their healing path and will allow for others on the same path to lean into and outwardly express their faith without trepidation. It is essential that Indigenous peoples no longer feel that they are an “afterthought” to the Great Spirit (LeBlanc & LeBlanc, 2011, p.93) wherein the Creator required missionaries and the white man as a bridge to connect Himself to them. For far too long, my

people have been marred with horrendous wounds due to this colonial myth. I believe that this knowledge gathering will serve to dispel this myth and create movement within reconciliation and decolonizing social work practice.

### **Self-Location**

Positioning myself within the context of this study is imperative to providing an understanding of the values and ethics with which I view and interact with the world around me (Baskin, 2016). Traditionally, I introduce myself with my name, Nation of origin, Band name, and family name. This information alone tells my new Indigenous friend something about my ways of knowing and being, values and ethics I might follow, the gifts of my people, whether we are fishers, hunters, or gatherers, and forms a tie between myself and them. This is the starting point by which we forge our relationship.

My name is Dionne Mohammed. I am from the Nation of the Statimc peoples and also have settler roots through my non-Indigenous dad. I am currently an uninvited visitor to the unceded lands of the Secwepemc peoples where I have lived and worked for more than 10 years. I am a mother of four children – two sons and two daughters. My sons, Malik and Trey, are 22 and 24 years old. My daughters, Asha and Maya are 11 and 18 years old. They are the joy of my heart. I am a wife to my husband Syed. His parents immigrated to the lands currently known as Canada from Pakistan. After 23 years, he remains my best friend.

I am a daughter of a residential school survivor. My mother attended both residential school and Indian day school for several years. My dad's parents are of Mauritian (grandmother) and English (grandfather) ancestry. My dad grew up in a small town where they were the only Black family. Thus, my dad's first experience with racism was during his childhood. My

grandfather was white and married my grandmother who was Black, despite how society frowned upon interracial marriage, especially at this time. Sadly, my Indigenous grandparents were only sporadically in my life throughout my childhood and adolescence. Due to my mother's time spent in residential school and Indian day school, she was unprepared to be a full-time mother to my brother and I. Therefore, we were raised predominantly by my dad's parents for the majority of our childhood. My grandparents lived on a homestead beside the Fraser River where they grew their own vegetables, fruit trees, berry bushes, pigs, and poultry. As a child, their home was my refuge, and I spent every waking hour outdoors.

My brother and I, both born in the 70's, were exposed to extreme domestic violence and instability. Today we both contend with the trauma of our childhood and with intergenerational trauma. Even within this chaos, my dad found time to teach me about the civil rights movement, the Holocaust, and colonialism from an early age. Due to his teachings, my flame for social justice and social work was ignited. Today, I have a blessed relationship with my parents as they both found Jesus later in life. Today, I am truly thankful for everything I experienced as a child and hold no bitterness towards my parents. Because of our shared faith in Jesus Christ, we have entered into a renewed relationship full of love, respect, and care for one another.

My love for Jesus, family, connection to land, my people, and literature keep me grounded and moving forward when the darkness of my past tries to overshadow the light that Christ has given me. I am on a lifelong healing journey riddled with deep dark valleys and sun-drenched mountain tops and clearings. With this understanding, I face everyday needing the strength of my Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## Critical Analysis

This knowledge gathering work nearly did not take place. However, through the Holy Spirit, I was led and carried through some of the darkest valleys of my life to arrive in the sunny, open meadow I stand in today. Without my faith in the knowledge that Jesus desired to walk this path with me and His continual affirmation that this venture was bigger than myself, I could never have arrived here. Through my learning of situating self and self-reflexivity (Baskin, 2016), I have come to better understand and articulate how my interests have evolved over time and through life experience. Drawing upon these teachings, it became increasingly important to me to include a critical analysis of my research as part of remaining accountable to my Indigenous peoples in hopes that through this analysis, my objective for taking up this controversial topic will be better understood.

It is immensely important to me for my people to know that I thought of them, their ancestors, and future generations as I prayed and humbly brought my heart to the throne of my Father baring pieces of me I preferred hidden. During those moments, God allowed me to feel a fraction of the love He carries for my people. It is an unwavering love extending to the corners of the earth and reaching beyond the heavens. And so, as I set one foot in front of the other on this journey's path, I adopted an all encompassing "love ethic," (bell hooks, 2001. P.94). This kind of love holds me accountable to take up this work with reverence, vigilance, devotion, honesty, faith, knowledge, and a nurturing spirit (hooks, 2001). A love ethic keeps us self-aware and facilitates reciprocal learning (hooks, 2001). I knew this was important for me to feel and know in order to walk this path in humility and without ulterior motives. I had to come from a place of authentic love, for my spirit ached to think of inflicting further harm on my people. So, it is my hope that my people, first and foremost, will open their hearts to this gathering of

knowledge more readily if it is known that I critically weighed this knowledge gathering endeavour and the implications which may arise.

This topic decision was made with the assistance of the sacred knowledges of my professors and knowledge keepers I have been honoured to sit with, and whom the Creator allowed to cross my journey's path. I firmly believe that the Indigenous teachings derived from this research will contribute to the wellness of my people. My decision to focus on stories of intergenerational trauma and healing through Jesus surfaced several dilemmas which I relay throughout this thesis.

One reason I had difficulties deciding on my topic was due to my passion about other areas of Indigenous research I had been invested in years past. Years ago, as an elected Band councillor, I took immediate notice of the oppressive practice perpetrated by Band leadership and administration. I often felt alone in my efforts to dismantle the two-tiered hierarchy and fragmentation of my community. When beginning my undergrad education, I was given the opportunity to research this area further through a directed studies course. From this point on, it had been my intention to one day evolve that research into a thesis had I ever the opportunity. However, once completing my degree in social work, I began in a role advocating for families who had come into contact with the child welfare system. I saw the failure of Aboriginal Delegated Agencies to implement mandated provincial legislation in a way which was anti-oppressive while using traditional practices and protocols. Again, I said to myself that if I ever had the opportunity to complete a masters, I would do whatever I could to address these issues and provide recommendations for Indigenous child welfare policy reform and best practices.

In August of 2018, a shift in my gaze began to develop as my new learning forced me to question how exposing what was taking place on reserves in regard to leadership would do to serve my people. Would it do as I had hoped and force oppressive leadership to re-evaluate their authoritative approaches and passive attitudes towards my people? Or would my work serve only to discredit my peoples as incapable of leadership and governing our own affairs? These thoughts arose when reading Wilson's (2008) *Research is Ceremony*, wherein he speaks to how negative focussed research serves to empower conflict and encourages relationship breakdown. Then, one of my professors gently, but firmly reinforced that as Indigenous peoples we do not use our knowledge as a weapon as has been done with western knowledges, but as medicine (Allan, 2018). With these new teachings in mind, I feared that by taking up deficit-based research, this might be something I unintentionally contributed to.

Thinking further, I remembered the researchers and leaders actively advocating for change in the child welfare system, including the remarkable Cindy Blackstock. I began to feel that my contribution might be more valuable if I supported initiatives of those already pursuing change. Moreover, as I began to listen to the podcasts of my professors and read the assigned readings, I noticed a reoccurring message showing itself to me like a crimson thread woven through a plain coloured blanket. I read Searles (as cited in Aluli Meyer, 2013), "This is how change occurs...through ordinary people becoming activated about the love of their own lives" (p. 251). I recalled Kovach (2009) discussing how "we know what we know from where we stand" and how it is imperative that we are truthful about that (p. 7). Finally, I saw Meyer's (2013) quote on the top of my term two syllabus, "Find the truth of your people and bring it forward" (p.252). While these are but a handful of crimson threads which presented themselves to me, I realized that within the sacred knowledges I became privy to, and research I had

undertaken to write my papers, there was a gap – I couldn't find me reflected. At least, not the most important part of me. What about the healing my mother, a residential school survivor, and I experienced, as well as of other Indigenous Jesus followers? Where were our stories?

These stories and lived experiences were not sporadic, isolated divine interventions. The healing was only the beginning of the journeys I heard about and had experienced. Along with them were stories of transformation, restored relationships, forgiveness, overcoming addictions, suicide ideation dissolution, families mended, peace and happiness after suffering years of depression. Furthermore, many continued on to do remarkable things in their Indigenous communities. For myself, because of my mother's healing, my brother and I received a gift of a healthy mother who today loves us without condition and is there for us without hesitation. Nothing she tried before offered this healing and sustained transformation.

I had to convince myself that bringing these stories forward were as important as the reason behind why we were wounded and searching in the first place. I had become well versed in explaining why the state of Indigenous peoples is where it is today, but I rarely had the opportunity to share the healing aspect. I also had to remind myself that bringing these truths forward did not mean that I was no longer going to work towards social policy reform or to empower the oppressed with ways to take a stand on their reserves for what is right and just. Although I continued to have conversations with myself and my Creator about whether I was doing the right thing, I was certain this work was needed and long awaited by so many of my people. But first, I had to begin with me (Baskin, 2016).

Over the course of my life, I have attributed my healing from the impact of intergenerational trauma to one source – Jesus. After bearing witness the transformation in my mother, a residential school survivor, I became fascinated with how the profoundness of her change, as if over night, could be real. At seven years of age, I went to her and said, “I want what you have,” without even knowing what *that* was. Although my mother was not equipped to care for my brother and I on a full-time basis until I was 12 years of age, my life was profoundly altered after meeting Jesus. I carried a peace which surpassed understanding, a sense of safety which I had never felt as my first memories were of extreme violence and abuse, and joy where darkness dwelled as later in life I was diagnosed with clinical depression.

Throughout my life, and within the small town I grew up in, I was introduced to other Indigenous peoples who also had a relationship with Jesus outside of and apart from the Catholic church. As I became older and into adulthood, I started to understand that due to my faith in Jesus I was an outsider to the majority of my Indigenous peoples, thus enduring rejection by them. What I have come to know over the years is that I am not alone in my struggle to belong within the body of my people and within my identity as a Jesus following Indigenous person. There are many Indigenous peoples like me who have been rejected by their people but cannot deny the realness of meeting Jesus and finding healing in Him from the impact of residential school, the 60’s scoop, displacement, addictions, abuse, suicide ideation, mental health decline, broken families, and intergenerational trauma.

With this opportunity, I have had the chance to sit at my people’s fireside, listen to their stories, and bring their voices forward and out of the shadows of their marginalization. They too must be given a chance to share their flame and add it to the knowledges of Indigenous ways of knowing, to be understood and heard without judgment, and to be able to walk wholly without

feeling the need to hide this piece of themselves to appease others. To say with pride, 'I am Indigenous in my blood, in my bones, and in my spirit. Finding Jesus has amplified my identity as an Indigenous person, not depleted it.' Most importantly, to be able to say that being a gospel believer does not mean I have denied my Indigeneity. It is my prayer that this endeavour brings understanding to non-Indigenous peoples that their ancestors were not the discoverers of God, but that who they called God, my ancestors called the Great Spirit and Creator, and has dwelled among us and guided our peoples since time immemorial.

I am aware of the dissonance of believing in the gospel of Jesus as an Indigenous person. I painfully acknowledge the harm and hurt experienced by my people who attended residential school wherein the name of God and Jesus were used to justify horrendous crimes against my people. I have sat with these thoughts analysing and questioning my own spirituality and from where my healing came, even wondering at times throughout my life if I owed it to my people to compromise my beliefs to gain their acceptance. It has been a difficult journey for me to come into my identity as someone with half Indigenous, half settler origins, but very much presents as Indigenous. To feel whole within the intersecting pieces which contribute to my identity continues to take, effort, tears, prayer, fear, but also elation. In the end, I could not deny that I came to this understanding and wholeness through God who called me His daughter when I needed a parent. I could not ignore that Jesus was my protector when I needed protection. I know I would not be here today writing these words and waking to another day if not for His intervention in my life and the sacrifice He made for me. No one had ever loved me like that – to lay down His life for me, I could not comprehend this kind of love.

I was a broken child abandoned by those who were meant to love me and keep me safe. I felt such deep darkness that I was too young to articulate. I witnessed and experienced things a

child should never see, feel, or hear. Yet, through it all, I can see the Creator's hand on my life as He walked beside me, often carrying me as He penetrated the enveloping darkness. This darkness spoke to me often, encouraging me to succumb to its grip.

Before seeing my mother's transformation, I first witnessed my dads. Shortly after, my grandmother and grandfather, who raised my older brother and I, converted from Catholicism to gospel believing and were completely changed. Then, one summer my aunt visited from the Northwest Territories with her Dene husband and children, and they too were Jesus believing. They wrote music about Jesus and were worship leaders in their Indigenous community. Others in my mother's family came to believe in Jesus after they saw her transformation as they longed for the peace she had and deliverance from alcoholism and the destructive lives they were leading.

Seeing others in my family commit their lives to God somehow validated my experience. I wasn't completely alone, but there were few of us Indigenous Jesus followers. Unfortunately, one of my gospel believing uncles, also a survivor of residential school, broke under the pressure of rejection from our people due to his newfound faith and turned away from that which finally made him whole – Jesus. It was not until he was diagnosed with cancer 5 years ago, and ready for his journey into the spirit world when he summoned my mother to his hospital bedside to pray with him to reunite him with his Saviour, Jesus, before he took his last peaceful breath. What occurs to me now is how unfair it was that he could not walk in the openness of his faith because the rejection he faced by our people was too great to bear. He hid his healing story inside and isolated the most significant part of his being – his spirit.

Bringing forth my people's stories of healing through Christ Jesus is providing them validation that they are no less Indigenous because of their chosen path to healing. By shedding light on their lived experiences as Indigenous gospel believers, it is my hope that a bridge of understanding and acceptance will arise between themselves, their identity, their families, and their communities. It is my hope to bring the truth of how Jesus was misrepresented by our colonizers in contrast to who He really is, and that it is this Jesus who sought out my mother offering to carry her burdens. For it is this Jesus who sought me out offering to heal my wounds. That this is the experience of thousands of other Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island and is rarely spoken of is heartbreaking. These stories must be heard and honoured as a part of Indigenous peoples lived experiences and knowledges and epistemologies. For it is our lived experience in Christ Jesus and the knowledges of the Great Spirit which informs our epistemologies, ontologies, and axiology's.

It is my wish to come with the truth that God, the Creator, has and continues to be the Creator of the universe and all people within it. I resist the colonial lie that God came with Europeans and missionaries as an offering to the "savage Indian" which would civilize us and redeem us from our filth. This research endeavour is not to preach, to prove my belief to be true, or to try to convert my people's beliefs. My purpose is pure. It is to shed light on Indigenous stories that have been hushed and hidden in fear that they might offend. Yet, these knowledges are as much a part of my people as the breath that they breath, and for some are the reason they continue to breath at all.

I knew, without a doubt, that I would experience transformation on this journey and that it would be an arduous path. As I walked this path and was invited to sit at my people's firesides, I experienced the beauty of ceremony as the Maori wherein ceremony is conducted to

reduce space between oneself and their people, and from my people to their people (Wilson, 2008). Hence, this knowledge gathering seeks to facilitate closing the space between my people and their communities and identities. These spaces prevent us from standing in unity against oppressive systems and legislation perpetuating our division. How can we stand together to resist systemic racism, epistemic racism, epistemic violence, and social injustice when we are divided by spiritual beliefs? To divide and conquer is a colonial strategy. Thus, we must come together and sit at the same fire, join our hearts and hands as one, lift our voices to the Creator, and allow Him to strengthen our unity and knowledges wherein lies our power to push against the forces which separate us.

The social justice implications of my topic speak to equality, privileged knowledges, our Creator given authority as stewards of our lands, resources, sacred knowledges, and resisting individualism and Indigenous community fragmentation. Like Eve Tuck (2009) discusses, this research steps away from “damage-centered research” which focus solely on loss and harm (p. 415). My research magnifies the power of healing from trauma through Indigenous peoples lived experience. My research speaks to the transformative nature of healing, importance of Indigenous identity and self-determination, and how Indigenous peoples have and continue to overcome adversity and marginalization. The desired outcome is unification of Indigenous peoples wherein I have used, in part, a desire-based research framework “concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” (Tuck, 2009, p.416). These knowledges will strengthen our knowing that God existed with us since he first breathed air into our lungs upon the land he gifted us.

It is important for my reader to know that I have faced many fears. I’ve feared rejection and persecution by my people, while also expecting it. However, because I understand the

fragility of my topic, I have learned through Jesus' modelling that I can not harbour any ill feelings towards them – for *I am* them. The Creator placed such a love in my heart for my people in preparation for this work. He prepared a path for my journey spotted with many fires for me to sit by along the way. If I did not see how this work would be of benefit to my people in advancing their wellbeing, I would not pursue it. The Creator has revealed a need, and if it can free even one of my people to walk in their truth, I am encouraged with knowing that it only takes one person's fire to radiate a glow to call others into its warmth.

## Chapter 2: Background

### **Assessing the Landscape of Knowledge**

The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996) states that the 60's Scoop, along with the enforcement of the residential school system, both played a pivotal role in debilitating Indigenous wellness. The harmful colonial imprint formed by the institution of the residential school system on Indigenous peoples has had devastating consequences, not only for residential school survivors, but for the generations that have followed (Aguiar & Halseth, 2015). The trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples has transferred to successive generations through mental, physical, and societal practices (Aguiar & Halseth, 2015). Thus, these generations inherited a heritage of indignity, damage, and hatred of self which is the fundamental source of substance dependency and social issues Indigenous peoples contend with today (Ross as cited in Aguiar & Halseth, 2015). This state is known as 'intergenerational trauma' and is academically defined as "the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, across generations, emanating from massive group trauma exposure. The past trauma of parents contributes to present-day disparities in the well-being of their children" (Ferrara, 2017, p. 1861). Thus, while we are aware of the disproportionate disadvantages and losses suffered by Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island and globally, we are rarely privy to Indigenous healing narratives. My people often carry shame driven by dominant discourse, as reflected in the media, and perpetuated within Canadian society. Thus, it is time for my peoples' *healing* narratives to be brought to the forefront so that we can recover our roles as a resilient, thriving people.

While my literature review revealed a dearth of research literature, this did not mean I was unable to find my peoples' voices. Whether they took it upon themselves to record

and post their testimony of finding healing through Jesus on social media, wrote about it on a forum or blog, shared it with an interviewer, or wrote it down in a grass roots newspaper, my peoples voices were found. When reviewing the literature, I located gaps of Indigenous healing through Jesus and the need to bring to light the prevailing power of dominant discourse over Indigenous knowledges. Missing was the understanding that my people's stories of their relationship with God, and healing through His son Jesus, are their own and must also have a spot beside sacred Indigenous knowledges.

Intergenerational trauma and stories of healing through Jesus in the land that is now called Canada were few and did not speak to how Indigenous knowledges and wellness are imbedded within the fibres of these stories. Through the literature review, my findings confirmed the need for these sacred stories and voices to be heard and acknowledged as Indigenous knowledges. The publication of the stories gathered here are imperative as Indigenous personal narratives create empathy, understanding, connection, and promote transformative discussion (Episkenew, 2009). The stories gathered through this research provide a touching stone for those like me who enter higher education and cannot find where they are represented in the literature and narratives of our people. Through the sharing of these healing stories, it is my prayer that my people will begin to see us as wholly Indigenous, and we can begin to walk our truth among our people without fear.

### **Literature Review**

I was unable to locate a multitude of literature which would specifically speak to my topic. I searched for academic articles and publications in the UVIC online library, Thompson Rivers University online library, UVIC on-campus library, Chapters Indigo bookstore, Amazon books, Google books, Newspaper archives (i.e. Indian Life Newspaper), North American

Indigenous Ministries (NAIM) publications, North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies, Christ for First Nations website, Without Reservation website, Native Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (NEFC), YouTube, and Tribal Trails (Northern Canada Evangelical Mission, 2021). While Australia had much more content available around my topic, it was necessary to focus on healing stories pertaining to North America and Western Canada as outlined in my original thesis proposal.

Search phrases I used in locating literature included “Indigenous healing narratives,” “intergenerational trauma and healing,” “historic trauma and Aboriginal healing,” “Christianity and First Peoples,” “First Nation encounters with Jesus,” “stories of healing from intergenerational trauma through Jesus,” “Indigenous Jesus followers,” “Aboriginal spirituality,” and “faith-based Indigenous healing stories.” When using “Indigenous” in my search phrase, I also used “First Nation,” “Aboriginal,” “Metis,” “Inuit,” “Native American,” “Native,” and “Indian.” When using “stories” in my search phrase, I also used “narratives,” “testimonies,” “accounts,” and “encounters.” When using “Jesus” in a search phrase, I also used, “Christ,” “God,” and “Holy Spirit.”

I endeavoured to focus on literature published in the last 10 years as recommended when writing a university paper. However, due to the absence of academic literature focussing on Indigenous healing narratives through Jesus Christ, I had to expand my search to include the 1990’s as the only book published focussing on my specific topic and within the geographical boundaries of my research was printed in 1997. Today, most stories of Indigenous healing through Jesus are found within the gray literature.

For the purpose of future research, I have attempted to locate literature by Indigenous authors and Knowledge Keepers who have been impacted by trauma personally and within their

communities and have found healing through a spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ. Because findings of scholarly and academic articles and research are scarce on this topic, I also use articles written by non-Indigenous people. To bring in more of an Indigenous perspective, however, I reviewed speaking video sources, interviews, and periodical articles. It is my hope that I have brought a range of knowledge on the topic with the limited literature found.

### **Insider/Outsider**

As an insider, it could be argued that due to my Indigenous ancestry my research endeavor is less difficult or that doors may be open to me that would be challenging for an outsider to open. However, what most do not know is that my own narrative of healing through faith in Jesus Christ is often concealed due to my fear of rejection by my people. I prefer to allow people to become acquainted with my character, what I stand for, my values, the ethics I approach my work with, and much of my life journey before I introduce the central piece of who I am. As unreasonable as this may seem, I lastly reveal that I am a follower of Jesus unless an earlier opportunity presents itself, wherein I have assessed that the prospect of harm to others and myself has been abated. It is only then that I gently proclaim that I believe - I *know* – that I am a child of the Creator of all things. Its like carving out an intentional time of prefacing so that later the core of who I am is easier to accept. Whether right or wrong, at this point in my journey it is how I have managed to protect myself from the pain of rejection – a symptom and consequence of my intergenerational trauma.

I am often weighed with deep-seated concern that the mention of the name of Jesus may trigger survivors of residential school who explicably associate the name of Jesus with the pain of their lived experience. Yet, my spirit longs to be connected to my people, to serve them as Jesus calls me to, to walk with them, to stand beside them, to sit at their fireside and welcome

them to mine, and to see myself in them without hinderance. Attending church with my family once a month does not ease my sense of alienation from my people just because I am around other followers of Jesus, also called my brothers and sisters in Christ. When I look around, I seldom see anyone who looks like me or views the world through the same lens I do. It is then that I understand that the Creator, while creating us with equal value, created us with diverse beauty and gifted each tribe with attributes and knowledges distinguishing each nation as a unique people equipped to steward the land base He appointed us (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, Acts 17:26-28, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, 1 Peter 4:10-11, 1 Corinthians, 12:4-6, I Corinthians 12:8-11, Romans 12:6-8, Hebrews 2:4). What He never meant was for these gifts to divide us, but that we might each take His gifts and the strengths passed down to us to support one another (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, Ephesians 4:2-5, Romans 14:10, Romans 14:1-23, Romans 12:16, Proverbs 22:2, Ezekiel 47:22) as we care for the earth he created for our nourishment and enjoyment (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, Genesis 2:5-15, Job 12:7-10, Genesis 1:27-30, Psalm 24:1, Jeremiah 2:7, Mathew 6:26). Where one nation is weak, the nation holding strength in that area was meant to fill this need (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, Romans 15:1, Galatians 6:2, Mathew 5:42, Philippians 2:4). It was never within His plan for any one nation to dominate the world, to become prideful of the gifts He had given them, or to control or put themselves above other nations or peoples.

Becoming a follower of Jesus did not resolve the racism my family and I have and continue to experience daily. Deciding to put my heart and life in the hands of Jesus Christ did not terminate systemic barriers and oppression, or the humiliation I feel and am forced to explain to my children every time we are followed in a store or mistreated by those who's roles are to

help. Thus, my healing did not remove the societal stigma attached to my Indigenous physical features. Although Jesus sees me as His own (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version, 2001/2005*, Galatians 4:6-7, John 1:12-13, Galatians 3:26-27, Ephesians 1:4-5,1 John 3:1, Isaiah 41:10, Romans 8:38-39) and equal to all mankind (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version, 2001/2005*, Leviticus 19:33-34, Malachi 2:10, Romans, 2:11, Proverbs 22:22, Acts, 10:34-35, Colossians 3:11), the world actively demonstrates my status of inferiority. As a person of visible minority, this dehumanization is observable and palpable through my lived experience as it is inflicted as a result of systemic and societal racism, marginalization, and oppression. Moreover, it is reflected in our colonial history of genocide, assimilation legislation, and sustained occupation of Turtle Island.

When I attempt to communicate to a non-Indigenous believer that I need to go home for a visit and connect with my land, they do not understand that “home” means my Nation’s territory and that I am intrinsically connected to a land base which the Creator gifted my people from the beginning of time. They don’t understand my heart’s longing to stand by the river I grew up beside, to hear her song, how she twirled and danced about as I played on her banks, and how I remember the nights she rhythmically lulled me to sleep. To return home means to smell the sweetness of the saskatoon blossoms, to stand at the foot of the strong towering mountains protecting me on all sides, and to hear the wind blow through the pines gently carrying the aroma of sage and earth. My inner urge to sit beneath the open night sky watching a million stars twinkle unpolluted by artificial light and to hear the crickets trill without sirens and motors tolling can be difficult to describe. To return to my land of origin means I am someplace where I belong without question.

Searching for insider Indigenous narratives and stories to bring forth for this thesis is intentional. My hope is that it will contribute to other Indigenous research challenging the fallacy that Indigenous knowledge is subpar to western academic knowledge or privileged understandings. Historically, Inuit, Metis, and First Nation peoples and their knowledges have been ostracised and falsified within academia (Kwame, 2017). Indigenous knowledges and the lens through which we view the world have been doubted and considered “exotic and couched in spiritualism” (Kwame, 2017, p. 218). Though, in the latter 1990s, Indigenous academics started examining western concepts of research and knowledge of realism represented as the only truth (Kwame, 2017). It was at this time that Indigenous researchers contested the perceptions of what develops knowledge, as well as how one seeks out knowledge (Kwame, 2017).

Upon reading the small amount of literature I was able to locate, I found that there were Indigenous faith-based leaders, educators, authors, theologians, and everyday people like myself who also believed as I *without* denying their Indigenous identity – who the Great Spirit of the universe created us to be. I then wondered why these contributions were not referenced in academia when topics around Indigenous healing are discussed. Thus, if an element of epistemology is validation of knowledge, were my epistemic beliefs viewed as merely opinion? Or worse, as indoctrination? I recalled an instructor during my undergrad studies questioning my healing path as a possible result of my inadvertent submission to colonial religious dogma. To have something so deeply sacred and life altering reduced to a shameful bending of my knee to colonial religious doctrine was crushing to my spirit. Even so, I had to receive and process what was offered by this instructor as an alternative view to my truth and as a query demanding my attention. Consequently, this doubting of my healing path as an Indigenous person has, in part, fueled this literature review and study. Because I am not uninformed as to how religious

indoctrination has impacted the cultural fibres of Indigenous peoples on a global scale, I am able to better decipher “brainwashing” from spiritual transformation.

Revered Elder Uncle Mike Arnouse (Personal Communication, August, 2020) recently discussed with me what he believed to be a missing piece of the four quadrant circle our people so often use as a model for wellness. Elder Uncle Mike (Personal Communication, August, 2020) described how at the centre of that circle, regardless of what it is being used for, is where the Creator belongs and is central to all our ways of knowing and being. With this understanding, it has remained imperative for me to locate and bring forth the narratives of my people placing the Creator at the centre, and to allow their stories to speak to their spiritual truth on the healing path they have chosen. These stories must no longer be hidden or presented as isolated experiences, but as a part of an interconnected composite of Indigenous healing narratives.

During my literature review, I finally saw myself reflected in narratives and stories of Indigenous people from across Turtle Island, New Zealand, and Australia who shared their lived experience of healing through personal You Tube videos, interviews recorded on the *Tribal Trails* (Northern Canada Evangelical Mission, 2021) television show, and in faith-based periodicals (Decontie, 2011; Pardo-Kaplan, 2017; Seigneur, 2012) I began to feel less alone as these stories revealed how many other Indigenous people who shared my story of healing discovered freedom and peace through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. However, I also understood their experiences of seclusion and scrutiny from family and community that this decision often brings.

While this endeavour is personal, it is more importantly for all my Indigenous brothers and sisters laying low, afraid to share their truth. It is for all my people who want to be free to

*live* their truth alongside their people without inhibition. And it is to ensure that these healing narratives are accredited as authentic Indigenous knowledges of my people.

## **Trends**

Trends within the literature emerged immediately. The most prominent themes were identity, relationality, community, and “contextualizing the message of the gospel” (LeBlanc & LeBlanc, 2001, p.93). Repeated also were the ‘walking with’ and ‘journey’ analogies I use in my personal framework. But what was confirmed for me through the literature were teachings that our ancestors have had a relationship with God from time immemorial.

There was one thread similar in likeness which distinctively emerged from the stories of my people who chose to follow Jesus and experienced healing from intergenerational trauma through their personal relationship with Him. This thread looked tattered and its colour dull. It wrapped itself around each story and held them tightly closed. Although the thread had been picked at, loosened, and unknotted many times, it was evident that it had been retied again and again by fear. This thread was familiar to me and made of the same smaller strands I was familiar with – strands of loneliness, worry, dread, rejection, and alienation. Together they made the thread into a prickly twine which sought to separate my brothers and sisters in Jesus from our identity – our Indigeneity. As we stepped towards Jesus, the answer to our healing, and to freedom from the chains of shame and dehumanization we laboriously carried, we were further told by our people, family, and communities that we no longer belonged. The vibrant beautiful Indigenous thread representing our identity was severed and became tattered and dulled, and what remained we used to piece together and tie tightly the healing stories hidden within our hearts. We could not deny the restoration, freedom, and asylum found in the arms of our Saviour

Jesus Christ, but we now had to hide this truth to avoid rejection by our people, whom we deeply loved, in order to avoid causing them further heartache.

Jeff Decontie (2011), an Algonquin and Mohawk man with a Masters in Indigenous Studies reflects on his decision as an Indigenous man to follow Jesus and how he faced difficulties within his community as he grappled with not wanting to upset anyone, as well as his desire to retain his Indigenous identity. His focus is made clear as he courageously prefaces the article with the disclaimer, “This article is about Indigenous identity and the benefits of following Christ. Yes, I am going to write about it.” (Decontie, 2011, p.8).

As I sat at his fireside and listened carefully to his narrative, I realized that my journey’s path had led me to find a brother in Christ who understood the fears that only we encounter as Indigenous Jesus followers. Decontie (2011) took time to reflect on the legitimate fears of Indigenous people who did not believe in following Christ and their reasoning. Decontie (2011) shares how many Indigenous peoples he has discussed this topic with have revealed their concern of having to deny their Indigenous identity. Further to this, he states that Indigenous people fear that Christ and his teachings are an instrument of colonization and used to further disempower, oppress, and marginalize our people. He also mentions that Indigenous people are afraid if they follow Jesus that they will no longer be “Indigenous enough” and that there may be too many rules to follow (Decontie, 2011, p.8). I had to recount my life and wonder if he had spoken to me at some life juncture as these were some of my personal trepidations. He then goes on to say something crucial: “Indigenous peoples *should* be concerned about this and they should know they are not alone” (Decontie, 2011, p.8). He may never know how pivotal this one simple, yet profound, statement means to myself and so many other Indigenous Jesus followers – *we are not alone*.

What most do not understand is the profound need as an Indigenous woman, specifically, to be accepted. In a day and age where Indigenous women are disposable and where Indigenous men have little worth outside their own family unit or communities, we are reduced to very little if not for the acceptance of our own people. That is why our Indigenous identity, the value of our people's knowledges, and the asking to share something which may divide us from our people is so very challenging. We are all survivors with a shared history. However, to walk in denial of that which has made us whole, would be a travesty to our truth. It has only been through prayer, spiritual growth, and the decolonizing of my thought patterns that I have come to this day where I am prepared to share with those who will hear that it is through Jesus that I have found healing and an inseverable connection to my Indigenous identity despite those who would reject me. For who could make me one with my Indigenous identity better than the One who thoughtfully and purposefully wove my people together in the wombs of our mothers (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, Psalm 139:1-18, Psalm 119:73, Galatians 1:15). We were made for His purpose, and so it is through Christ Jesus that I have found my true self as an Indigenous woman gifted with an avid devotion to the healing, strengthening, prosperity, and decolonization of my people. It is through Jesus that I was shown that the knowledge and ways of knowing and being He accorded my people are invaluable because they were established by Him, bestowed by Him, and intended to be treasured, sustained, and transferred from generation to generation. Until these revered knowledges are viewed as valid, valuable Indigenous knowledges, they are like hidden jewels beneath the mire, forbidden to shine unless by the authority of those to which they do not belong.

For the first time in my life while researching the literature for my thesis, these thoughts and understandings began to unfold by insiders who I never met or knew about. I read the

following profound words I had spoken and thought, but never expected to find within a publication: “I am a follower of Jesus, though I would not call myself a Christian” (Seigneur, 2012, para. 2). Another Indigenous brother in Christ, the late Richard Twiss, speaks in length about his loss of Indigenous identity during his first 8 years after deciding to become a Christian, as well as how the Creator brought him to the realization that this was contrary to what He desired and asked of him (Twiss, 2000). The late Dr. Richard Twiss or Taoyate Obnajin (He Stands With His People) is the Lakota leader, educator, and author who proclaimed these words. As I began to examine his publications and listen to his speaking engagements and interviews, I felt connected to another Indigenous person who was adamant about retaining his identity as an Indigenous man who followed Jesus. In Twiss’s (2000) book, *One Church Many Tribes: Following Jesus the Way God Made You*, He Stands With His People (2000) shares his story of healing through Jesus Christ. The cover of the book is an image of Twiss in full regalia, braided hair, and a sunset sky over a mountain range in the background. As an Indigenous person who follows Jesus, I was immediately affected by this image as I have never seen a publication which aligned the name of Jesus with traditional Indigenous identity. While I believe that Indigenous identity is defined little by wearing buckskin, eagle feathers, and pony beads while carrying a bow and arrows or a tomahawk (what many Hollywood movies and popular culture have reduced our identity to), I saw an Indigenous man who is declaring that the feathers in his hair, bone beads on his chest, and colours he wears are a representation of his people. Each component is sacred and carries meaning, position, functionality, and a story. These stories are his people’s to tell, to pass on, and to teach when it is the right time to do so. These pieces symbolize Lakota knowledge, and their stories mirror the ways of knowing and being of his Nation. What they are not are pieces of a costume so often emulated during Halloween, a style

for non-Indigenous people to appropriate for a high fashion runway and financial gain, or a showy exotic spectacle. He is saying unapologetically with gentleness, yet sternness, “I am a follower of Jesus, and I am a traditional Indigenous man. This is who I am. One is not separate from the other”.

In an interview with Reverend Laverne Jacobs from the Ojibway peoples, he discusses how religions such as Hinduism are listed as one of the most ancient religions of the world, yet Indigenous spirituality can be dated further back than those hailed in educational settings (McKenna, 1993) and continue to go unacknowledged beside these. Reverend Jacobs goes on to say that missionaries, upon meeting Indigenous peoples, refused to see God in their already established beliefs and spiritual practices (McKenna, 1993). Without listening to the narratives of the Indigenous experience regarding their relationship with the Great Spirit, missionaries could not comprehend that Indigenous peoples walked with God before their arrival. LeBlanc & LeBlanc (2011) speak to Twiss’s (2000) offerings of the historical relationship Indigenous people have had with God since time immemorial:

Twiss’ work has brought us [back?] to the realization that God has in all times and all places been seeking to reconcile God’s creation to the community, which is God. His work emphasizes the fact that it is God at work in and through us – now, and then. We have a valid spiritual history that predates European contact! The recovery of the *missio Dei* in the Native world has meant we are no longer an afterthought – we have always been fully in the heart and mind of God. (p. 93)

Other discussions taking place in the literature are centered around syncretism and whether the coming together of Indigenous spirituality and faith reduces or enriches Indigenous spirituality. Reverend Laverne Jacobs discusses how Indigenous ways of knowing and being can

greatly enhance the Christian walk with God as our people take part in this relationship holistically, whereas “non-Native people deal with God in a more analytical or intellectual fashion” (McKenna, 1993, para. 33).

Achiel Peelman (2013) mentions his attendance at several Indigenous spiritual functions across Turtle Island and remembers a key message offered by many Indigenous faith-based leaders - the Bible wasn't put in their path to substitute their worldview, but to edify it (Peelman, 2013). This speaks to a very different perspective than what Indigenous peoples have been led to believe dating back to the teachings of the first missionaries to arrive on Turtle Island.

### **Known and Unknown**

What is known about faith-based healing for Indigenous peoples is that there are many who have chosen this path to healing, but that numerous have also questioned whether one can both retain their Indigeneity and follow Jesus simultaneously (McKenna, 1993; Decontie, 2011); LeBlanc & LeBlanc, 2011; Ono, 2012; Peelman, 2013; College, 2013; Twiss, 2000; 100 Huntley Street, 2017; Pardo-Kaplan, 2017). What is known is that many non-Indigenous authors and researchers have, both past and present, gathered, and shared Indigenous life experience and narratives in an unethical manner. While non-Indigenous allies and knowledges are valued by my people, I strongly believe that we must be the authors of our knowledges, teachings, stories, and experiences.

Missing are personal Indigenous narratives of finding healing through Jesus *which are deemed as Indigenous knowledges* and not as conversion to the white man religion stories. This missing piece displaces Indigenous faith-based believers from their identity and isolates them from their community. Lucio Cloud Ramirez & Phillip Hammack (2014) state that Indigenous peoples “must negotiate the cultural and psychological legacy of colonialism as they construct,

purposive individual and communal narratives” (p. 113). Because Christianity was misappropriated by white western civilization, used as a tool of power to achieve colonization, and justified their forced assimilation by misconstruing the Bible’s teachings, there is disdain and uneasiness around the gospel of Jesus based healing in Indigenous communities. Moreover, it is because of western supremacy where fragmentation of the gospel took place through organized religion, fundamentalism, segregation, class, and separation by denomination – Jesus opposed and taught against all of these (*Holy Bible, Today’s New International Version*, 2001/2005, Mathew 23, Mathew 12:25, Galatians 3:28, John 10:16, Luke 4:16-21). What must be brought forward is the truth about Jesus’ relationship with Indigenous peoples. He is not what was presented to our people in residential school. Thus, through the stories of my people the truth about God’s relationship with Indigenous peoples can be brought forward in a way which is genuine and unaltered.

### **Honouring the Work That Has Come Before Me**

There was but one publication I was able to locate containing narratives of Indigenous people’s lives from the lands currently known as Canada (including some from the lands presently known as British Columbia) pertaining specifically to their Christian walk. These are found in the book *Bridges in Spirituality: First Nations Christian Women Tell Their Stories* (Carlson & Dumont, 1997). The five stories told and written within are by Elders Sarah Simon, Dr. Jessie Saulteaux, Gladys McCue Taylor, Gladys Taylor Cook, and Vi Smith.

I must emphasize as I begin this section that my reverence and love for Elders is immense. I am not sure if this comes from being raised by my grandparents throughout the majority of my childhood or if it is a gift of the Holy Spirit that I have been given, but I often become awestruck in the presence of Elders. I think it is because I am aware of the wisdom they

hold, but also understand that their journey has far exceeded the hills, valleys, meadows, storms, and sunsets of mine. I am aware that they are holders of the past, connected more closely with our ancestors than I have yet to attain, and carry guiding tenets for our people's future. Elders have toiled in strengthening, achieving, and becoming vessels of humility, respect, truth, love, wisdom, honesty, and courage despite the vast barriers of colonial oppression. Even when they could boast of their accomplishments, knowledge and wisdom, strength and tenacity, they always choose humility. I was taught by my Elders that there is strength in silence and not to let anyone ever mistake your silence for weakness. However, I was also told that when it *is* time to speak, make your words few, but make them count so your message is clear, understood, and leaves an impression which will stay with your listener beyond the moment. I was also taught from an Elder from my territory that being an Elder has little to do with age. Elder Alf Dumont (1997) and contributing editor of *Bridges in Spirituality: First Nations Christian Women Tell Their Stories* (Carlson & Dumont, 1997) writes the following which I have intentionally chosen not to paraphrase as I believe our Elders voices should be represented exactly how they were spoken and/or written as often as possible:

Not all older people are elders for us. Certain people who have journeyed in a certain way chose to become our elders, at the same time that we chose to be guided by them...The elders I have known do not have an easy road to walk. They have always walked in the spirit of humility and with the spirit of integrity all their lives. They have sought to live by the gentle teachings of those who have been elders for them. Through their humour, reflection on their own lives and what has happened to them, and from the teachings that they have gained from those who went before them and guided them, they seek to guide those of us who will listen to them. Often the stories they tell for the situations we are

facing may not make sense to us at the time. We are asked to reflect on the story that we are told, until we can see what is being taught. We are not to raise questions until we have lived with the story for some time and listened to it many times to gain the wisdom that is being offered. To hear the truth and understand the truth and then to apply the truth may take months or even years. But the elders are patient and watching. (p. 4-5)

What is apparent is that the stories of our people's walk with Jesus and the power of His healing for the wounds we have suffered are few. I am extremely grateful to Elder Alf Dumont and Joyce Carlson for bringing forth the stories of these five extraordinary Elders and documenting their narratives for future generations. These stories hold layers of teachings, knowledges, history, inspirations, guidance, and humour which will mean something distinct for every Indigenous person who reads them. Although Elder Sarah Simon, Elder Dr. Jessie Saulteaux, Elder Gladys McCue Taylor, Elder Gladys Taylor Cook, and Elder Vi Smith have all gone home to be with their saviour Jesus Christ, their life stories and legacies continue to thrive as generations of Indigenous people will continue to be led through their narratives and teachings. Through their stories, they have reached through the pages and offered their approval for the work within these pages. Theirs are the footsteps I will follow on the path they have forged ahead of me. And as they bid me a safe journey, I can not help but look back one more time. As I move away from the warmth of their fireside, I continue to hear the murmur of their voices. I know in time I will meet them face to face and sit by their fire again - a fire blazing in a clearing surrounded by towering cedars, five colourful blankets shawling their shoulders as they tell the next journeyer the stories they are needing to hear. These precious Elders have secured my once unsure footing for this important work. They have transcended space and time and met me where I was at. Through our sharing of our healing through Jesus Christ, He brought me to

their threshold and allowed me to absorb the warmth of their stories, to be strengthened by them, and to allow them to guide my path. This is, in essence, my prayer - that my people be no longer afraid to walk and tell their truth because the participants who courageously came forward to contribute their stories in this gathering of Indigenous knowledges found courage to tell theirs.

Elder Gladys Taylor (1997) shared:

As elders, we are not here to tell you what to do. As young people, as leaders, you are to determine your own directions. All we as elders can do is to tell you our stories, what we have done. You are asked to listen and to take from our stories what you need. Then, as leaders, you must determine where you are to go, and what you are to do. That is your responsibility. (p.4)

While Indigenous healing through a faith-based path is not widely researched, the best sources of knowledge were from interviews, speakers, and gatherings of Indigenous peoples themselves. For example, a gathering of Aboriginal Christians took place where Aboriginal representatives from communities and churches met in Manitoba with the Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit, the Correctional Service of Canada, and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (Aboriginal Correction Policy Unit, 2006). Questions around Aboriginal healing, traditional spiritual practices, Aboriginal faith healing processes, and involvement or role (if any) of non-Aboriginal people in supporting Aboriginal communities (Aboriginal Correction Policy Unit, 2006). This coming together allowed attendees to take part in dialogue around these issues and was the first time many were provided space to do so (Aboriginal Correction Policy Unit, 2006). Having Aboriginal representatives from faith-based communities and churches are a step forward in working towards understanding Indigenous faith-based healing. With so little knowledge gathering completed on the topic of Indigenous healing through Jesus, it became

apparent that bringing forward the stories and narratives of Indigenous peoples *by those experiencing them* is crucial.

Indigenous narratives and personal stories have potential for political impact as they hold the power to unsettle the colonial myth Episkenew (2009) speaks of:

Not coincidentally, Canadian government officials began to develop policies to control the proliferation of Indigenous languages and stories shortly after the establishment of the Dominion. These policies made it ‘possible to falsify history in order to undermine group and individual identity and in a sense invalidate the life experience of those [they wished] to disempower.’ (p. 5)

I believe that the gap in research around my topic is due to the devaluing of Indigenous knowledges, my people’s fear of rejection by their families and community, and because a colonial myth prevails that Indigenous peoples could not possibly find healing through Jesus by any other avenue but the white man. While there were and are many well meaning white, Christian missionaries, it is time for my people to be the spreaders of their stories of healing through Jesus and to become the bridge between their people and the gospel. For it is the “white man God” untruth which plays a significant role in the continued oppression of Indigenous knowledges.

The stories offered by the participants are a testament to the need for Indigenous wellness models which include faith-based healing. My research aims to validate this need and serve as the catalyst for change in social work practice and Indigenous healing approaches. This gathering of knowledge also aims to bridge the gap between Indigenous Jesus followers and their Indigenous brothers and sisters – all our relations. Finally, this research aims to situate

Indigenous gospel believers as spiritual leaders, Biblical scholars, and space keepers for Indigenous peoples to engage in faith-based healing.

Through these healing stories, we have been made privy to how Jesus has sought out, healed, and walked beside Indigenous people who were unable to find their healing on other paths. It is my prayer that this research fills a void where I could not see myself reflected in academia. It is my hope that as other Indigenous students enter into higher education, that they will find themselves reflected here and know they are not alone.

### Chapter 3: Personal Framework of Knowing and Researching



Image 1: Personal Framework of Knowing and Researching

#### **Situating Self**

Drawing from Kovach's (2009) interview with Graham Smith regarding relationships and the importance of being transparent and vulnerable to those you are interacting with in research, making self-location and situating of self in relation to the knowledge gathering topic became my starting point. This means that I took time to remember, wrote my own story, reflected, and became comfortable with it as an offering, not as a means to shift focus to myself, but to create a space of safety and trust for others to speak their truth.

Absolon and Willett (2005) emphasize the necessity, as Indigenous researchers, to “locate ourselves” first as an act of accountability to our own “positionality” (p. 97). From my experience, traditional introductions, as previously discussed, produce immediate connections as the space between us is lessened and we begin to link familial ties, both blood and kindred, discuss any previous visits to one another’s traditional territory, and knowledges learned from each others’ peoples. However, situating self in research should go beyond a basic introduction. Locating self means that one must reveal the “values by which they live” (Baskin, 2016, p. 32). It also means disclosing other areas of my life including educational background, personal upbringing, significant influences in my life, how I am held accountable to community, and making transparent my privileged status (Baskin, 2016).

Offering my self location is not about me. This practice is about sharing my life experiences so that in turn “listeners will filter the story being told through their own experience and thus adapt the information to make it relevant and specific to their life” (Wilson, 2008, p. 32). When people know my personal story, it allows them to comfortably interact with it and retain the bits they need (Wilson, 2008). Thus, relationality is formed and required for reciprocity to take place. These are the ways of my people.

### **Ways of Knowing**

I can only use my own ways of knowing and making myself transparent to create space for open dialogue with others’ ways of knowing so theirs can be honoured and translated through their voice. Therefore, my ways of knowing remain malleable, leaving room for their knowledges to mold our interaction and space in which we fill. As I have also become attuned to the importance of relationality, through this learning “judgment of another’s viewpoint is inconceivable” and “egalitarianism and inclusiveness become not merely a norm but the

epistemologically inevitable” (Wilson, 2008, p. 92). Remembering that one cannot take possession of or “discover” knowledges, I can then understand that knowledge “is merely a set of relationships that may be given a visible form” (Wilson, 2008, p. 127).

Thus, there is an intentional balance that must be applied where my ways of knowing do not take precedence over the ways of knowing of those who have welcomed me to sit by their fireside – these places are the trails, roads, valleys, and nooks of their being. bell hooks (1994) describes the “passion of experience, the passion of remembrance” as “a way of knowing that is often expressed through the body, what it knows, and what has been deeply inscribed on it through life experience. This complexity of experience can rarely be voiced and named from a distance. It is a privileged location...” (pp. 90 – 91). When we are invited into these “privileged locations” (hooks, 1994, p. 91) there are general guidelines beyond my own ways of knowing that I should follow. Baskin (2016) discusses guidelines for non-Indigenous researchers as allies. However, I believe that I too must ground myself in these guidelines including “knowing when to shut up”, “know[ing] yourself first”, “sharing one’s power”, and “taking their lead on every endeavour” (pp. 388 - 391).

### **Voice, Space, and Place**

Wilson (2008) states that there is no division between relationships with others and relationships made with our environment; therefore, both are honoured equally. Drawing from this teaching and Basso’s (1996) insights and interaction with Elder Dudley (Basso, 1996), I wish to so entangle the importance of place and land throughout the fibres of my framework that to extract and isolate its significance to that of the wellbeing of my people will pose difficulty just as the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical make up our being as a whole. This is where my use of journey and fireside interchangeably hold great status in the way the Great

Spirit wove us together, created the earth, set seasons in motion, and where the knowledges of our people are carried – both literally and along the path of one’s walk-through life.

Furthermore, Basso (1996) explains the intricacy and intimacy of place, our human relationship with it, and wherein knowledges and memory are stored:

As numerous as they are both singular and specific, and fully realizable across great distances, relationships with places are lived whenever a place becomes the object of awareness. In many instances, awareness of place is brief and unselfconscious, a fleeting moment (a flash of recognition, a trace of memory) that is swiftly replaced by awareness of something else. But now and again, and some. Wisdom Sits in Places times without apparent cause, awareness is seized – arrested - and the place on which it settles becomes an object of spontaneous reflection and resonating sentiment. It is at times such as these, when individuals step back from the flow of everyday experience and attend self-consciously to places-when, we may say, they pause to actively sense them-that the relationship to geographical space are most richly lived and surely felt. (pp. 106 – 107)

The sacredness of how our peoples have used fire, not only as a necessity, but as a means to congregate, sing together, dance together, sit in silence together, discuss both lighthearted and difficult topics together, mourn with one another, and celebrate life with one another has been utilized since time immemorial. In my life, from as young as I can remember, fire warmed me, comforted me, absorbed my tears, was a glowing listener, and performed a dance dawning

regalia woven of golds, crimson, and sapphire with which I could gaze and watch its flickering motion for hours.

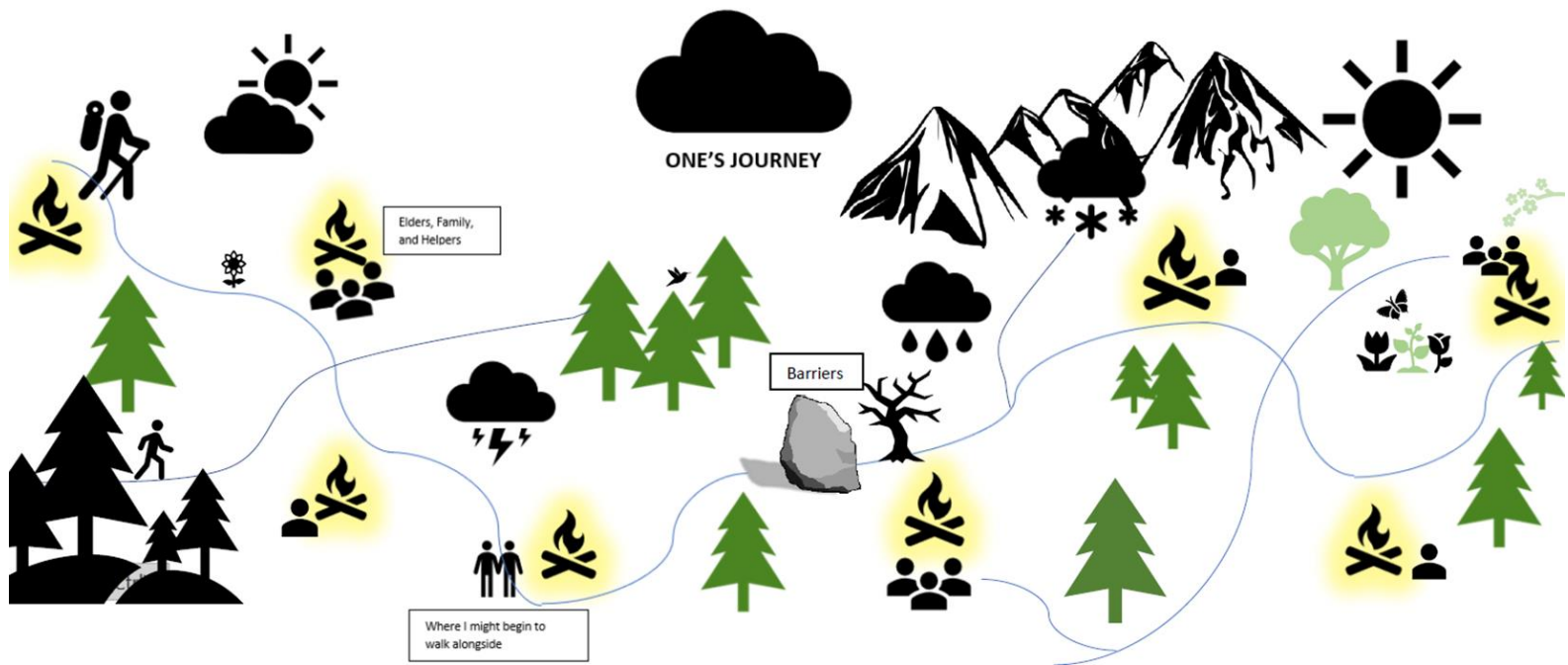


Image 2: One's Journey

How did the fire start? I believe its first spark began when the Creator spoke light into the darkness. After creating mankind, He gave this flame to our ancestors as a gift with which they were tasked to never allow its flame to be extinguished despite the difficulties he warned them they would encounter (the flame is our knowledges and ways of knowing which survived colonization, assimilation, and genocide – our ancestors kept their word to the Creator and kept the flame hidden within them). I see the fire being fueled, growing brighter, as our knowledges are remembered. As the flames reach higher, the heat intensifies as its warmth radiates beyond those sitting fireside beckoning our Indigenous brothers and sisters to return to their origins. I view the fireside, where stumps and logs are placed for our people and allies to sit. This is where we resist the influence of western individualism and spend time being together. It is the way of Indigenous peoples to assemble collectively with invitations extended to Nations outside their

territory. This coming together symbolizes unity and friendship and is part of standing witness to the ceremonial events taking place. This coming together is beautifully reflected in the ways of the Maori peoples as “when they do ceremonies, it’s to eliminate the space between people” (Wilson, 2008, p.87). Here, at the fireside, we can engage in this type of ceremony, where “knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us” (Wilson, 2008, p. 87). When one adds knowledge to this fire, one is then responsible for watching it, overseeing its careful dissemination, being accountable to its origins, honouring its power, preserving its warmth, and protecting it from being extinguished.



*Figure 2.* “Perpetual Flame of Indigenous Knowledges”  
by Kelsey Jules, Secwepemc Nation Artist, Kamloops, B.C., February 2021

These knowledges and ways of knowing are relayed, taught, and absorbed in many different ways. Elder Dudley explained to Basso (1996) where wisdom is found:

How will you walk along this trail of wisdom? Well, you will go to many places. You must look at them closely. You must remember all of them. Your relatives will talk to you about them. You must remember everything they tell you. You must think about it, and keep on thinking about it, and keep on thinking about it...wisdom sits in places. (p. 127)

Therefore, when space is shared and wrapped in safety, this environment invites our voices to surrender what is in our minds and hearts for the growth of self and the collective. These offerings rejuvenate and keep us strong and intentional as we walk our path.

### **In Service To**

I was called into social work and education to serve my people through the guiding principles laid out by the Creator. I pottered in other areas, but the pull was too strong, and I inevitably returned to the fireside of my people. I once worked in an Indigenous agency where my colleagues and director heard me state numerous times, “this is not our agency, this place belongs to those that we serve” - their place of safety, a home away from their Indigenous communities in an urban setting. With this in mind, I work in service to my people daily in all I do, not for my benefit, but theirs.

When thinking about research, I reflect on what I can do in service to my people through the opportunity I have been gifted. I ponder, who am I that my people would entrust me to become a vessel through which their voices flow? Am I strong enough and equipped to advocate for their ways of knowing to be heard, validated, and sat alongside western ways of knowing and

the difficulties and barriers I may encounter? These introspections prepared me for the work that was to come.

Meyer (2013) speaks to how, within Indigenous research, there is “some kind of recovery, renewal and reawakening” (p. 252). Overall, it is the power within my people’s stories, their knowledges which bid me the strength, passion and unceasing desire required to have embarked on this journey. I had to find the place where camp would be set up, a fire built around the eternal flame of our ancestors, and knowledges added to the centre giving us warmth and light. I was not only present for the taking in of the fire’s warmth, but also for the work involved in packing and unpacking, carrying, and walking beside them over unwelcoming terrain and untamed wilderness to get to the pristine meadows and rejuvenating creeks. I served in helping to find the supplies needed, wood to fuel the fire, blankets to ward off chill, sustenance, and shelter with which to create safety from the lingering taunting storms wishing to destroy what had been built and guarded.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

My methodology was developed through the use of several elements. As an Indigenous knowledge gatherer, it was important to garner attributes from research methods reflecting not only the required components of academic social work research, but to my understanding of Indigenous knowledge gathering epistemologies. Thus, the following weaves together threads of each to create a blanket used to wrap my knowledge gathering journey with all which was necessary for me to carry out my responsibilities diligently and ethically. Thus, ethics, values and beliefs, traditional teachings, relationality, risks, limitations and significance of this work, and analysis and meaning making are outlined within the following.

My research methodology joins storytelling with elements of yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) and experience-centered narrative research (Patterson, 2008). Because western academia researchers refer to stories as narratives (Geia, Hayes, & Usher, 2013), I use these two terms with the understanding that each has their own origins, qualities, and intricacies.

“Storytelling methodology” is also known as the “yarning methodology” and was developed by two Indigenous PhD research students (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). Yarning methodology is based on the Western Australian Nyoongah term ‘yarning’ and is used when their people wish to have meaningful dialogue with one another (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). The storytelling method is an organic fit for the gathering of healing stories as “story telling is a feature of Indigenous societies where oral traditions were the main form of transmitting and sharing knowledge with individuals and between groups” (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010, p. 38). Furthermore, unlike historical deficit-based research (Tuck, 2009), I wish to focus on healing, which offers hope and understanding between and for my people.

Experience-centered narrative research, developed in the 1960's through the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967), can be used as an approach to gather knowledge from many people regarding a general experience (Patterson, 2008). Experience centered narrative research (Patterson, 2008) provided a clear navigational tool during the storytelling and data analysis phase. Using the yarning methodology, elements of the experience-centered narrative research approach, along with the storytelling cultural protocols of those I am sitting beside will allow for the process of knowledge gathering to be steeped in the values and ethics with which I wish to gather knowledge. The two values which were most important for me to practice throughout this process were respect and relationality for to practice these is to practice humility, care, accountability, awareness, non-judgment, and anti-oppressive principles.

I have chosen critical race theory and its corollary practice of counter-story to round out my methodology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Because faith-based beliefs or Christianity have been conveyed as the religion of the white man and led by the white man, Solorzano and Yosso's (2002) counter-story approach rejects these "majoritarian stories" founded in the legacy of white privilege (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28). This theory recognizes that the "experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate" and "draw[s] explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, cuentos, testimonios, chronicles and narratives" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Montecinos (as cited in Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) states:

The use of a master narrative to represent a group is bound to provide a very narrow depiction of what it means to be Mexican-American, African-American, white, and so on...A master narrative essentializes and wipes out the complexities and richness of a group's cultural life...A monovocal account will engender not only stereotyping but also

curricular choices that result in representations in which fellow members of a group represented cannot recognize themselves. (p. 27)

The “counter-story” method is the telling of stories of “people whose experiences are not often told” and confront majoritarian stories of white privilege (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Personal experiential stories and narratives are used in counter-storytelling to recall experiences of racial injustice (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). This research counters the dominant narrative that it is only through the white man wherein healing through Jesus is found.

### **Ethics Informing My Research Methodology**

With the resurgence of traditional Indigenous wellness models, my people are able to recall, examine, and engage with how our ancestors thrived and addressed wellness pre-contact. Due to both historical and present-day systemic violence and racism experienced by Indigenous peoples, mistrust heavily influences our decision in accessing non-Indigenous healthcare and wellness services. Episkenew (2009) states that: “Indigenous people look to their own communities to find resources with which to heal traumatized spirits. Over the last three decades, Indigenous people have witnessed the healing power of stories as they have begun to reassert their individual and collective narratives” (p. 11). The western notion of healing suggests that people are ill, but Ward Churchill (as cited in Episkenew, 2009) asserts that the difference between being sick and being wounded is that illness necessitates a remedy, whereas an injury requires healing. In attending to our wounds, Terry Tafoya (as cited in Episkenew, 2009) asserts that “to heal, people must write or create a new story or script of their lives” (p. 13).

I used some guiding principles from the “eight criteria of quality in qualitative research” to ensure I covered all areas of good qualitative research (Tracy, 2010, p. 839). However, because I sat with a diverse population of Indigenous peoples, the principles for quality varied and were modified according to context (Tracy, 2010). My attraction to this framework was its ease of use and alignment with many of the sacred teachings of Indigenous peoples. These eight qualities are listed as: “worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, [and] meaningful coherence” (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). Through my Indigenous lens, and the teachings of Dr. Robina Thomas, the foundation of this work was grounded in the honouring of traditions and my critical reflection of how I planned to “take up those stories and protect the people who choose to share” (Thomas, 2011).

While working through year one of the MSWI, my ethical framework became clearer. Using Baskin’s (2016) outline, I organized my developed framework and illustrated how my values and beliefs developed through my spiritual walk with the Creator and teachings of those I have had the privilege of walking beside me. I approach all facets of my life, including writing, research, social work practice, relationships, and daily living using the following structure.

### **Values and Beliefs**

My values and beliefs originate from that which has been imparted to me, have thoughtfully been absorbed, instilled, and which I have come to learn through life experience. By writing this framework on paper, it does not become static. Because I believe that erudition is a lifelong endeavour, I know that my approaches and frameworks will evolve as new knowledge and deeper understanding is attained.

My framework, which guides my path, is rooted in the Bible verse, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (*Holy Bible, Today’s New International Version*, 2001/2005, Galatians 5:22-23). These spiritual fruits run parallel to the Seven Sacred Teachings. It is through understanding this parallel, I have come to see that the Great Spirit my ancestors followed and spoke of, was the same God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Bible. The Great Spirit, who walked and talked with my ancestors, was the same who walked and talked with the tribes of the Hebrew peoples from the beginning of time.

Although love is listed as only one of the fruits of the Spirit, in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (Today’s New International Version Bible, 2001/2005), “love” is defined and envelops all of the fruits of the Spirit:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

In all that I do, it is this love I strive to embody.

### **The Seven Sacred Teachings**

The Seven Sacred Teachings run parallel with the fruits of the Holy Spirit (or the Great Spirit). This understanding arises from the knowledge that Indigenous peoples recognize that “The Creator gave to us the family, which is the place where all teachings are handed down from the grandparent to the parent, and to the child” (Spirit Talk Gathering, 2011, para. 4). These teachings are valued as sacred because they come from the Creator and are principles with which

to practice in all areas of our being – spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental. Looking at the “Anishnawbe teachings, these values are called ‘the Seven Grandfathers’ or ‘Seven Sacred Teachings’” and include wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth (Baskin, 2016, p. 141). Entwined within these teachings are peace, honouring all, integrity, bravery, meekness, and understanding (Baskin, 2016).

Baskin (2016) also speaks about love, not as interpreted by dominant discourse, but as relational and connectedness. Again, this is the type of love which the Bible teaches in 1 Corinthians 13. My people knew God (the Great Spirit) since creation. Thus, European colonizers did not *bring* the knowledge of God to my people, but only their distorted version. Canadian Pastor, Bruxy Cavey, states how things might have been different had newcomers, upon their arrival, asked Indigenous peoples, “How has our great God *already been* revealing Himself here?” (Boyd, McLaren, Cavey, & Zahnd, 2017). I firmly believe that my people could have shown missionaries how they could elevate their religion into something incredible by entering into a truly intimate relationship with the Creator where they need not go through a priest or sacraments to reach Him.

The Seven Sacred Teachings and Fruits of the Spirit that I endeavour to follow are Indigenous indeed – they come from the Great Spirit of all mankind, the One who Paul states “created all people equal – which prevented the development in their minds of biases against people who were different” (Paul, 2003, as cited in Baskin, 2016, p. 2). However, this is not a teaching that was understood, or heeded, by European colonizers and missionaries. Had it been, I believe history would have unfolded much differently.

### **From an Ethical Place**

As Baskin (2011) stated, finding a publication on Indigenous ethics is difficult. Due to the vast diversity of Indigenous peoples, locating a code of ethics reflecting this array would be even harder. However, the Elders of Four Worlds Development Project (2014) outlined an Indigenous code of ethics which teaches continuously giving gratitude to the Creator, finding your inner courage, respect, the giving of knowledge, honesty, being caring, generosity with what you have, empathy, honour, kindness, service to others, moderation, and balance, listening to your heart, and accepting guidance in all forms it is given. I understand ethics to be an integral part of my people without having to discuss, frame, or write them down for validation - they just are.

### **Moving Away from Individualism**

My Statimc people were, and continue to be, a cooperative people (Drake-Terry, 1989). They are hunters, fishers, and gatherers. My ancestors were guided on the land by the seasons and what the land and water gifted them in each of these seasons (Drake-Terry, 1989). They spent their winters beneath the land in pit houses (S7ístken) and summer camps on the fish rocks along what was later named the Fraser River (Drake-Terry, 1989). Everything that was made, traded, and stored was for the benefit of the whole. To do what was best for oneself or for personal gain was a foreign concept and this continues as a guiding ethic for many of my peoples today. However, due to the Indian Act, fragmentation and hierarchy within Band membership has faded this ethic in some communities, setting families against families.

Nevertheless, I was encouraged by some of my experiences upon returning home to my Statimc territory from Sto:lo territory to raise our children on my reserve. For seven years I had the opportunity to live among my people, my relatives, and walk where my ancestors walked and where my mother and her siblings had once played as children. For all the dysfunction taking

place on my reserve, I also observed something more powerful – the caring ways of my people. In those seven years, there was much death due to disease and alcoholism. I had never experienced such immense, continuous sorrow. Yet, what I noticed was that families who held grudges and disdain against one another, sometimes for generations, would humbly lay the animosity aside and do the work that needed to be done to support the family in mourning. Even those who never spoke kindly to one another in the community, or where tensions were thick between them in passing, became humble and gentle faced. Men who loathed one another would lay this aside and hunt for that man’s mourning family to feed them and their visiting grievors. Women who normally slighted one another organized fundraisers for that woman’s family and cooked meals into all hours of the night to feed that family and those who grieved alongside them. Youth who fought and had gripes with one another, together helped the adults gather wood and sat side by side at the sacred fire feeding it, ensuring it didn’t go out, so the adults could rest through the night. The men laid down their weapons of anger to dig graves. The women ignored their daggers of bitterness and allowed kinship among them for the sake of those going through the pain of loss. For that time, children could play with children they were normally not allowed to play with. I was awed to bear witness what I knew must be the pre-contact ways of my people.

During these times, my mother called me to bake and make wreathes out of flowers for families – even those I knew she had been hurt by in the past. I would accompany her to the grieving family’s home – a place she would never go on any other occasion – and watched her sincerely embrace and whisper words of strength and remorse into a broken mother’s ear who had lost her child much too soon. I followed suit, and together we were welcomed to sit in the family’s living room at the side of the cedar frame her child lay in. We would cry for her

departure from our community while we laid the circle of flowers on the sweet-smelling cedar. My mother's fresh prized flowers, which she tended to daily, now took a place of honour absorbing tears shed at this sacred vigil in a home she would not think of visiting at any other time.

I will never forget the genuine love, care, and empathy displayed in the darkest times during my time living on my reserve. I know that these times together revealed the traditional ways of my people. The problem is that western individualism has influenced my people's ways where many no longer have the strength or tools to resist this detrimental foreign concept. We have become dependent on western ways for survival – that which they fear, if they do not surrender to, may cause their demise. I caught glimpses of how my people once were and imagined the beauty of what it would have been like to live in times of constant togetherness. Even if these times together were no longer our common way of life, these lessons of community are the greatest gifts my people have taught me, what I try to emulate, and what I strive to impart to my children and those I support.

### **Relationships**

One day, revered Secwepemc Elder Uncle Mike Arnouse imparted to me a profound teaching with so few words. He told me that there are no exact words in his language for, "How are you?" as is often said in the English language (M. Arnouse, Personal Communication, 2016). He said that in his language, the closest phrase translates as, "How is your heart?" (M. Arnouse, Personal Communication, 2016). Uncle Mike explained that you can say, "How are you?" ten times a day to people in passing, and that people know the correct response is to say, "Good! How are you?" (M. Arnouse, Personal Communication, 2016). However, he said that if you

genuinely want to know how someone is doing, ask them, “How is your heart?” He said that this is when people will “get real” with you (M. Arnouse, Personal Communication, 2016).

Relationships, throughout most of my life, were a struggle. I continue to have difficulty nurturing relationships outside of my immediate family. When I was younger, I struggled with boundaries as I overly cared for people who often didn’t reciprocate. When I was a little older, I trusted no one and was afraid that those who said they loved me would eventually leave, thus putting them in an impossible place of repeatedly having to prove themselves to me. It wasn’t until I entered my early thirties when I gained the gift of knowledge that my mother’s leaving me with my grandparents wasn’t abandonment, but rather an act of love. It wasn’t until around this time that I stopped testing people’s love for me and made peace with the care and love that they showed me. Finally, I was able to look at the bigger picture.

Although I had been a cultural education worker and taught Indigenous history in schools, I never stepped into that history myself, but unknowingly detached myself from the equation of intergenerational trauma. Once I personalized this history as part of my own, I was then able to begin my journey of healing. Through this metamorphosis, I fell deeper in love with my people – I fell in love with my ancestors and connected with them like I was walking back in time. I was able to nurture a relationship with my people, those who had passed on, and those who stood before me, young and old, and knew that the blood which flowed through my veins was connected to the heartbeat of my ancestors. My identity was formed through the sacred bond of this relationship and the poetry I write and has continued to grow to this very day.

As I learned more about the traditional social organization of my people, I embraced the knowledge as though I had been living it from my first breath. When I learned about egalitarian societies and how the very survival of my people was contingent upon the interwoven

relationships within a Nation, and from Nation to Nation (Dickason & Newbigging, 2010), I also gained the awful understanding of how the descent of my people took place. Western ideology dictated that “sharing and equality are wrong” and “selfishness and competitiveness are good” (Alfred, 2005, p. 110). For my people to be dismantled they had to be separated, for it was in their unity where their strength was generated and how they flourished since the beginning of time.

With this knowledge, my work has been rooted in relationships – the nurturing of, the building of, the edifying of, and the unification of not just one to one, but one to all. With this knowing, I understood that the journey I had taken, from relationship with self and God first, then reconciling my relationship with my people and my history, was for my present purpose – to gently and authentically, and without harm, build the relationships I have been entrusted with through the roles I have been gifted by the Creator.

### **Learning I Brought into Research**

Learning, for me, occurs daily. When I speak with God, the Great Spirit, the Creator, each morning, I ask Him to make today count. What my Father knows about me, is that this means I desire to draw closer to His presence. I want Him to guide my learning, to not let the day end without spiritual growth and a deeper understanding of myself and what He has set me in this place at this point in time for the work He would have me do. I pray, “Let me see through Your eyes, hear with Your ears, speak with Your lips, and feel with Your heart”. Because the Creator has woven each one of us with an individual heart, and soul, and marvels at the beauty of each of our existence, I understand that it is not me I am trying to erase in exchange for becoming Him, but that I long to enter into the fullness of all He created me to be.

Thompson Rivers University Professor Airini (2016) states, “Indigenous peoples are strong, intelligent, and bold knowledge makers. We were this way generations ago; we still are today. This means Indigenous research is strengths-based, relational, and future-focused” (p. 35). Airini (2016) goes on to say, “Indigenous peoples are knowledge makers who take action, transcend, and imagine. We are researchers who are strong, intelligent and bold. We were this way generations ago; we still are today. We are being who we were called to be” (p. 36). I take notice that Professor Airini (2016) repeats, with intention, that the knowledges of our peoples and epistemologies did not cease within us after contact. I think what she is saying is while there may have been a disruption and an attempt to eradicate our ways of knowing, through the strength of our people’s resilience and the innateness of how our knowledges burrow into our being, we have transcended these adversities. Hence, these knowledges, whether we fully recognize it or not, remain in us today and are the reason we continue to overcome. We need only continue stoking the flicker of light our ancestors kept safe from the extinguishing breath of our oppressors as they awaited our resurgence.

I am a lifelong learner who desires to one day be an educator. My learning takes place sitting by this fire of knowledge – the one our ancestors hold vigil – offering all I can to keep it burning for those who will come after me. I stare into the centre of the glowing embers seeing the source from which the flames rise bursting in colours of yellow, purple, blue, oranges, and reds - this is where my deepest learning takes place. This is where I gaze, reflect, and spend time with self and others as they too come sit by that fire and warm themselves, peering into the centuries of wisdom it holds, while absorbing the warmth it offers as a blanket of belonging and strength for our journey. Like home, I can return to the fire again and again, or stay there for as

long as I please – this is where my own learning takes place, and where others teach me as I invite them to sit with me, and where I am invited to sit along side them.

The ethics in which I walk are grounded in spirituality, and have stood the test of time, surpassing the limitations of space separated by the immensity of oceans deep – space that could only be transcended by the Creator Himself. Although his teachings were given with the authority of His hand, He gave us the gift of free will to choose how, or if, to live out these teachings. I walk in His ways, but I also fail in His ways. But through Jesus Christ, I do not live in condemnation, for He has taken my failures upon Himself, and made me a new creation (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version, 2001/2005, Romans 1:17*). The Creator is okay with my shortcomings, as long as I am striving and using the teachings as my touchstone. I am not meant to be perfect, for only the Great Spirit, His Son, and the Holy Spirit have attained that. I am only meant to strive towards, learn from, share with others, and continue to grow in His sacred teachings. I look forward to each rising morning, when He meets me at the fireside and I lean into His warmth, gazing into the embers, hoping today He would show me a glimpse of the greatness He has planned for the prosperity of my people.

### **Recruitment and Participants**

The criteria for participation in this knowledge gathering project were minimal, but specific to the topic. Each participant had to identify as an Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit, or Metis) person over 19 years of age from Kamloops, BC or surrounding Indigenous nations. Each participant had to have found their healing through Jesus Christ and wanted to share their healing story. Participants were recruited through a letter written to the leadership of Indigenous churches to request permission to have them circulate my recruitment letter (See Appendix A).

This letter was also sent directly to any Indigenous people who I thought would be interested in sharing their story of healing through Jesus Christ.

While this gathering of knowledge sought input from participants which required sharing their identity as an Indigenous person including traditional knowledges, practices, and attributes of their life experience as Indigenous people, the option of anonymity was provided. For those choosing anonymity, I ensured specific identifying factors were omitted or modified. I further engaged each participant in approving/disapproving story content omissions or modifications as the importance of the participants as authors of their stories remained steadfast throughout this knowledge gathering process.

As the sole knowledge gatherer and as someone who was personally known to some of the potential participants, mitigating the possibility of unintended coercion was necessary. Thus, in regards to the knowledge gatherer/participant relationship, I declared all possible forms of relationships which I may have to potential participants including as mother/daughter, previous colleague, cousin, auntie/niece, uncle/niece, friend, or acquaintance. To ensure these relationships did not influence potential participants to feel under obligation to share their story, no letters were given in person to the potential participant, but either through a third party or electronically. Sufficient time was given to ask questions with the assurance that persuasive answers or language would not be used in responding, but only direct specific information. Responses to the letter could be provided by a third party or electronically and potential participants were given 2 weeks to respond. It was emphasized to all potential participants that deciding not to participate in the project would not, in any way, damage existing relationships, bring tension to or halt collegial relationships. It was important to me to ensure that potential participants knew that I understood that their healing journeys have many facets and intersecting

pieces and that to share this journey is sacred and personal. I stated my understanding that when one shares personal pieces of themselves, a vulnerability is exposed, and therefore to whom and in what setting your sacred story is shared is of utmost importance. Therefore, saying “no” to this project would not be misinterpreted as a rejection of becoming a part of my knowledge gathering, but a response to wanting to keep their story internally sacred, to avoid the potential risk of harm to treasured relationships, may represent the stretch of path the potential participant was on in their healing journey, and would be viewed as an embracing of their autonomy and strength as an Indigenous person who may not always feel they are permitted to decline in many areas of their lives.

Although this knowledge gathering took place off reserve in an urban setting, I fully and humbly acknowledge that I am residing as an uninvited visitor to Secwepemc territory. I am ever cognizant that I am raising and financially supporting my family on the occupied land of the Secwepemc Nation peoples who have stewarded and protected their land base since time immemorial. As a visitor to the neighbouring nation of my own Statimc Nation, I have with intention, involved revered Secwepemc Elder Uncle Mike Arnouse, who the Creator had cross my journey’s path in 2016. It has remained imperative for me to join together in ongoing consultation and guidance with Elder Uncle Mike who agreed to walk beside me on this knowledge gathering journey. These narratives will contribute to Indigenous knowledges and will reflect the diversity and intersectionality of Indigenous peoples.

### **Data Collection Method**

Healing stories were gathered by telephone, a laptop recording app, as well as through notetaking. In advance, a preliminary telephone introduction meeting took place and a date and time arranged for the storytelling session. This initial phone meeting was utilized to self-locate

following traditional Indigenous protocols. It also provided an opportunity to discuss Covid-19 pandemic social distancing protocols/regulations set out by the University of Victoria, the intent of the research, ongoing consent processes, the recording and transcription procedures, confidentiality, and my research framework. It was at this time that I answered questions and responded to concerns. However, participants were welcome to be in touch after the phone meeting through telephone or email should any further questions or concerns arise.

Three stories were shared over 1.5-to-2.5-hour periods using a cellular phone recording device, a laptop recording app, a note pad and pencil. A separate candle was lit for each participant's story telling time to represent the sacred knowledges of Indigenous peoples which reflected my personal research framework. These candles were mailed each participant thereafter. A prayer was offered by each participant before commencing each storytelling session. I used a storytelling/yarning method, a Western Australia, Nyoongahi peoples Indigenous term used when referring to talking to another person and now used as a viable Indigenous research method and experience-centered narrative research (Patterson, 2008), during the interview. These methods align with Indigenous traditional communication styles and ensure Indigenous ethics, protocols, and values are present throughout. While the methods I used provided open space for storytelling to occur organically and without probing, questions I had readily available were as follows:

- Where did you grow up?
- From what Nation or Indigenous community do you identify with?
- From where have you garnered your strength?
- What led you to your spiritual understanding?

- How did you meet Jesus?

Due to the possible retelling of traumatic live experiences, a time of reflection and settling of the spirit at the close of our time together was important. During this time, I could assess with the participant whether they felt they needed ongoing support and offered myself as a support at any time after our phone call ended.

Over four weeks, all three recordings were transcribed by me. First, I transcribed verbatim each recording. I printed each story and secured them away in an envelope to send to each participant through postal delivery, but only after each had decided whether they would like to keep a printout of their stories. I then reviewed each transcription omitting my words, filler words we use in conversation (i.e., "um", "like", "you know?" etc.), and chronologically organized each story. For those who did not want to be identified, I omitted identifying information without losing the integrity and truthfulness of their story. I also omitted Nation identifying information. For example, instead of naming a specific type of ceremony, I wrote "traditional ceremony". I also added insignificant words so the stories could read grammatically and allow the reader to have a clear understanding of context.

It was important to ensure the stories were/are authored by the participants using their words and their knowledges, therefore, I did not add any knowledge or story content, but only acted as a listener, learner, carrier, and editor of their stories. Each participant was sent their story electronically and given a generous amount of time to read, add, change, or omit the edited version of their story. Once this process took place, the stories were added to my thesis without any further revisions. Thus, the stories provide authentic Indigenous knowledges rooted within each participant's experience of healing from intergenerational trauma through Jesus.

## **Data Analysis and Meaning Making**

As I prepared myself spiritually and mentally for this journey, I held tight to the teachings of my past, but understood that new learning was critical for the growth I so desired. It wasn't enough to just practice reflexivity through the knowledge gathering process, but the Holy Spirit told me it was time for me to enter into transformative learning – if I was not going to be altered by this experience, then I would have failed in this endeavour. I am tremendously honoured to have stood witness and be allowed to gently carry their stories forward in safe keeping until the day I take my last breath. For to stand witness within Indigenous culture is a great responsibility. Many are never asked within their entire lifetime.

My learning around being called to witness arose from a time I lived among the Sto:lo peoples many years ago. It was then that I was gifted the teaching of how being called to witness was the cornerstone for the enduring Indigenous oral histories of their people. I was honoured to have been asked to stand witness at a naming ceremony and was told that those chosen to witness had to be of principled character and prepared to be summoned at any time throughout their lives to testify of the events that day. For the purpose of this paper, I will not attempt to unpack the various elements of witnessing, the historical significance of this practice, and the necessity of this ritual for the survival of Indigenous knowledges. Through a lens of decolonizing how Indigenous peoples take up research, my engaging in the process of bearing witness is intentional and aligns harmoniously with story telling just as our ancestors designed it to. I am privileged to live in an era where my people are walking the trodden paths of those who came before us as we carry their torch forward ensuring their toiling was not in vain. And in safeguarding and resuming this work, I recognize that the revitalization of our people's ways of knowing and being must begin with taking every opportunity to honourably practice our ways,

so that “decolonizing” becomes simply Indigenous people living the way we were created to be. Thus, “being called to witness is re-learning how we once led our own dances and successfully locked them into strong good hearts and strong good minds” (Koptie, 2009, p.115). And with this same reverence, I accept responsibility to remain accountable to the significant role bestowed upon me by the tellers of the stories within these pages.

After lighting a candle, praying together with the participants, and having them open their hearts to me, it was time for me to sit with the stories before the next step. While I thought that the storytelling session was the height of the knowledge gathering journey, I was completely unprepared for what was to come – transcribing. As I played back the recording of each story and physically typed each word second by second, I entered into what I can only describe as a “deep saturation experience”. I became extremely emotional beyond that of what I had experienced during the actual storytelling phase. My senses were opened and heightened, and I became poignantly connected to the highs and lows of the participants hearts and spirits. It was like I was pulled into their reality and my own faded. They welcomed me to their fireside, and I sat at their feet listening and leaning into their grief, their pain, their total surrendering of self to our shared Saviour Jesus Christ. I wept as I listened, typed, rewound, paused, listened, and typed again. At times I had to stop and walk away. I called my husband and asked him to sit with me as I allowed the tears to flow. Their heartache was felt so deeply in my chest that it physically hurt. I told my husband that I did not know that I would experience such intense sorrow for and with these women. I thought I was strong enough to not be overcome with such emotion, but my heart broke for them as I felt so connected to their life experiences – so similar to mine, but yet their own. I cried out to my Father God, the Creator in prayer and asked Him, “Why, Father?” Then, comfort came to me when the healing they discovered through finding Jesus was shared

and the tears I heard them cry over the recording turned from pain to joy. The shame, guilt, loneliness, darkness, and fear they had lived with for so long was replaced by light, love, peace, joy, faith, strength, resilience, and freedom. I wanted to blanket them with warmth and hold their little girl selves for I once yearned for such comfort in my most fearful moments as a child. Then, God spoke to me and reminded me that He so loved my Indigenous sisters that He allowed His only Son to die on a cross to bear their burdens, hurt, and suffering of a fallen world. It was then that I could rest in Him and thank Him for being the Father to each of us we so needed.

### **Ethical Considerations/Risks to Participants**

There were two prospective risks to the research participants. The first potential risk was the possibility that the story tellers may become triggered with unsettling emotional, mental, physical, or spiritual reactions due to having to revisit painful parts of their life story. The second potential risk was that if participants decided to disclose to family members or those within their Indigenous community that they were sharing their story of healing through Jesus, this may not be well-received and could cause tension to these relationships if those whom they disclose to do not agree with their chosen healing path. Indigenous intergenerational trauma and residential school survivors are a vulnerable population given the historic and current impact of colonization. Due to ongoing oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, their vulnerability remains high. To mitigate these risks, it was important to leave ample time for the story telling sessions. Hence, I offered 2 hours of open-ended time together to ensure that if a participant was triggered, we had sufficient time together to talk through their emotions, relax their spirit, and pray together. I also made clear that the objective of the knowledge gathering was to offer their story of healing and wellness as an Indigenous person and did not require participants to share negative aspects of their lives or parts which may cause discomfort. Story

tellers were welcome to focus on the healing part of their stories, rather than the harm. As an extra precaution, I made myself available to the participants after the session ended if they needed to talk through anything or have me connect them to a counsellor or helper in their community who would respect their chosen path of healing.

To address the potential of their stories causing friction to family relationships or within their communities, extra measures to keep participant identity confidential was maintained throughout the process. These precautions included the option for the participant to use an alias name when referring to you them in the writing portion of my thesis. I also provided only vague identifying details of each story when necessary. Some places, locations, Nation of origin, family names, or other identifying factors were either omitted or changed without losing the truths and integrity of their stories. Two of the three participants chose these options.

Providing autonomy, self-determination, and ownership for the participants was paramount at every stage of this process. Therefore, everything shared belongs solely to the storyteller. After the audio was transcribed and edited in preparation to add to the thesis, each participant got to read their story and make any revisions they saw fit before they approved it to use in my thesis. The opportunity to withdraw from the knowledge gathering project, to provide approval for only selected parts of the transcript to be presented or provide approval for the entire transcript to be presented within my thesis was imperative to thoroughly commit to the ongoing consent of participants. As an Indigenous gathering of knowledge process, I utilized decolonizing methods and practices aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Part of this was diminishing power imbalance by ensuring probing or deficit-based questions were not used.

UVIC and provincial social distancing protocols impacted my initial plan for traditional face to face yarning. Thus, all storytelling took place through the use of cell phone and laptop recording device in a confidential space in my home. Compensation, offerings, and gifts did not impact the participants decision to participate as compensation was not stated in the recruitment letter, nor until after the participant had agreed to participate and sign consent (See Appendix B). Gifts offered were not viewed as “compensation”, but as part of Indigenous ways of traditional gift giving - a way of memorializing their sharing, and as a symbol of gratitude for their time and knowledges shared. At the time of participant consent, I had not been awarded any research stipend, thus the gift value offered was miniscule. It was not until after consent was signed and stories were told that I received a research stipend and unbeknownst to the participants was able to offer them more than initially stated in the consent agreement. All gifts purchased were made by BC Indigenous peoples.

### **Limitations and Significance**

Because stories are viewed as perspective driven, their use to compile research data can be limiting (Greenhalgh, Russell, & Swinglehurst, 2005). Further to this, “a story is an interaction—an artistic and rhetorical performance for an audience who (actively or passively) shapes the telling” (Greenhalgh et al., 2005, p. 444). Although I did not use all elements of the narrative interview model, Greenhalgh et al. (2005) argue that depending on the day and who is doing the interview, one can never replicate the same story from the storyteller. I would argue that as a part of Indigenous ways of knowing, that the problematization by Greenhalgh et al. (2005) of “different story, different day” is a significant element of Indigenous oral tradition which my people, with purpose, have employed in the teaching and passing on of sacred

Indigenous knowledges and teachings from time immemorial. However, I can see how this might unsettle privileged research modalities for data collection.

The method of retrieving truth through narrative can be challenging as the interviewer's findings must not be held above that of the storyteller (Greenhalgh et al., 2005). Thus, the soundness of the research process is reliant on the interviewer's demonstrated "reflexive awareness" (Greenhalgh et al., 2005, p.445). As such, the necessity to "systematically and repeatedly interrogate the 'truth' of narratives" gathered during research lends to the reasons it is impractical and unethical to use told stories in research (Greenhalgh et al., 2005, p. 445). Again, I would point out that for my people, our truths are imbedded in our stories and need not the microscope of "interrogation" to validate their legitimacy. Our truths are weighed between the spiritual space of ourselves and our Creator. Our truths are witnessed, hidden in our hearts, and provided sacred space within our spirit and are not given voice unless the Creator guides us to do so - what could be more rigorous, ethical, and evaluative than this?

## **Chapter 5: Intergenerational Trauma and Stories of Healing Through Jesus**

The following stories are the healing narratives of three Indigenous women from three distinct Indigenous Nations. These courageous women have never met one another and range in age from early forties to late sixties. For two of the participants, I have changed names, locations, and omitted any pieces of their stories which might reveal their identity in accord with their decision to remain anonymous. For the purpose of this thesis and length limitations, I have omitted small details without losing the Indigenous knowledges being offered to the eternal flame of Indigenous knowledges, context, sacredness, and integrity of their voices.

Before these healing stories are presented to you, it is important to share the unexpected impact these Indigenous women's narratives have had on my spirit. Each story was told over approximately 2 hours, and while this time together at their fireside was profound in and of itself, it was not until revisiting their fireside word by word, second by second as I transcribed, hearing the highs and lows of their voice fluctuations, sitting with them in their moments of silence and reflection, hearing the earnest yearning coming from a place deep within their hearts, closing my eyes and seeing their tears of pain turn to cheers of elation at finding the healing they never thought they would, where I gradually realized I was becoming spiritually connected to these women.

These resilient Indigenous women invited me to their fireside and allowed me to walk back through space and time alongside them through valleys deep and forests riddled with tormenting specters seeking to hush their voices. They met me at the forest edge as little girls with an outstretched hand and allowed me to hold their fragility in my grasp. They showed me their hiding places in the thick of the brush, the thorns and prickles which scratched and cut at

their innocence. They showed me the places on their path where rocks were cold and jagged. On these stretches of path, it seemed that they might never encounter a warm fireside of protection and someone to wrap them with a blanket of security. They showed me where they had fallen, were injured, and held sticks and stones they were told could never hurt them but cut deeply through their hearts leaving wounds bandages could not mend.

As we walked, they allowed me into the darkness of their adolescence and adulthood where streams of sunlight began to shine through the branches. There were times during transcribing when I had to push pause and allow my eyes to release the pain I couldn't bear to hold. There were times I pushed pause and asked God, "Why?" I then came to a halting realization that they never had the power or choice to just "push pause" but had to live out minute by minute, breath by breath pain induced by the hands of their abusers. In contrast, there were also instances where I felt incredibly honoured to be sitting at their fireside, humbled that they would choose me as their listener and carrier of their story.

As I walked alongside them on their path, the landscape transformed as the cold shadowy forest thawed into towering green cedars and pines surrounding a sun-drenched meadow. I hadn't realized that in the darkness they had grown from little girls to beaming strong women in moccasin clad feet each holding the hand of a little girl – the hands I was just holding. These little girls were themselves. As I saw these reunited fronts looking back at me, I humbly turned my face toward God and thanked Him for restoring them to themselves – no more shame, no more sorrow, and no more pain. I knew this was their little girl selves for I had spent my entire life looking for mine. I searched for her through my healing journey so I could tell her to come out of her hiding spot, lift her up in my arms, wipe her tears, tell her she was safe, and that it was going to be okay. Then, as these thoughts came to mind, I felt a gentle tug. I looked down and

there she stood - *my* little girl self tugging at my hand as she smiled up at me. I looked into my own brown eyes and took her little hand in mine and walked out into the warmth of the Son. And as He shone His light on us, our little girl selves ran to Him and played. Knowing they were safe, as strong Indigenous women, we could take up one another's hands and walk forward together into the futures our Father had planned for us, a united sisterhood in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

My sisters, I am forever grateful for the journeys you have taken me on, for finding a spot for me at your fireside, and for entrusting me to become a vessel with which to share your stories of hurt and healing through Jesus Christ. You each are eternally etched in my heart and have made my fire warmer and brighter with your presence.

### **Lydia's Story of Healing from Intergenerational Trauma through Jesus**

Before I begin, I want to say that when I tell my childhood story, it is never with the intention to dishonour my parents. I would never want to dishonour them in any way. It wasn't until after I had become an adult, when I learned about what they had gone through. One of the things that I studied to obtain my degree was Indigenous Leadership. It was then that I became more appreciative of what my parents, grandparents, and great grandparents went through to help us be at the place that we are as First Nations people today. So, while a lot of my childhood story is harsh, it is not as harsh as others.

I grew up on reserve with my mom and stepdad. My stepdad came into my life when I was little. I have a half sister from my biological dad but didn't know her until later in life. I also have one full brother and three half brothers. All three of my parents (mom, stepdad, and

biological dad) were addicts in some way – addicted to marijuana and alcohol. For my dad, it was hard drugs for a while.

My biological dad wasn't really a part of my life. I would visit him, maybe, once a year. He was my emotionally distant and physically absent father. He made a lot of broken promises. I remember at the age of 10 he made this big promise of coming to visit as he often made big promises like this. I always believed him, but once again, he didn't show up. So, I was crying on my bed and my brother came in and said, "Why are you crying?!" I said, "Dad didn't come and he said he would!" My brother said, "Why do you even believe him anyways?!" For me, that was a very distinct memory because it was then that I blocked my heart off and stopped believing what my dad said to me. So, I had a lot of pain around not feeling accepted by my biological dad. Even my identity as being from his Nation, I didn't want to claim to be from that Nation because I didn't want my dad to have any say in who I was. So, that was part of my childhood pain. Although, as I grew into young adulthood, I realized all I ever wanted to be was "Daddy's little girl," and I wasn't.

When my mom and stepdad were drinking it was rough. But, when they were sober, it was pretty good. So, I like to weigh out both sides of it. When they were drinking there was parties at the house, and they were physically violent towards one another. I was the caretaker to my younger siblings. I remember at the ages of 9, 10, 11, and 12, I was essentially the adult in our home. I have memories of when my parents would physically fight, yell, and get drunk. I also have a lot of blocked memories. I have memories of screaming at them, standing in the middle of them fighting, and kicking them out of the house. Another memory I have is of them fighting and knocking over the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve. I was the one that woke up and tried to redecorate the Christmas tree. I also remember trying to be the protector and intervener.

To this day, my mom has physical and emotional injuries from my dad. They have been separated now for 15 years, but she stayed in the relationship for a long time. So, my story is connected to her story as I helped her through her healing journey.

I felt out of place at school during my childhood. Later in life, I did some bi-cultural studies and was able to outline the stages of bi-culturalism within my life. So, my childhood was the stage when I felt that out of place, awkward, and stupid feeling when I went to school. I remember my joy as the school bus pulled up to my house. I would get off the bus feeling a sense of, "I'm home now and in the place that I belong."

The things that made me feel like I belong are the good things I learned from my family like living off the land and being really connected to the land. So, we did a lot of gardening, preserving food, fishing, hunting, picking berries, getting firewood, and raising animals. Because my parents taught me to live off the land, I learned to work hard, persevere, and endure. I also love the songs I was taught. One of my favourite things about being from my Indigenous Nation of origin is when we all stand and sing with our hand drums together. The drumbeat is so strong. We are told that it is our heartbeat. So, I feel like our hearts line up with the drum beat when we're singing. I like that connection with one another.

My mom was angry when I was younger. She worked through some of it, but she used harsh discipline towards me when her temper flared up. I remember one moment when I spilled rice on the floor while I was serving myself and got hit by a hanger across the arm. I remember it leaving three welts across my arm. That's one of the harsh memories. I also remember cleaning up blood off the hallway walls when my parents had a physical altercation. Then, when we went to the medical clinic, I was told that I had to say that my stepdad fell on glass. So, we had to hide the pain from the outside world. But a lot of that is just mistrust of the system. Those are my

heavier memories. It took me a long time to heal from the blood cleaning memory even though I didn't actually see the altercation. The smell of stale alcohol used to make me nauseous. Just the smell of it would trigger me.

I've learned what my parents have gone through though. My stepdad went to residential school for many years, as well as federal day school. Through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, I also learned that his sister committed suicide because she didn't want to go back to residential school. My mom went to federal day school for a while and was part of the 60's scoop which went all the way into the 90's. She lived in a foster home and some of the time with family. One thing my mom talks about is that her older sister went to residential school and actually became a certified teacher which was amazing! My mom has memories of things that she calls 'residential school.' Even though she didn't go to residential school, her sister did things to her physically, emotionally, and mentally. These same things my mom did to me. My mom admits this. When she recalls the harshness of her discipline and her anger, she will say, "That's residential school."

In the public-school system, my mom was sexually abused, became pregnant, and had an abortion. I walked through all of that with my mom as far as she has made it. The story came out thirty plus years later. She has these memories of the nuns teaching her at federal day school that abortion and divorce are unforgivable sins. These teachings were still in her mind until 2 years ago when she became a Christian. My mom went to a Christian treatment centre. Anytime those stories get triggered, I remind her that they are not the truth and are not from the Bible. Its interesting to hear how she carried lifelong guilt because of those teachings and still does. I think it impacted her decision to stay in a volatile relationship.

When I talk about a lot of the pain I have been through, it impacted me physiologically and will continue to for the rest of my life. I now have anxiety and started meds a few years ago. I thought I was making progress, but when I went to see my counsellor, they told me I wasn't making any progress. They said my anxiety was not good and I needed to see a doctor. I was really hesitant about going on medication for anxiety, but when I was doing my masters, I was seeing a Christian doctor and a Christian counsellor. They helped me realize that my anxiety started in childhood, so my anxiety was going to be lifelong.

As a teenager, my mom moved me out of my home community because the teacher that sexually abused her was still teaching when I reached high school. She said, "I'm moving you out. I want you to go to school in the city." She said she wanted me to have a better education. Even as a child she expected me to go to university, and I was not a smart kid (laughs)! At least, that's how I felt. All my report cards read, "Need Improvement." I joke that I always got the Citizenship Award because they couldn't give me any other award (laughs)! Now I realize that its part of who my mom taught me to be. She taught me to be a caring person and to help others. In our home, even when we didn't have enough, we were always taking in other kids. That's a value that my mom taught me. She also taught me to feed and care for people even if you're struggling. She taught, if you have a little bit, you still have enough to give. Like I said, in elementary school I felt stupid. But I knew my mom wanted and expected me to go to university, so when I left in grade 8 to go to the city, she said it was for a better education. What I learned later was it was to keep me away from that teacher who sexually abused her. I ended up coming back, not lasting a whole year in the city. She then had to tell me to never be alone with that teacher and to never let him touch me. I think I instinctively knew that there was something wrong, but I didn't know the seriousness of it.

In my grade twelve year I had a plan that I would live one more year back home on my reserve, but that my goal was then to leave and never go back. So, on my first day of high school, I walked into class and there was a blonde girl sitting at the front of the class. In my community Natives and non-Natives didn't have friendships. There was a lot of racism. I did have one or two non-Native friends as an elementary school kid, but tension grew because of the Oka crisis. The thought came right into mind before I even saw her face that she was going to be *my* friend. For me to socially seek out a friend was hard because I was super shy. But I sought her out as a friend the entire day. I just kept talking and talking to her. She ended up being my best friend that year. I connect that situation to God inspiring me because she turned out to be one of the most faithful Christians I ever met. She just loved God. I mean, she had to have Jesus in her because the grace she showed was beyond our human ability. So, we studied and played basketball together. I don't remember ever inviting non-Native people to my house, but she came to my house. There were times when she showed up unannounced and I would meet her outside and say, "You're not coming into my house," because I was embarrassed of what it looked like after a weekend of partying. She would say, "I love *you* and I don't care what the house looks like." I was like, "Wow." Any time I had really hard things happen, my friend told me about Jesus. I remember her always praying for me and the peace I felt when she prayed for me. That's the only word I can use to describe it - peace.

One weekend I wanted to see my friend. My friend's family were missionaries on my reserve, and they didn't have a phone, but I knew she would be at church on Sunday. My auntie was going to church, so I asked to go with her. My auntie is always late and so we were late for church. I had gone to Catholic church with my mom and grandma as a kid, so my plan was to walk in the door and stand at the very back close to the door in case I needed to escape. So, the

pastor started preaching and I began to have tunnel vision. I felt like the pastor was only speaking to me! I felt like he must have known the anger and bitterness in my heart. I physically remember looking around thinking, “Do these other people know what’s in my heart? Because this guy knows what’s in my heart!” I was wondering what was happening. As soon as church was done, I darted out the door and hid behind the building trying to figure out what was going on.

During that year, I was facing my own internal anger and bitterness. I was becoming afraid of who I was going to be as an adult because I was going to be graduating and going out into the world. Peers I was supposed to go to university with, I knew the lifestyle they were living. I didn’t want to live that way or be who I was at that time. A week later, I went to a youth group meeting with the missionaries on my reserve. My friend was going and so I went. The missionary lady told her story and I realized that her story was even harsher than mine. I mean, I never went hungry or without a roof over my head. I couldn’t believe what she lived through. I was 18 at the time and had known her most of my life. But, when I would see her over the years, I thought she was being fake because she was so sweet, would call everyone “sweetheart,” and treated everyone like they were special. I really thought that she faked it. So, when I heard her life story, I realized she couldn’t fake it because I had tried to fake it and I couldn’t fake it! I had seen a lot of people be fake. I mean, in public they would be one way and then in reality I would see their anger in different situations. Then the thought quickly came to my mind, “What she has is what you need.” That night was one month before I graduated high school and I said the salvation prayer. We spent an hour talking about it beforehand. She then prayed with me and talked me through a lot of what I was feeling and thinking. When we were all done, I think I

cried for a good hour and a half. She said to go tell her husband that I had just put my trust in Jesus.

Later, they drove me home. Before I even reached the house, I knew my parents were drinking after a four-month sober stint. On the rollercoaster of sobriety, they had succumbed to the addiction. I knew before we reached the house because there were rules about keeping the curtains closed super tight. I knew that they were drinking because if they weren't drinking, the curtains would have been closed shut, but they were open. When I opened the door, there was an empty beer can and the smell hit me. My stepdad was a really hard-working man. He built our home, worked all day, and never stopped. So, there he was on the kitchen table passed out drunk and sleeping which had happened before. I was instantly hurt and angry all at once, so I just walked by him and went and sat on my bed. Then, I heard God say to me in an audible voice in my head, "You are mine now, honour your parents." When I heard this voice, I remember my eyes going huge and I said out loud, "Okay!" But I was also wondering, "What does this mean?" I got up and helped my stepdad get to bed. I took his shoes off and I covered him. So, God began to speak to me very quickly. I think that He rocked my world so much that I couldn't walk away from Him, ever! It was all of a sudden. He just became so real.

A year later, I started to help out with a ministry. I was getting training in a training group with a bunch of amazing Christian men who had inspired me. We were doing a training session and one of the guys stopped and said, "How many here need to be prayed for regarding fear in their lives? I don't know who it is, but we need to pray, and I feel that that's what God is telling me." So, after about forty-five seconds of quiet, I blurted, "It's me!" So, they started praying for me. I cried and cried. After we prayed, it was lunch time. I sat down at the lunch table and I was amazed! I think if I was to be diagnosed with something, I would have been diagnosed with

obsessive compulsive disorder because the majority of my visualizations were constantly fear based. Like, if I was cutting vegetables, I would have a clear visual of me cutting my finger and blood spraying everywhere. If I was holding a baby, I would imagine dropping the baby on their head and the baby's head cracking. If I was sitting in a car, I would imagine it crashing. So, I remember when we sat down to lunch, I started making a sandwich and realized that I didn't visualize blood or any tragic thing happening! I sat there looking at my sandwich thinking, "Woow, its all gone!" It was just amazing! So, God just healed me of those fear thoughts. That was the start of my Christian journey 25 years ago.

Forgiving my dad was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. I had a mentor who was doing some Bible study with me when I was a very new Christian. We were studying these verses on forgiveness and she challenged me to think about someone I needed to forgive. I said, "Well, I need to forgive my dad but I'm not going to because he doesn't deserve to be forgiven." I bluntly said to her, "I can say the words but I'm not going to mean it." I had so much resentment towards him for abandoning me. Then, she challenged me to pray through the Bible verses I was reading about forgiveness. So, I came up with a short prayer and took her challenge. My prayer was going to be, "I forgive my dad and God teach me to love him." I then went to university in the fall and any time anger towards my dad surfaced, I said those words. I said them for a year and half. So, I eventually did the forgiving part, but I hadn't learned the love part yet. But, because I really felt like God wanted me to love my dad, I would reach out to him and try to do stuff with him. At one point, my siblings and I sat down with him because we really felt like we needed to tell him how much we were hurt by the fact that he wasn't in our lives. It was not a satisfying conversation. We felt like my dad did not own up to not being a dad. He told us that he had made the decision to fight for the whole community through leadership instead of being a

parent. So, I can appreciate why he made that decision, but for us as his kids and adult kids sitting before him, we walked out of that meeting going, “Okay, he doesn’t really feel bad about not being in our lives.” And so, I knew then I had to just build a relationship with him even though part of me felt like he should be sorry for not being in our lives.

My dad died 3 years ago. Before he died, he had become paralyzed. I visited him at least once a week in the hospital, and everyday when he was in critical condition. But, I have a memory of a time when I went to visit him. The curtains were drawn around his bed, so I peaked around the curtain and said, “Hi, daddy!” He had the biggest smile on his face when he saw me. The nurse, who was feeding him, said, “*Somebody’s proud of somebody!*” And it hit me. “My daddy *is* proud of me!” In that moment, I feel like God answered my prayer. He showed me that my biological daddy loved me and was proud of me. That was so important to me. No, I didn’t get to sit on his lap as ‘daddy’s little girl’ but, he *did* love me. I think if I didn’t have that moment of realization his death would have been really difficult. Instead, I was able to know that I loved my dad and he loved me so that when he died, I was able to grieve him fully. I was able to grieve his death in sadness, not with a hole of uncertainty.

In terms of my education, I eventually went on to do my masters in Christian studies with a focus on intercultural and cross-cultural studies. I spent a lot of time wondering how our First Nations people stay strong with God because its so tough to do. Actually, when I was at seminary, I actually doubted God and His existence for about 3 weeks. I was deep in theological studies down to the miniscule details that didn’t mean much to me as a person. I was just really battling it. Then, I had a professor pray for me for a long time after I told him how I was feeling. I wasn’t even in one of his classes, but he prayed for me anyway. I finally got up and said, “Its going to get resolved!” - and it did. That doubt just went away!

Three years ago, my husband and I got to go to Israel as a gift from our family. I had actually had a dream that we were going to go before I knew we were going. At the end of our trip, I talked to a lady there who asked me, “What’s your meeting God moment? Everybody has one when they come to Israel.” My meeting God moment was when I got to go to the Qumran Caves. I stood there looking up at the caves thinking about what we had learned about the Essenes who had preserved God’s word. I thought about how this learning is such a big part of being able to say that this is proof that the Bible was consistent, has been preserved, and has not been altered over time. So, as I looked up into those caves, I realized how much the Essenes who lived in that area valued their job of recording the scriptures. Then God hit me like a tonne of bricks in my chest and I felt like kneeling. I didn’t kneel at first, but just stood there as tears started streaming down my face. Then, God spoke to me and said, “Who are you to doubt Me? Look what I have done to preserve my word.” In that instance, I was like, “Woe!!” I finally kneeled down, and tears were streaming down my face. Because we were part of a tour, this guy started calling, “Come on! We got to stick together!” I was in a daze as I said, “Okay, I’m coming!” (laughing) But I was thinking, “I’m experiencing something pretty big compared to what the tour guide is going to say over there, but okay, I’ll come!”

I had another moment like that where God’s power showed Himself to me. We knew my grandmother was going to die soon due to illness, but she had a lifelong dream that all of her grandkids would have an ancestral name. I never pursued it too much because it was part of my dad’s identity. But I didn’t want to be disappointed if it didn’t happen either. I think my whole family has battled our identity. I wasn’t one of my grandma’s favourites and we all kind of wrestled with where we fit. So, when this ceremony came up, we were all trying to figure out our place. In my community, a naming ceremony is a big deal and a lot of work. So, we knew

because my grandma's health was not good that we had to do it right away. All my family had to come together as there were lots of names to be given. I wondered how I was going to take part in our ceremonies as a Christian. I thought about all of the studying I had done in school on the word 'conscience' in the context of the Bible and the freedom we have in Christ. So, I chose to have my freedom in Christ be at the forefront of this journey of entering into a cultural ceremony that I didn't know about. I said to God, "God, I don't know what this is all about. I keep asking questions, but I'm not getting all the answers I want. All my family knows I'm Christian, we're having weekly family meetings, and I've been asking all these questions." Finally, I just said, "God, I want to honour my grandma because this is her dying wish. You're going to have to meet me. I'm gonna do it because I think it's right."

There were things I didn't know about the ceremony and so I would pray every time I went in to meet with everyone. But, on the day of the ceremony as soon as it began God hit me with the word, "Jesus." I thought, "How simple this is." So, I said the name of Jesus through a big portion of the ceremony. I was like, "That's it – Jesus!" There was also a time during the ceremony where I said to myself, "How amazing that God is going to heal me of my identity crisis during this ceremony with my family and in my place of being. This is my family and I belong. My grandma loves me, and she wants me to be apart of this. I have a place in my dad's family." Tears were streaming down my face. I always knew the name my grandma wanted to give me. Now, I have the name she wanted me to have for so long. That day, God met me there.

God met me through my culture another time also. I had a friend who was doing training to be a spiritual leader for her masters. She asked me to be one of the people she was to meet with weekly. One week, she did a visualization session with me. She began by instructing me to visualize a room. Right away, God gave me a visualization of one of our Indigenous traditional

dwellings. I've been in them as a kid, but they had not been a big part of my life. She then said, "Imagine walking downstairs into this room." I then visualized walking down the stairs in the centre of the traditional house and sitting cross legged on this dirt floor. As she led me through this visualization in stages. Then, I saw Jesus. At the time, I felt like there was still fear in my life that I hadn't dealt with. So, through this visualization, Jesus came down the stairs and stood in front of me. He proceeded to scoop the tar off of my heart. This tar symbolized fear. He then took that tar and burned it in the fire that was there. Then, He took cedar bows, dipped them in water, and brushed me off. Jesus brushed me off with water and cedar bows and burned my ugly tar. All of those elements are important things. Fire, water purification and cleansing, and cedar. It was at this place in my journey as a Christian where the two parts of who I am came together without a need to be separated – my First Nations identity and my Christian identity together as one.

When I went to university, people weren't very accepting of Christian First Nations. First, I was in an academic realm of First Nations people that were anti-Christian, and then I entered into a mostly white middle-class Christian world. I didn't know any other Native Christians, so I lived two lives. I never felt whole in either life and so I went between the two. I had Bible study, church, young adults' group, leadership, and all my classes with white Christians. And then, when I did my teaching program, I had all these classes that were studying culture, history, and anthropology. One day, I was talking to some friends in a young adult's Christian group and they were laughing hysterically about some childhood memory that I couldn't relate to. I would normally stand there feeling out of place and not say anything. Then I thought, "Hey! I'm going to just tell them what I'm thinking!" So, I blurted out who knows what about my childhood. They all stopped laughing and looked at me. I could tell they had no clue

how to react! It was one of those stages in life where I decided, “I’m just going to be me!” It was a hard decision to make as a young adult because I didn’t know anybody else that was like me - a First Nations Christian being educated in a very secular environment.

In regard to my family relationships now and with my Indigenous community, some are very anti-Christian. However, my family wouldn’t be anti-Christian in front of me because they know that being a Christian means so much to me. Also, one of the values in our culture is harmony. For example, one day there were people at a naming ceremony I didn’t really know and who didn’t know me. We were all sitting at a table chatting and they started joking about “church goers” and “Bible thumpers.” So, I sat there thinking, “I haven’t heard these in a while!” Then, my grandma walks in, hears the jokes, and says, “My granddaughter has a master’s degree in theology!” (laughs) It was so weird! I didn’t know if she had actually heard the jokes that were said, if she didn’t hear them because she is hard of hearing, or if she just decided to share this fact with a table full of people I didn’t know! So, the jokes stopped! Sometimes I think people hide what they truly think when they are around me, but I know they accept me as a Jesus follower. People accept me praying for them, so often times that’s what I’ll do is pray in the moment for them. Also, I’ll often be the one to pray before our family meals. My family knows I pray to Jesus and end my prayers with, “In Jesus Name.” Even so, I still get asked to pray by my immediate family, but not so much with my extended family. So, my immediate family is very accepting of my beliefs.

My mom is a believer, but she’s not a church goer. When that happened, it was a really cool moment. We were actually attending a course together and she said to me, “What does ‘intercessory prayer’ mean?” I said, “Its when people pray for other people.” Then I said, “Actually mom, you are an answer to intercessory prayer after years of praying.” She looked at

me and said, "I'm sorry I took so long." (laughs) It was one of those special moments, like, "Oh, its kind of all coming together here!" I have had so many moments where I doubted that my family could believe. My auntie who was a big part of me coming to the Lord fell away from the Lord after I became a Christian, but in the last year and a half she actually now has strong faith in the Lord. Its really cool.

My one brother is very much into our cultural ways like living off the land. We have to relearn aspects of how our people once lived off the land through trial and error. We're just trying to figure things out. So, when I was living with my brother these Jehovah's Witnesses were coming to the house day after day. My brother was getting tired of the Jehovah's Witnesses coming. I had tried to talk to them once or twice. One day, my sister-in law said to them when they were trying to talk to me, "You have to stop coming to talk to her. She's a Christian and she's never going to walk away from it." (laughs) Then, different Jehovah's Witnesses came years later when I had moved out and my brother said to them, "You need to be like the Christians. They actually come to our back yards and try to learn stuff about us!" Oh man, those two moments were a difference in like 20 years ago, 10 years ago, to today. But that's what I do. My job is trying to build bridges between the church and my people.

My husband is not First Nation, but we decided that we wanted to move home to my territory so my daughter could learn values from my culture - her culture. I wanted her to learn our language from my mom and be around our teachings. Like, I wanted her to learn that the drum is her heartbeat. I wanted her to know how to go gathering berries in the bush, how to cut meat and fish, but also for her to continue to know Jesus. At bedtime she'll say, "Mommy, sing!" I made up a song because she would take forever to get to sleep. So, at bedtime, I sing prayers over her even though I can't really sing. She calls it, "Jesus Bring Her Peace." I sing this to her

until she falls asleep. There's another song that's also her favourite called, "1-2-3 Jesus is Alive!" We listen to worship songs too. Yesterday we were driving and listening to worship songs and she says, "We have to trust in God mom!" She's only 3! That line was in the worship song that we were just listening to. Because I don't think she really knew as a 3-year-old what trust means, I explained it to her. I taught her that when we're angry or sad, having a bad day, hurt, and things aren't going the way we want, we can pray about it. I told her that we can talk to God and then trust that He is going to work it out. Although I sometimes explain things to her that are way beyond her comprehension, I know she gets it. She teaches me too. Like, when we sat down to eat the other day, I didn't say grace. So, all on her own, she prayed, "Thank you God for my food." Her most recent question was, "Where is God?" So, we talked about that. And at the same time, she's got her little hand drum as she twirls around the kitchen drumming and singing one of our Jesus songs I like singing to her. Jesus is now instinctively a part of who she is.

I had a lot of fear when we were preparing to move home. I feared what our daughter was going to be exposed to. The fact that there was probably not going to be any other Christian First Nations her age was one of my fears. When I moved home right after my teaching degree, I almost went into a depressed state. It was hard to be here and see all the pain over and over again and be in the midst of it. So, I was really fearing coming home and what she was going to be exposed to just by being amongst our people and close to their pain. I had one of the missionary couples come and pray for me. One said to me, "Do not fear the darkness overtaking you, but trust that the light of Jesus is going to break through the darkness." And the fear just went away about coming home!

Remember that nighttime prayer I told you I sing to our daughter? That is how I work through some of my angst about her future. Part of the prayer is asking that the truth of God would be so deep within her heart that she won't walk away from it, that she will seek Him and know His word, and that she would know His ways and choose to follow them. That's my nightly prayer.

### **Esther's Story of Healing from Intergenerational Trauma through Jesus**

I was born into a large Roman Catholic family of 13. We attended Catholic church on our reserve. During this time, I knew that God was holy and saw everything that we did, so I feared Him. I remember seeing Jesus up on the cross and no one told me why He was there. I used to wonder, "Is that God the Father who was killed? And if so, why did they put Him up on that cross?! Why did they kill Him like that?" So, I put Jesus and God as one together because that's who I thought was on the cross – God. At times I remember praying to Him to forgive me for my sins and to stop my mom and dad from fighting because there were times I thought my dad was going to kill my mom. I also remember going into the confession stall, kneeling, and asking the priest to forgive me for my sins. He would say I was forgiven, tell me to try not to do it again, and I went on my way. After, I thought I was okay and accepted that I was forgiven by God. Then, we moved away from the main reserve to an isolated area and stopped attending Catholic church. After this, we never thought of God except for the few times we attended a funeral service.

I was told that because we were Roman Catholic, my parents were not to use birth control. So, with a family this size, it was difficult for my parents. They had to ask my grandmother to take one or two of us kids to ease the load. For me, this brought a lot of heartbreak wondering why some of my siblings had to go. One time, my oldest brother and one

of my younger sisters, who I was and am very close with, was left at my grandmother's. I remember crying when my sister was left behind as she chased after our car crying. Soon after, she became very sick and was brought to see the doctor. The doctor told my parents that she got sick because she was so lonely and heartbroken being removed from her home and family. She was brought back home after this. I was so happy. The loss of family members by being given to my grandmother was something that left me very confused and lonely. I found out later in life that I was almost given up to a white family. My mom, of course, denied this. Even if it was true, hearing her say this gave me relief.

I experienced a lot of tragedy growing up. One of my little sisters, who was only 2 years old, died of pneumonia. She lived with my grandmother when she passed away. One of our family's most tragic losses was that of my youngest brother who died at the age of ten. He was accidentally shot by my second youngest brother when they were home alone playing with hunting rifles. I remember my mom screaming and asking God, "Why did you do this to me?!" Then she would say, "God is punishing me!" Our family changed after this. My parents never got over it, and it affected all of us. I never blamed my little brother for this. He was only twelve when it happened. From that day on, I could see deep hurt in his eyes that he didn't know how to deal with. There was no therapy for him or any of us.

Our lives were filled with turmoil and fear when mom and dad drank. We always knew what it was going to be like before the night was over. We'd take all the smaller kids, put them in one bedroom, close the door, turn the light out, and lay there listening to the partying. I remember lying in bed with my siblings and praying that my parents would stop fighting and pass out. After a while they would pass out. Dad never beat mom when there were people there, but when it was just the two of them drunk, he'd beat her. There were times when we would take

our smaller siblings, hide in the forest, and sleep there until morning. We always made sure the little ones were warm by taking lots of blankets. Then, one of us would go to the house early in the morning and check to see what was going on. If everything was quiet, we would all go home.

When mom and dad sobered up, it was like nothing ever happened. We didn't know how to deal with it, so we just took it as part of life. One time my sister and I were brave enough to go after my dad with a wood poker when he was beating our mom. We hit him with it and yelled, "Dad stop! You're going to kill her!" He spun around and when he saw us standing there, he stopped. These things went on every weekend – this was our life.

As a way to "escape," I read books. I thought it was so great when they opened up a library close to home. I would always sign out books and then read and read. I couldn't believe I could take the books home! I'd even read mom and dad's magazines because I was interested in reading all the time. I remember my dad sitting in his corner as I watched him reading books. I thought, "Wow dad, you only went to grade four and you're so engrossed in what you're reading." One time I brought it up to him and he said, "That's how I learn about the world and what's going on out there." Later in life, he told me that he taught himself how to spell. I told him how amazed and happy I was that he did that for himself. I told him that maybe he was why I felt encouraged to read. When I would read in class, no one could get my attention!

I attended Indian Day School for many years. This was a very negative experience for me. I am currently going through the process of applying for compensation for the abuse I experienced there. Through this process, I am seeing how the system trivializes the pain and suffering that I went through by saying if I was not sexually assaulted that I should not receive as much in financial compensation. However, I do not believe that the severity of abuse, whether it be physical, emotional, or mental, should be measured by dollars.

The abuse I suffered took place daily. When abuse is experienced continuously it affects your ability to develop good mental health. My mind was raped and then corrupted by the people running the non-Native day school. They were supposed to prepare me for a future and lead me into my adult life with tools to live a normal life.

When I started school as a little girl, I was so happy to finally be able to go with my siblings and friends. Starting school was a huge step for me. In my first couple school years, I had a teacher who taught me many things, met new friends, learned how to read, saw pictures in books I never saw before, and learned how to write my name. I couldn't wait to go back every day.

When I got up into grades 3, 4 and 5, the abuse started. Watching as my school mates were being abused and having it done to me, gave me a new perspective on what these teachers were doing to us. It shook me to my core that this was happening in school. I recall times that one teacher grabbed me by my hair, yanked my head down, spit on me, and told me I was stupid. The rage I saw in her face and heard in her voice I had ever experienced. She also slapped me over my head. One time she hit me so hard that she broke the plastic headband off my head that I wore to school that day. Sudden, jarring fear would come over me as I tried to understand what I did that was so bad that she had to hurt me this way. I felt full of shame and disbelief as these things were happening to me. I wasn't allowed to raise my head to look at my school mates, so I would sit there with my head down trying to understand what I did wrong. I can recall crying, my body trembling, not knowing what to do, and feeling so alone. I was too afraid to ask to go to the bathroom to clean myself up, so I sat there afraid to move in case she hit me again. I thought, "She's supposed to be a teacher, but she's a monster!"

Everything had changed since the days I looked forward to attending school. Every night when I went to bed, I didn't want to go to sleep because I knew when I awoke it was time to go to school and be in the presence of that teacher who would abuse me over and over again. After getting my headband broken, I told my parents about how it happened. I could see it hurt them to know what these teachers were doing to us, but nothing was ever done. Later in life, I learned and understood why they felt helpless. Parents were told that their children would be taken away and sent to residential school or foster care if they said anything.

Because jobs were scarce where we lived on our isolated reserve, it was hard to find employment. At that time, my parents collected welfare, got a small allowance for all of us kids, and my father worked whenever he could. When my parents couldn't do anything about the abuse at school, I knew then that I was alone. I had to harden my heart and mind to protect myself. As a young child, I couldn't process everything that was happening to me. I had nowhere to turn, so I withdrew into myself.

The worst of the abuse came from the principal of the Indian Day School. She stood over us like a huge monster, glaring down at us with piercing eyes of hatred. There was abuse from other teachers also. They taught us to be obedient to them and to never talk back. I can remember being poked in the side with a pencil, having wooden rulers slammed over my fingers, and being strapped with a thick rubber strap. I went home with swollen hands and showed my parents evidence of what was taking place at school. I never heard of racism in my home, but these experiences made me look at the world differently and how I viewed white people. These teachers showed me the reality of how white people looked at us. Caucasian people became "the people who didn't like me." They were the people who didn't see me as a human being, but as a "savage" living in deplorable conditions needing to be civilized - stripped of our language and

culture. We learned this by the rules they had for us. We were not allowed to speak our language or talk about our culture during school hours. If we did, we were punished. We were taught the white way and no other way was accepted.

As each day started, I remember feeling afraid knowing that sooner or later the abuse would start. The teachers would begin to walk up and down the aisle looking over our shoulders at our work. If they found something wrong, their hand would slam down on top of my book. They would then yell at me saying that I was wrong. Then he or she would aggressively erase the work I had done and tell me to do it over. My hands would be shaking as I desperately tried to fix it, but I'd only make a mistake again because my mind would go blank with fear. My mind would just shut down. Eventually, I would immediately cringe when the teacher came near me or stopped at my desk. I would be so scared that my body would start to tremble as I waited for her to pull back her hand to slap me, pull my hair, or spit on me and tell me I was stupid. There were times I was held back in class to work and had to watch the other children go out to play or go home. I felt so terribly alone, not knowing what she was going to do to me.

The principal used to have us line up and march around the class like soldiers. I never understood what she was trying to accomplish with this routine. One day she asked us what a sign posted by the railway track said. The sign had information about how and when the railway was built through our community. None of us knew what it said. She began to scream at us because we didn't know. She then walked up to one of the children in the front row and asked them what the sign said. When they couldn't tell her, she spit on them, slapped them, and pulled their hair while we all watched. After that, she ordered us to go to that poster and memorize it over the weekend because she would be asking us to tell her on Monday. Some of us did go read it and memorize it, but for those who didn't, they were punished.

One time when the principal had just finished abusing me, I was sitting there crying. She then walked over to a boy in a higher grade than me and started to hit him. He must have had enough because he jumped up, looked right at her, and yelled, "If you hit me one more time, I'm going to hit you back!" She was startled! I thought for sure she was going to brutally beat him, but she actually backed away.

To this day I wonder why that teacher saw me as worthless and felt she needed to beat me. She *did* beat something into me - she beat fear into me. She also gave me an out-look that all white people looked at us the same - as worthless and stupid. There was a school inspector that travelled to our community that oversaw the Indian Day School, but the principal would turn syrupy nice when they came around. I couldn't believe she was the same person.

The happiness I felt as a little girl to begin school was gone from me forever. The horrors I suffered at Indian Day School filled me with hurt and pain. I bottled this up inside and didn't know where to escape. I felt hated and destroyed inside. Little did I know I would face this hatred for the rest of my life. Every school I went to after this, racism was there. I shrunk back and always sat at the rear of the class hoping I wouldn't be seen. I felt inadequate, afraid of being laughed at, and scared to give the wrong answer because I knew I was being looked at as stupid and worthless.

By the time I left that school I was totally broken. The physical, verbal, and mental abuse I suffered destroyed my chance of accomplishing anything I dreamed of becoming. It took away my ability to be successful over the next 40 to 50 years of my life. I no longer trusted anyone. I felt I was not good or smart enough to gain any level of competence. I was told I did not matter, would always be a failure, and didn't deserve kindness. I think I was branded as being ignorant and stupid because teachers thought I didn't understand the work in front of me. However, I was

afraid to learn in a school setting, therefore, I was seen as *unteachable*. I withdrew and did not participate in anything or offer my thoughts. I avoided getting involved because I was afraid of being yelled at. There were times in high school that I would play sick and be allowed to go to the medical room to lie down. I played sick so I didn't have to participate in class. As much as I tried to believe I could do more, I was haunted by feelings telling me I was stupid and fear would set in again. I've heard it said, "If you hear something long enough, you start to believe it." That was what happened to me. I could not get past what I was made to believe about myself.

My heart grew dark and I lived with this darkness for many years. Because of my feelings of incompetence, I never got to accomplish the things I now know I could have. As I grew into adult life and found employment, when it came time to count money, I literally froze. My mind would go blank. All of a sudden, I could not count. I was reprimanded for this many times. When I was asked to do an errand, I would panic and try to find a way out of the errand. Today, my mind often freezes, I lose concentration, and need time to be alone. There have been jobs that I let go of because I felt inadequate. I felt I was looked at as just another "savage" - a low life who would never accomplish anything in life.

Because what happened to me and my schoolmates was an attempt to destroy our language, culture, and human existence - an attempt to take the "savage" out of us and reform us to the "white man's way" - the damage is something I will always have to deal with. So, it's with mixed feelings of relief and sadness that I tell my story. Relief, because I can finally say out loud what happened to me as an Indigenous child. Sadness, because what they came to accomplish in that Indian Day School was accomplished in their eyes and minds. What I witnessed and experienced in those years robbed me of a time when most children are learning and growing. I was robbed of what I know I could have become in life. I suffered in silence throughout my life

unable to talk to anyone because I didn't think they would understand. I feared they'd tell me it wasn't a big deal and I needed to move on.

I witnessed terrible violence against my mother by my dad. We were all abused. My sisters and I had to fight off drunk men that mom and dad brought into the home when they were drinking. Although mom and dad drank a lot as we were growing up, they were very strict. We were taught to make our home clean inside and out. I also had to learn how to parent my younger siblings at a very young age, so us sisters and brothers grew very close. This closeness remained between my brothers and sisters us throughout our lives and to this day.

When we got into our teens we started drinking too. We began running away from home, getting together with friends, and not returning home until Sunday before our parents woke up. As we got into the high school grades, we were sent to a Residential School. I actually remember feeling a little relieved that at least we didn't have to see or hear mom and dad fighting. However, we were totally alienated from our parents and siblings. I stayed there for 2 years. Because I failed a grade, they put me in a dormitory in a town an hour from my reserve. So, I stayed in town during the week and returned home on the weekends.

It was then that my life spiraled further out of control as I met my boyfriend at the school I was attending. I ended up getting pregnant at 16. We had to end up living with my boyfriend's parents. We were so immature and had a very troubled relationship. I didn't have parents to turn to because they had their own problems. I was in so much turmoil. I thought to myself that I couldn't expect my boyfriend to stop living his life. We were just far too young and separated many times. So, his parents took over the up bringing of our baby. We tried to stay together and make a home. We had an opportunity to buy a home, had our daughter, and were so happy for a while. But our drinking and partying continued. Eventually, we grew apart and lost our home.

My husband and I separated many times and there was a lot of abuse. I was a victim living in hopelessness. I saw how my son was getting picked on by his dad and the abuse was getting to a level where I knew I had to change things. I had become a prisoner with no voice. After many nights of abuse and heart ache, I can't even explain how and why, but God came into my thoughts. I cried out to God in desperation and said, "God, if you are real then it is only through You that I can walk away from this toxic relationship. God, please give me the strength to leave. I am too weak. If you don't help me, I know I'll just come back to face the same abuse and turmoil." With God's strength, I packed up my children and left. As many times as he came begging me to come back, I stood my ground and said no. For the first time, I seen a strength in my own mother that I never seen before. When my husband was trying to get me to go back with him my mom stood up to him and said, "You've hurt my daughter enough. It's time for you to leave!" My husband listened to her and left.

When I look back at my life back then, I can literally believe God the Father gave me strength to leave and not look back. Finally, I was stable enough to live a life without my husband. I thanked God for what He did for me that day. But I was free for the first time in over 10 years and because I was so badly traumatized by everything I went through, didn't continue to pursue God as a daily part of my life, never got therapy or even heard about such things, I felt relaxed and didn't have to fear abuse for the first time in my life. So, I partied a lot and my life again spiraled out of control. This time, I ignored my children's lives and relied on my parents to care for most of their needs. We moved often and there were times they lived with their grandparents or their dad. Today, my heart pains for how neglectful I was to their feelings and for abandoning them. I didn't consider the loneliness and confusion this was causing. At one time, I was always there for their every need and they were my world. I was so thankful for their

late grandparents who took them in. I could never repay them for being there for them. I often think that I could have easily lost them to foster care.

One day I woke up, looked at my life, and didn't like what I saw. I was empty inside. The friends I thought I had were not there when I needed them. At this time, I noticed there were Christians living down the road who always seemed so happy and were friendly towards me. I felt drawn to them and decided to visit them. Finally, I said, "I want what you have." They asked me some questions about what I knew and believed from the Bible. I was not too familiar with Bible scripture, but I knew if God was like these people, then I wanted the same. I was tired of living the way I was and wanted to change. I already believed God was real and that He cared for me because I experienced Him lifting me out of the hell I was living in years ago. I knew about Jesus and saw Him on crosses. As a child, I couldn't understand why He was put up on that cross. I believed in God's Son, but didn't know that He died for me so I could have salvation and be with Him forever. After this was explained to me, I said, "Yes! I believe!" I admitted that I was a sinner, but that Jesus took my sin upon Himself when He willingly was nailed to a cross and died for me. They then asked if I wanted Jesus's gift of salvation. They asked me if I wanted to invite Him into my heart to be with me forever. I said yes. He said, "We're going to close our eyes and ask Jesus to be here in our presence." He then said that the Bible says that where 2 or 3 are gathered in Jesus's name, He will be there in your midst. I was holding their hands as the pastor and his wife walked me through the salvation prayer. As I was saying the prayer, I literally felt something go from the top of my head down to my shoulders and through my body. As I finished my prayer I literally felt something being placed on me. I was told that the Lord had placed a pure white robe on me. I cried and cried tears of happiness - not of fear, not of

distress, just pure happiness of finally coming to know who Jesus is. I literally felt all the sin in my life wash away as I prayed that prayer! I was so overjoyed with peace and inner cleanliness.

It was getting late and I had to get my son and daughter home to get them ready for school the next day, but I didn't want to stop talking about Jesus or be away from the pastor and his wife. We left and started walking home down the street. It was dark out and it was like the whole world and everything around me felt so good! I could see my children staring at me with a look that said, "What's wrong with mom?!" I looked up at the sky and said, "Look at that! Look at the stars! They're just so beautiful! Those are all God's stars!" They were looking up at the stars and then looking at me wondering, "What's going on?!" My daughter says that she does remember a huge change in me that night. She tells me now that she remembers a spiritual shift in our lives where everything was different - the feeling in our home, our talk, all of it.

That night I sat up until around 2 or 3 in the morning reading the new Bible the pastor and his wife gave me. I could not let go of the Bible. The pastor and his wife told me to read the book of John because it was all about Jesus. I read and read until I finally had to get to sleep because I had to get up early and get my children ready for school. I was laying there in bed falling asleep when I felt an evil, evil presence come into my bedroom. I was laying on my stomach and it came and stood up against my back. I didn't know what to do so I just started saying, "Oh God, please help me! Please help me Jesus, please help me!" Then, all of a sudden, I saw a bright light shining from the doorway of my bedroom. The source of light was a huge - I didn't see it directly because I was on my stomach. I somehow knew that this huge presence was good, but powerful - it was an angel. The angel came in and grabbed that dark, evil thing and threw it out! Then the light faded, but there was peace left in that room. I jumped up and went into the kitchen. I picked up the phone and phoned the pastor's house. His wife answered before

the first ring finished and said, “I knew it was going to be you.” She asked me what had happened, and I told her. She said, “Yes, Satan came to try to take you back, but Jesus said, ‘No! She’s mine now!’”

I was playing baseball at the time and I had practice that week, but there was also a Bible study at the pastor’s home that evening. I chose to go to practice instead, and I heard one of the player’s curse the name of Jesus. For the first time, it felt like someone grabbed a hold of my heart and was squeezing it. It hurt me so bad to hear His name cursed. I knew then that I could never play for that team anymore because I had changed. I walked off the field and never looked back. I just didn’t care about partying or drinking or doing drugs anymore and I just wanted to serve the Lord and be with my children and wanted to give them a better life after what they had been living through and that’s all that mattered to me, you know. And I know that things didn’t go as well as they should have gone, and I think that what happened at the church after were not meant to happen but they did because the enemy will always find a way to go into people’s lives and destroy what we have in Jesus. I’ve backslid in my life and gone back out into the world, but when I was out there, I would never curse the Lord’s name again, never ever. I couldn’t do it ever again and I didn’t like it when anyone else did it. I hated it when I heard people use the Lord’s name in vain, and I would think to myself, “You don’t even know what you are saying. That is Someone who has died for you!” And my family separated themselves from me because I couldn’t stop telling them what happened to me, I couldn’t stop talking about what Jesus had done for me. They didn’t want to talk with me about it and they shunned me, but I still loved them, you know. I continued to go to family celebrations once in a while like when my younger sister graduated, but I didn’t feel like I was a part of them anymore. They put a wall up there, but I still loved them and never shown them bitterness, or hatred, but there was an evident wall that

was there that I knew I couldn't cross over to that side to take part in the destructive lives they were living anymore.

Since that day, Jesus was all I wanted. He filled that empty hole in my heart that was full of hurt and shame. Jesus is my all and I know there is no other way. Jesus *is* the Way! Jesus has done for me what no other religion could ever do. There is no "religion" in following Jesus. For me, having salvation in Jesus means living in Him daily and having a personal relationship with Him. Being able to pray to Him every day, anytime I want to gives me peace and security. I *know* He is there, and He is real because I can feel His presence. I can talk to Jesus as a friend and He is there for anything that I ask. I know that Jesus is not stuck on that cross. Jesus defeated death and rose from the tomb He was buried in and revealed Himself to many before He ascended into heaven to sit at the right-hand side of His Father. He then sent His Holy Spirit as a constant comforter, protector, and guide until He returns one day. I look forward to the day I will be with Him for all eternity! There is no one in history who has done what Jesus has done for all mankind.

After that, whenever I went through a hard time, I prayed to God about it. Before that, I never knew to pray about anything. I didn't look at my problems as being that big anymore because I always had the Lord to turn to. At any time, I could pray to Him and ask Him to help me and give me strength to get through situations in my life. As well, mine and my kid's lives had changed so much and things became brighter in our home. I was so happy to have the Lord in my life. I was so happy that my children had made their own decision to accept Jesus into their hearts just days after I did because they said they wanted what I had.

When my family heard what I did they pulled away from me because they couldn't understand what had happened to me. I still loved them, but I also had another family in the

Christians I fellowshiped with. I continue to pray for my family today. I pray that they too would give their lives to Jesus. That is my hope. I have 2 sisters that have accepted Jesus as their Saviour.

I have a third sister who has been asking me a lot of questions about Jesus. I keep praying she will take the next step. The other day, she said she wanted to talk to me about some things she had been going through. She said, "I've been watching shows like Tribal Trails on TV and I really like the things that they're talking about." I was so surprised. She said that she had been thinking a lot about her life lately and often feels like she doesn't know what to do. I asked her what she meant. She looked up at me with tears in her eyes and said, "I really want to know what God thinks about things." I told her that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and knows the burden we carry. I said, "You don't have to tell nobody what those sins or burdens are because Jesus already knows." I told her that God says in the Bible that no one can go to Him without going through His Son, Jesus. As I was telling her these things, she began to cry and say how thankful she was that we had a chance to talk. I told her, "He just loves and cares for you. He longs to know you and is waiting for whenever you want to make that step." I told her to just call when she's ready to take that step so we could pray together. My sister called me a couple days later and told me that she had asked Jesus to forgive her for her sins. I told her how happy I was for her and that I had never felt so close to her than when we had talked the other day." She said, "I never felt so much peace than after I asked Jesus to forgive my sins!" So, I will continue to pray for her because God is working in her heart right now.

In terms of my Indigenous background, I am familiar with my culture. My dad tried his best to teach us our language, but we didn't take it serious enough. I regret this to this day. We never grew up with drumming or smudging. We honestly didn't hear much about it growing up.

When we asked our parents later in years about it, they said it wasn't there when they were growing up. These parts were never part of my upbringing. For me, Jesus cleansed me through His blood and continues to through daily prayer. His presence is made known in my home and penetrates any evil that might try to settle in there. Any evil or bad I feel or see, I just pray, and the Holy Spirit overpowers it and dwells in my home and life so no evil can take over. So, I don't need to smudge. I was taught by my parents the preparations for winter, fishing, berry picking, and preserving from the land God gave us. I was taught the cultural values of sharing and taking care of one another. To me, these are the most important Indigenous teachings. My teachings come from reading the Bible daily. The Bible was written for Indigenous people too.

Becoming a follower of Jesus also helped my mental health and how I viewed white people. I was now able to relax around people. Before, there was never a time that I would ever be in the presence of white people, sit with them in a restaurant, or go to their home. This was never done throughout my life. I felt totally different when I walked into a room where there were white people after I became a Christian. I no longer felt that I was any different than they were. Before, I was having to constantly prove myself, especially in my jobs. My mom and dad taught us how to work hard and so that's what I constantly did. I wanted to show people, "I know you look down on me because I'm an Indian, but I'm still going to strive to be what my mom and dad taught me to be." But after I became a Christian, I didn't look at myself as being Native, I just looked at myself as being a child of God.

After I found Jesus my life was totally transformed inside and out and God began to do unimaginable things. Ten years after we had divorced, I found out my ex- husband had also come to the Lord! At first, we became friends because he started coming to visit our son and daughter. He had changed so much and had become someone I never thought possible. We

began to re-ignite our relationship, and during this time my son (who was not his) became attached to him and built a trusting friendship together. Before I realized what was happening, he started taking my son out along with our two children. I had always said that whoever was going to be my next husband had to love my son like I did. So, while this was all happening, I suddenly realized that *he* was the one that loved and accepted my son as his own. I watched eagerly and started to realize what God was doing. I was so overwhelmed with what God was doing and knew without doubt that God wanted to renew our marriage.

One day, my husband told me that God told him he was going to bring us together again, but that he wanted to wait for a while to be sure. He said he finally realized that was exactly what he heard and told me what God the Father had told him. At first, I was unable to accept this news. I fought it and cried out to God about it because I never would have thought it would ever go beyond just being friends as he was the father of my two older children. My husband was very patient with me and never pushed a relationship on me. We continued to see one another, and it came to a place where I was able to accept God's plan. We remarried and have now been together for 30 years! Today, we are very happy and live a very comfortable life together. We both know and have told one another we wouldn't want to be anywhere else or be with anyone else. Now, we have a solid home and marriage where we are able to be there for our children whenever they need us. We also have many grandchildren who make us absolutely happy and who we enjoy spoiling!

When I think back over my life up until a few years ago when my dad passed away, I realized then how far Jesus has brought us. When my dad was on his death bed, he asked my husband to pray for him. My dad had always said he was Catholic and had already had the priest come pray religious Catholic prayers over him. So, him asking my husband to pray for him who

he knew was a born-again Christian, was surprising. In front of my whole family, my dad said, “There is something different about you. I want you to pray for me.” My husband was really surprised because my dad had never said a nice word or fully accepted him as his son-in-law over the years. I know he saw how my husband had changed after becoming a Christian. I think he also saw how much he cared, looked after me, and accepted my son as his own. So, the things a dad would be concerned about their daughter’s spouse, he saw things were good and that made my dad happy in the end.

God puts us in places for His purpose to help people even when we can’t see it in the moment. God leads me to where He wants me to be. It’s up to me to listen for His voice. So, that’s what I do daily – listen for His voice and remain obedient to His will.

### **Vivian’s Story of Healing from Intergenerational Trauma through Jesus**

As I look at the course of my life, I now see how Jesus has changed my heart and my life and is using my good and bad life experiences for His glory. Being born and raised in a community where my family and I were not accepted, because my mother was from a northern Shuswap band, was very damaging to my self image and self esteem. It did not help that my parents were practicing alcoholics who raised their children in continued violence, and where chaos and neglect was a constant. The community was fully aware of the negligence and would prey on us children whenever we were left alone at home. The home invasions and sexual assaults left me with traumatic memories and deep-set fear that has haunted me throughout my life. I can remember as a young girl, I had a yearning deep within my soul to live a different and better life than what I was experiencing at the time. But like the rest, I followed my parent’s footsteps and became an alcoholic and drug addict. I was 15 years old when I met Christian missionaries and started attending Christian gatherings and meetings where I eventually accepted

Jesus as my personal Savior. Slowly, God has healed me, pulled me out of the ashes of my dark past, and placed His light inside me for all to see. I am proud of the changes that have taken place throughout the years and how God has blessed me mightily for the hard work I put into changing my mind. As you read forward, you will see how my life experiences were filled with heartache and pain, and how God's love strengthened my spirit, and healed my troubled mind, heart, soul, and spirit so I can help others who are lost and give them hope as Jesus has given me!

My parents, Alfred Bonneau and Dorothea Pierro, were both athletes. They met in 1952 at a ball game where it was my mom playing shortstop on the Kamloops Residential School ladies ball team. My father was my mom's cheer leader from that day on. That same year, my mother graduated high school and moved to Vernon, B.C. to cohabitate with my father. They soon became pregnant which brought my mother's love of sports to a stand still while my father's sports increased. His alcohol consumption also got out of hand at this time. Alfred would work all day then go to the bar and drink throughout the night. He would then return home intoxicated and beat either his wife or kids, or both. This violent lifestyle went on for 12 years until my youngest sibling was born in 1965. Mom then started drinking and had her own battle with the disease of alcoholism which continued throughout her life as like my father.

All the while, my mother was chasing my father and drinking with him in these establishments. The perpetrators within the community took advantage of my siblings and I for we were left alone a great deal of the time. The home invasions and sexual assault that happened with my father, my older brother, other older male relatives and from men in the community did the most damage to my psyche. For years I suffered Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from all the harm done to me as a little girl. I was a troubled, lost little girl searching for love and to be loved.

I was introduced to alcohol at the young age of 11 by my older first cousin and a cousin from the other side of his family. Together they use to come find me and take me with them to drink together. I would get drunk and disorderly, pass out, and they would sexually assault me. This was occurring at the time I was removed from my parent's home because of a violent incident that happened with my mother. I was removed by the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) and placed in foster care just after my thirteenth 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. I thought sex was love at the age of 13, for that is all I knew. I did not know what love was, for my parents were too busy with their own addictions to be any kind of parents. I was in foster care for almost one and a half years when I almost died of an untreated sexually transmitted disease given to me by one of the men who preyed on me. I did not know what was happening to me when I became sick and slipped into a coma for three weeks. When I awoke, the doctor had to explain I had contracted a sexual disease that almost killed me. I did not even know what a sexual disease was! Though I fully recovered physically, mentally and emotionally, I didn't! I felt so ashamed of myself and so unloved by my parents that I did not want to live any longer.

All my life Alfred and I never had a close father/daughter relationship. After I was released from the hospital, he was not happy that my mother asked me to move home. My father's stern words to me were, "If you think you are living here in my house for free, you've got another thing coming. You are to pay rent and buy your own clothes. And don't expect me to help you, because I'm not." From that day on, my father kept his word until his death. Whenever I would ask for help of any sort, he would not, yet freely helped my other six siblings. I tried to please my father with accomplishments to get his approval, but nothing worked. I excelled in sports, I went back to school and graduated high school, and did things to get his attention and

love. Alfred didn't love me like he loved his other children and made it so obvious. I continued to suffer.

Though I went to a Catholic elementary school and they talked about God, I did not comprehend the concept of God for "God" was never mentioned in our home. I found Jesus through a childhood friend when I was 15 years old. Christian missionaries arrived at the time of her father's untimely death. I was so amazed at how He shone through this couple. I loved to watch how this Christian husband doted over his wife and always told her he loved her. My heart yearned for that kind of love and attention, so I accepted Jesus into my heart. Though I had a strong desire to live a better life, there were strongholds that controlled my mind and being. It took lots of prayer and reading scripture to change those dark thoughts, powerful cravings, strong urges for alcohol, drugs, and a sex-clouded my mind. I prayed and cried out to God for years to help me overcome these strongholds and to help build my faith in Him, for I desperately wanted to live a different life.

I wanted to learn more about God! So, for years I attended regular Bible study, attended church, and studied the Good Book (Holy Bible), but still struggled with addiction thoughts and behavioural patterns that followed me from childhood. I kept falling back into my "old" lifestyle patterns that lead back to drinking and drugging until I attended a spiritual ceremony which saved my life as my alcoholism was getting out of hand. A miracle happened to me that night. As I, along with the others, were worshipping and praising God, I started crying so hard that I expelled whatever was in my stomach. As I was expelling, I felt something leave my being. I felt different inside from then on.

My life slowly changed after that night. God became the center of my attention. I recognized that I needed to change my addictive personality and thought pattern to live a

different lifestyle. I attended residential treatment centers and individual counseling sessions to further fight those strongholds that controlled my mind. I went back to school to earn a degree and a diploma and many certificates in social work as I faithfully prayed and studied my Bible. Eventually those lustful desires and defeating thoughts were taken captive and I believe that I have been set free. I came to believe that when Jesus said He would never leave me nor forsake me if I followed Him, He meant it! God gave me His love, His power and Holy Spirit to lean on as I faced the wreckage of my past and set me free from that sin.

I am grateful to God, the many counselors and other significant people who supported me as my traumatic childhood was healed. I had to face many realities and let go of untruths about myself and others. I had to work at forgiving my parents and myself for falling prey to perpetrators and allowing them to do what they did to me sexually. I had to forgive myself for all the wrongs I had done to others. The hardest reality I had to face was the fact that my father was incapable of loving and accepting me as his own - this was the most painful experience I had to face. I then had to forgive him before he died. When Alfred died, it felt like the battle was over and the ugly experiences with my father were over! Jesus met all my needs as He promised He would if I followed Him. And He did. He kept His Word. I never lacked anything as I healed the wreckage of my past!

Today, I am so thankful for the life experiences I have had in my 63 years here on earth. God has been in my life for 48 years and has saved me from the pits of hell many times. I have seen so many miracles and answers to prayer throughout my lifetime. I know God is real and I have no problem talking about Him and praying with people. I am not afraid to pray in public or ashamed to say Jesus is my refuge and my strength. I start and end my day with talking to God. I am nothing without my Lord. He is in control of my life.

I have done my best to change the course of my life, as I vowed when I was a little girl. I did not like the partying and abusing that was going on in our family home. I see how strong my desire was to live a different life than what I raised in, so I tirelessly sought God's word and His presence in my life when I found out there was a God. I am so thankful for all the hard work I put in reading His word and seeking His face. My favorite Bible verse is 2 Timothy 1:7, "God did not give me the spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind." Now, I walk in faith with a changed mind, love in my heart, and peace in my soul. Thanks be to God!

## **Chapter 6: Findings**

### **Indigenous Knowledges Located within the Yarning and Stories**

The tellers of these stories allowed themselves to be vulnerable and revealed some of the most harrowing pieces of their lives. Some of their traumatic experiences were far too agonizing for them to approve be published in this paper even with the option of anonymity. I respected their autonomy and was inspired by their courage to let me sit with them at their fireside while they revisited paths walked before.

Because I was stepping forth in humility, I was able to open myself up to the sacred knowledges emerging from the stories of my people. I thought my role was to only be a vessel in the carrying forward of my people's healing stories. While this may have been my initial objective, the knowledges woven throughout each story were profound and spoke directly to what I needed to learn. I knew that if I was experiencing such immense alteration within my mind and spirit from these stories, that others were going to take away exactly what they needed from each no matter where they were in their lives. The teachings of my ancestors were unfolding and for the first time in my life I wasn't just reading about it in a book – I was living and breathing it.

As each story was told, Indigenous knowledges flickered as their fire became brighter and more colourful and I eased in closer to its warmth. Using my personal research framework, Indigenous teachings and knowledges appeared. Upon reviewing the transcriptions that I had printed on paper and stored safely away, I used a highlighter and highlighted every teaching spoken by each participant. I revisited each of the three transcriptions and only marked teachings, knowledges, and wellness offerings. These were then extracted and assembled

together. Without changing their words, I compiled each of their teachings and offerings and sent them to each participant for approval. One of the approvals came in the form of an early morning call before the sun had even shown itself. I answered my phone and immediately heard crying. I was relieved to find out they were tears of happiness. The participant said, “You heard me. You *really* heard me.” I too began to cry and we spent time together on the phone as she relayed her approval of her teachings. I reiterated that these were *her* words, teachings, and offerings, not mine. It was one of the most beautiful moments of this entire journey.

The following are the threads of knowledges and teachings located within each of the three sacred stories shared. Each are written in the words of the participants and have been approved by them as offerings to the sacred knowledges of Indigenous peoples.

### **Vivian’s Wisdom, Knowledges, and Teachings**

*The damaging impact of our pasts do not have to control our futures.* We must always do our best to pick ourselves up off the ground, dust ourselves off, and continue to push forward. Through my walk with Jesus, the importance of renewing my mind from the wounds and pain that my memory and intergenerational trauma carried was imperative to my healing. Therefore, we must learn how to retrain our minds because the mind holds a lot of memories we stay connected to. Those memories can stop us from growing and learning. Until we confront the hurt and bitterness inside of us, they will continue to show themselves through how we interact with the world around us, with ourselves, and most importantly, obstruct us from a relationship with God. Because negative thoughts and feelings materialize through our physical senses, we have to expel them through prayer, talking, and doing things with our hands like beading. When we do these things, the bad is removed from having control over us and no longer hinders our growing process.

*I encourage myself to pray for everything and worry about nothing.* I start every day with God and read the Good Book (Holy Bible). We must be extremely cautious in what we allow our minds to dwell on and entertain. To do this, a morning focus routine is imperative where I intentionally meditate on what I am thinking about, how I can be a better person, and use that time to counter any impeding negative thoughts with good ones.

*I understand the need for our people to be heard and listened to in order to grow our self-worth.* For example, when a child gives you something and is talking to you, you must listen to them because they need to be heard. God has given us freedom of personal choice, thus our journey's in life are personal journeys. I walk with God, the Creator and know I am a work in progress.

*We ought to rely on our spiritual side more than our human side.* The Creator wove us together in our mother's womb. He has known us from the very beginning, knows all of our thoughts, and knows what we need before we even ask for His help. Sometimes this means separating yourself from those who do not bring light into your life. As part of healing my heart, I had to remove some people from my life. I still love them, but know they are not good for my healing path. It helps to remind myself everyday that God has the entire world in His hands. In knowing this I can give Him my cares and concerns and go about my day in happiness while aiming to do good.

*Forgiving loved ones who caused me hurt was necessary for my healing journey.* I had to say, "Okay God, we're doing this. I have to forgive! Please help me God!" I had to let God deal with those who brought me down and decide when I was bothered by something whether it was mine to carry or somebody else's? I put faith in the Bible scripture that talks about how having

faith the size of a mustard seed enables us to move mountains. I know this to be true because I have seen many miracles happen through Jesus in my lifetime.

*It is important for us to maintain balance between our spirit, mind, and body.* Innately, our people are a “praying people”. Because we are given freedom of choice by God, we must choose to walk in balance so we can help others to become balanced. This means that sometimes we have to walk back into the pain of our childhood memories to address the pain that is connected to those remembrances – that’s how we heal. Whenever my heart hurt, I sought help because I didn’t want to carry the pain anymore. Then, we have to look at the pain, feel the pain, and talk about the pain until its gone. That’s how we clear ourselves of darkness.

*Our story’s inspire change in our people’s lives and empower them to step out of their darkness and begin their own personal healing journeys.* For those who are on their healing journey, we can make a difference in the world just by our walk. However, we need God’s help. Our human willingness can only get us so far. We carry intergenerational trauma from childhood and throughout our lives through our DNA. But we also carry resilience in our DNA and must work at strengthening that resilience and not allowing the pain to steer our lives. Going on big doses of God helped me to do that!

*It is so important to continually renew our minds through Jesus.* They say if we could only see into the spirit world, we would see how alive and active it is. So we must remember that the dark spirits know how to act in our lives to manipulate and speak negative thoughts into our minds. I did collage-making to help me renew my mind. You have to figure out what works for you. I had to also decide to get my house in order and ask God to tell me how to do that. Humanly speaking, I can fall backwards if I am not careful. But spiritually speaking, I’m strong

and maintain this through prayer and asking God to continue to walk with me, guide my path, and work through me.

*To develop balance, always remember the triangle – God at the top, ‘mind’ at one bottom corner, and body across in the other corner.* The general population are situated on the bottom line from body to mind. However, the disconnect is from body and mind to God – that’s our problem. So, the second our mind and body say, “God, help me, I can’t do it without You,” the triangle becomes full and all three are in working order. Sometimes we’re more human than spiritual, or our minds are stronger than our bodies, so it’s a process and requires work to keep the triangle balanced because there are always outside influences. The Creator must be at the head of all aspects of our lives – personally and professionally. Once I tell God I am here to do His work, He can bring me into the fullness of all He created me to be and fulfill His purpose for my life. I could not live one day without Jesus. When people don’t have God, they don’t have hope. God, the Creator has given us all gifts and talents to help others and puts people in our paths for a purpose. We are all a work in progress and must pick up our cross and walk with it everyday even when it is hard. We are all on this earth for a reason until God takes us home. As long as we are breathing, He has a purpose for us. Pray for and love one another because to love and to be loved and heard is to be connected and understood. Keep walking the good path. Through Jesus, I now know what true love is. The darkness of my past can no longer have control over my life.

### **Esther’s Wisdom, Knowledges, and Teachings**

*Indigenous peoples are highly valued by God.* God showed me that I am no less valued than the white man like I used to think. He has shown me that He created me for a purpose and that I am important to Him. He showed me that He loves me unconditionally. Through Him, I

found my true identity and place of belonging – I am a child of the Creator of the universe. I am grateful that my mom and dad taught me our cultural ways of preparing for winter by using summer to fish, pick berries, and preserve. I regret not learning more of our language as my dad tried to teach us as we were growing up. However, the cultural values of sharing and taking care of one another has stuck with me and I practice those to this day as these teachings are reflected in the word of God, written as a guide for every tribe and every nation.

*Jesus seeks us out and finds ways to connect with us because of His love for us.* God entered into my thoughts when I didn't even know Him. One day after living so long in a life full of hopelessness, I felt compelled to cry out to Him for help. I challenged that if He was real, then I needed Him to help me and give me the strength I needed because I knew I was too weak to leave an abusive marriage on my own. I had become a prisoner with no voice and was so greatly traumatized by abuse, violence, and the pain of my childhood. A strength I could not explain had me pack and leave a life filled with hopelessness. It wasn't until later that I learned how real God really was. This didn't take place until I learned about the reason I saw Jesus on that cross in front of the Catholic church as a child. I had learned about God and Jesus, but never knew I could have a personal relationship with Him.

*Jesus restores our broken families.* I know now that God is real because he lifted me out of the hell I was living in through His Son Jesus Christ. I didn't know any other way of living but what I saw on my reserve growing up, so I thought that how I was living was how it was supposed to be. But, when I asked Jesus into my heart, I felt all the sin in my life wash away and my life changed – there was more to life than what I was living in! I was so overcome with peace that I cried and cried. The dark hole in my heart where shame and hurt dwelled became filled with His love. My life was never the same from that day forward. He became my all and for me

there is no other way. If anyone told me that God would restore me and my husband's marriage after 10 years of divorce and both of us having children with other people, I would never have believed them! But, this is the power of what God can do. Today, my husband and I are best friends, and it hurts us to even think of who we were during our first marriage. Now because of what Jesus did in both of our lives while we were apart during those years, we are watching our children be parents and get to enjoy being grandparents - together. Jesus changed my husband from a hard, violent man to a gentle, caring husband and dad to our children and grandchildren. We are almost 70 now and I couldn't imagine walking one day on this earth without him by my side. We both know that it is only through Jesus Christ that this could have happened.

*Jesus walks with us.* Jesus is the way. He has done for me what religion could never do. Salvation through Jesus isn't religion. It is living in Him and having Him in my life every day. It is nurturing a personal relationship with Him. I pray to Him every day at any time and He hears me. I hear His voice and feel His presence through the Holy Spirit. I talk to Him like a friend and know He is no longer stuck on that cross. One day I will see His face. I look forward to that day.

### **Lydia's Wisdom, Knowledges, and Teachings**

*Home should be a place of belonging.* Although there were bad things that took place in my home growing up, there were also good things that took place. Most important were the teachings I learned from my family including living off the land and staying connected to the land. I learned how to garden, preserve food, fish, hunt, pick berries, get firewood, and look after animals. Values I learned were how to work hard and thrive. My mom taught me to be a caring person and help others even when we had little to offer. We often looked after children from our community and fed those who were hungry. Generosity is important.

*Listen for God's voice.* Jesus always found a way to speak into my life when I was searching for more than what I had grown up in. God found a way to intervene in my life through a Christian girl at my school. I could tell that she had grace beyond our human ability and that it was only through Jesus that she was so loving. She would pray for me and I would feel a peace that I never felt before. She didn't care about my home situation or that I was First Nation. God continued to connect with me through many experiences in my life and I couldn't deny the peace I felt when prayers were said over me in Jesus' name. When I said the salvation prayer to Jesus, that very night, God began to guide my walk. He told me to honour my parents even though I didn't think they deserved it. He became so real to me so quickly that I knew I could never walk away from Him. Any time I have had any doubts, He revealed Himself to me in such a way that I could not deny who He was.

*Forgiveness is necessary to our healing journey.* Forgiving a dad I was abandoned by was the hardest thing I ever had to commit to. It took a long time, but through prayer I was able to. But forgiving is one thing – loving is another. This also took time. But then before my dad passed away, I was able to build a relationship and forgive him. God showed me that my dad *did* love me. I don't think I would have seen it any other way if not for God guiding the process. Because of this, I was able to grieve his death fully and hold no feelings of uncertainty.

*Staying connected to who we are as Indigenous people is important to our wholeness and honouring how God created us each uniquely beautiful.* I really connect to and love the songs of my people. Standing together and drumming and singing is an incredible feeling – like our hearts are beating as one. This is when I feel most connected with my people. Because of the freedom I have in Jesus Christ, I entered into a journey of becoming even closer to my culture and traditional ways by keeping Jesus at the forefront of my journey. When I have questions, I

ask Him, and He reveals the answers to me. When I was given my ancestral name by my grandmother, all I could say over and over was “Jesus.” It was that simple – just Jesus. How amazing that God healed me of my identity crisis during my name giving ceremony. At last, Jesus brought me fully into my identity as an Indigenous woman with my family at my side and standing on my land of origin. God met me there amongst my people and continues to meet me in my culture too.

*We don't have to deny our Indigeneity to follow Jesus because He doesn't want us to!* It was later in my journey and through my education that, as a Christian, I was able to talk about biculturalism. I was able to see how two parts of who I am have come together without having to be separated – me as a First Nation and me as a Christian. I once had a visualization of Jesus wiping me down with a cedar bow and water. This is an example of that. It took a while, but one day I decided that I was just going to be me. This was a hard decision to make because I didn't know anybody else like me – a First Nations Christian. But now it has all come together.

*The cycle of intergenerational trauma and loss of culture stops with me through my decision to follow Jesus.* Moving home to our reserve was important to me so my daughter could learn values from our culture, as well as our language from my mom. I wanted her to be around the drum and learn how it is like her heartbeat. I wanted her to learn how to pick berries and cut meat and fish, but most importantly, have a relationship with Jesus. I was afraid to move her home at first because of what she might be exposed to, but God spoke to me and told me to trust in the light of Jesus to break through any darkness that might come in. Much of what I have done has been scary but out of obedience to God and always works out better than I could have thought. I know that as long as I pray over my daughter, God will hide so deep in her heart that

she will never walk away from it. She even sings songs to Jesus on her drum! Jesus is now just instinctively apart of who she is.

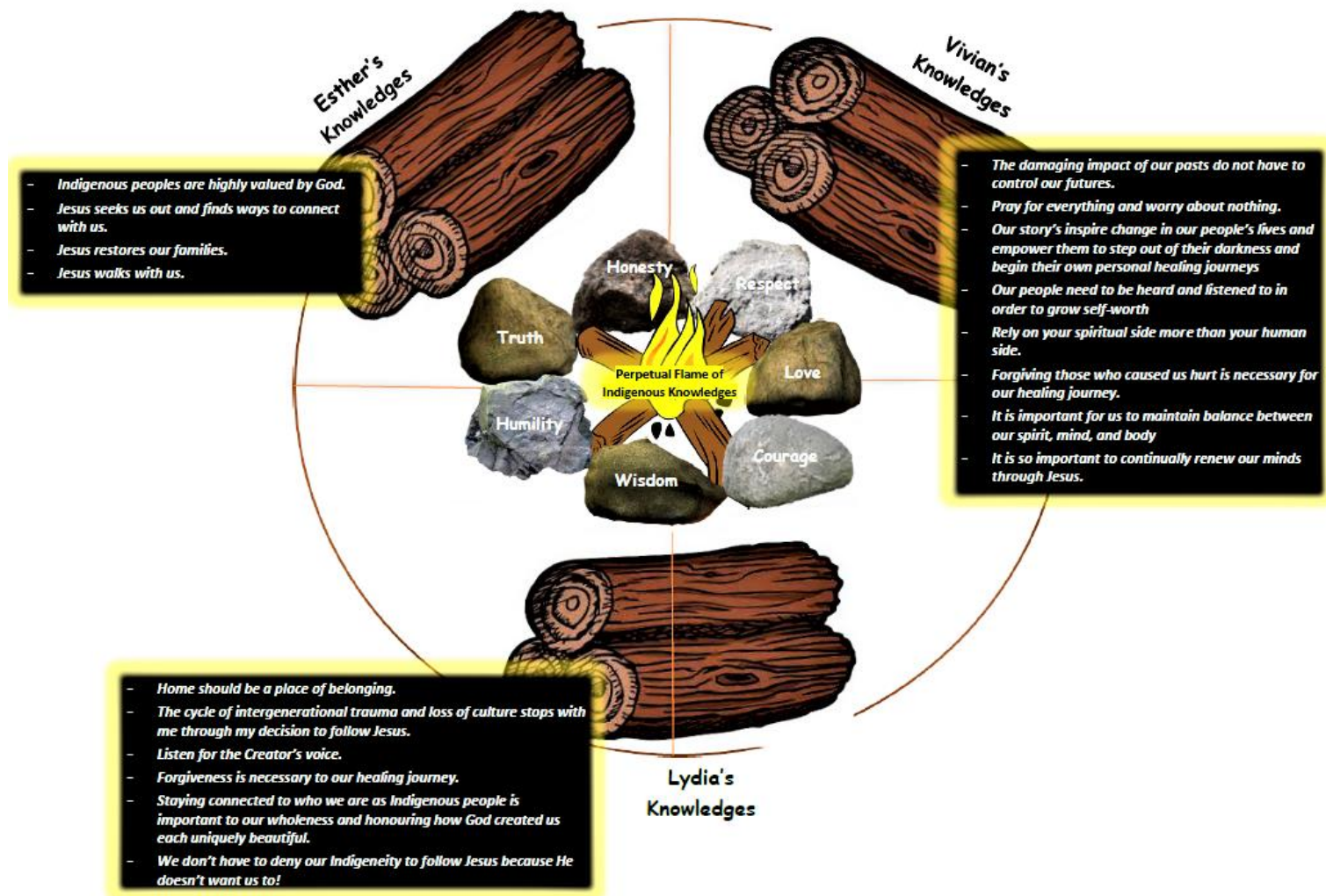


Image 3: Indigenous Knowledges Offerings

## Discussion

Historically and presently, prevailing discourse and mass-media depict deficit-based stories as the basis for Indigenous identity while omitting the wider societal conditions creating them (Butler, 2017). In essence, dominant narratives emerge from privileged voices and perspectives. The origins of these highly influential historical accounts continue to be

ascertained, nurtured, and disseminated within educational settings, the media, and society creating a skewed version of Indigenous peoples. Consequently, confabulation occurs circulated as truth. Thus, “the single story becomes the definitive story” (Butler, 2017, p. 23). As Indigenous peoples take their rightful place as the tellers of our history and lived experience, white privileged accounts of our histories and present-day subsistence will be replaced by our realities. Indigenous oral accounts of our people and meticulous traditional processes in which these have been preserved hold the truth about who we once were, the demise of our once thriving Nations, the current state of our peoples, and resurgence of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing and being.

The Indigenous stories presented within these pages not only represent three Indigenous voices but have served to painfully and courageously release the calls of their familial Nations and communities, the knowledge and wisdom of their ancestors, and laments and teachings of their kin, both past and present. Together with 630 First Nation communities, 64,235 Inuit, 418,380 Metis (Government of Canada, 2017), and 70 distinct Indigenous languages across Canada (McIvor, 2019), we are a greatly diverse peoples. However, since time immemorial, our stories tell of shared experiences defying space and time and unite us as an interconnected people (Drahm-Butler, Wingard, & Johnson, 2015). For “time immemorial” is vast in comparison to the last few centuries where colonization decimated Indigenous sovereignty and left the generations thereafter wounded and their futures bleak – the ramifications, we toil to recover and forge forward today (Drahm-Butler, Wingard, & Johnson, 2015).

Though Basso (1996) wrote *Wisdom Sits in Places* over twenty-five years ago, this remarkable piece reflects the pliability of Indigenous teachings across the lifespan and through time. Struck by the teachings of the Apache peoples this literary marvel exhibits, I was lead back

down the path to Basso's (1996) fireside and the knowledges and teachings woven throughout the stories of Vivian, Esther, and Lydia started coming together. The knowledge and guidance which Vivian shared regarding the importance of renewing the mind through her story and the yarning process demonstrates how we as Indigenous peoples and our ways of knowing and being are intrinsically connected. Basso (1996) depicts how the Western Apache peoples have been practicing this since the beginning of time:

This kind of self-reflexive activity, which is described in Apache as *bini' naayik' e'iziig* (working on one's mind), is understood to be a drawn-out affair that becomes less and less difficult as it becomes increasingly habitual. For it only stands to reason that the more one scrutinizes one's mind - and the more one acts to improve it by reflecting on narratives that exemplify the conditions necessary for wisdom the greater the likelihood that wisdom will develop. Disciplined mental effort, diligently sustained, will eventually give rise to a permanent state of mind. (p.138, para. 4)

Both the old and new testaments of the Holy Bible directly address the importance of renewing one's mind and provides ways in which to practice mind renewal (*Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*, 2001/2005, Psalm 4:23, Romans 8:6, 12:2, James 1:5-7, Mathew 6:25-27, Colossians 3:2&16, Ephesians 4:23, Philippians 4:8, Psalm 1:1-3, and Hebrews 12:1).

Through story, our people return home and find their place of belonging (Kovach, 2009). Through colonialism, our stories have been mocked and demeaned as mythical, exotic, fairy tales. I question whether for a time these claims were my people's saving grace, for if they only knew the power our stories held, they may have utterly extinguished our peoples' voices for all time. For our stories hold the knowledge and wisdom required for our people to recover what was stolen and for future generations to become strong and prosperous. Our stories hold answers

to saving our exhausted earth, contaminated water sources, and polluted air. God, the Creator of all things, gave us these knowledges from the beginning of time and are imbedded within the matrix of our stories. Like wisdom matures with age, so the stories of our people intensify in value and scope. What our colonizers did not understand is that silence continues to be a virtue practiced and taught to our young ones as strength of character. What they did not know is that in silence, we stood witness and hid the knowledges and teachings of our people in our hearts and spirits where they could not be touched, perverted, or destroyed. God ensured our peoples survival and provided us healing, power, and resurgence with greater strength and capacity than ever before through His Son Jesus Christ. Because His word can not come back void, His promises are indestructible. Through Jesus Christ, the Creator made Indigenous peoples one through Him so our identity can never again be weakened, altered, or fragmented.

Vivian, Esther, and Lydia's stories told of incomprehensible heartache, fear, and perseverance. From their earliest memories trauma unapologetically assaulted their innocence and took captive their hearts and minds. Through the love of God, the Creator, their hearts and minds were renewed through Jesus Christ. While this renewing took work including daily prayer, tenacity, and willingness to walk through narrow valleys, they relentlessly pressed onward towards all that God had in store for them. Their stories will humbly serve as new Indigenous knowledges anchored by the teachings of our peoples. They will each bring warmth to those who choose to sit beside their fire.

The teachings imparted through the healing stories of these three Indigenous women taught me about the nature of Jesus and how He seeks us out in our most challenging, painful times and invites us to find healing and rest in Him. These stories confirmed the resilience of our people and our ability to find strength even in the midst of struggle. I have learned that

forgiveness must occur for growth and is the first steppingstone towards inner healing and the reconciliation of broken families. I have learned that it is work to renew our minds and to learn how to lean into our spiritual side by putting God at the centre of our circles. These teachings have been transformative in that they have spoken words of guidance into my heart about how to navigate life in a constantly changing world which places little value on the traditional ways of my people. I have learned that I can be a force when walking beside my people through the strength that these stories have imparted to me. The feeling of loneliness and alienation I first encountered on this journey has lifted and I feel part of a family which has not asked me to give up my Indigeneity to gain acceptance. Knowing that we share a Father has connected me to sisters who will forever be a part of me. I pray for this for my Indigenous brothers and sisters everywhere who feel alone for choosing Jesus as their healer.

Today, I can visualize how Jesus can become an option for my people's wellness models as it has been revealed that there has been a historical Jesus/Indigenous relationship. My people's relationship with God through Jesus Christ reveals a holistic wellness model grounded in healing trauma, forgiveness, spirituality, and mind renewal while entering into a new relationship with our Indigeneity. No longer do we need to be ashamed or afraid to declare from where our healing and peace has come. Through Jesus, we can become balanced as He walks beside us on life's journey.

I am overjoyed to know that everyone who comes into contact with these stories will connect, find meaning, and be touched each in their own way. What is certain, is that these stories hold the knowledges of our people because they *come* from our people. We can no longer allow dominant discourse to dictate what constitutes Indigenous knowledges. If you are Indigenous, you *are* a holder of Indigenous knowledges. *Our people need them* – they are the

medicine for our wounds and the fires just off our paths guiding us to safety through the darkness. Our stories brighten our firesides and illuminate the darkened paths of our people seeking refuge from the darkness.

### **Contributions to Social Work**

Through my undergrad and MSWI course work, I had been made privy to the vast amount of deficit-based Indigenous research undertaken in the past. I had learned how my people had become one of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations in the world (Amnesty International, 2021). Through the University of Victoria, a new academic standard was revealed to me which situated Indigenous knowledges alongside privileged western knowledges. As an Indigenous woman, I now had the opportunity to bring forth the knowledges of my peoples as a part of the academic fibre of world expertise and understanding. This dichotomy in relation to western ways of research and education was the most transformative learning I had encountered up to this point in my academic journey. The arduous efforts of so many Indigenous academics before me, allowed my participation as a vessel in which to carry and highlight the invaluable knowledges of my people.

Reconditioning my thought processes, ideas, approaches, ways of being and knowing have and continue to challenge and test my being. As I have thought about and experienced the challenges this journey poses, I came to the realization one day that this process has been a “decolonizing of my mind”. Coming to this understanding created an instantaneous revelation and provided the next steppingstone in my life’s journey. Having come to the MSWI program at the University of Victoria at this point in time was by no accident or coincidence. God knew exactly what He was doing. I stood on my path and took time to stop and turn around. There on the path in the distance I saw a thin, but heavy shroud laying in a heap in the middle of the path.

I had begun to shed the skin of colonization that had bound me for so very long without even knowing it. As these layers of skin continue to peel away, I am learning to trust in my expanding personal ontology and axiology and the epistemologies which have been already established through them. With this epiphany, I researched the term “decolonizing the mind” to locate literature and any sources of work which had come before me. The earliest I could find came from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (James Ngugi) *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986). Recently, Mukoma Wa Ngugi (2018) reflects on his father's 80's publication and how the idea of “decolonizing the mind” translates into today's world. This led me to Obiajunwa Wali (1963) and his courageous unsettling of western literature as he resisted the translation of his people's literature to English with the understanding that this reduces and skews the meaning, depth, and cultural value imbedded within the language of his people. Wali (1963) argues that oral stories in and of themselves lose value as soon as they are spoken because rarely can words spoken, even in one's Indigenous language, illustrate that which one is thinking. Furthermore, once the story is written, it again is reduced to words void of the expression, context of the teller, and distances it from its origins. Moreover, translating Indigenous literature to English becomes “merely a minor appendage in the mainstream of European literature” (Wali, 1963, p.332). Thus, conveying Indigenous ideas in the disposition in which it is was conceived becomes diminished (Wali, 1963). It is imperative, in keeping with honouring the works that have come before me that I reach as far back as possible to examine how Indigenous oral traditions relied so heavily on our languages. Due to colonial assimilation practices and historical enforcement of prohibiting the speaking of our languages, recovering the foundational cultural constructs of my people rooted within our dialects are dismal. However, decolonizing Indigenous minds rouses resurgence. It is my prayer that one day my stories

presented here could reveal layers of knowledges and teachings beyond our comprehension when told in the Indigenous tongue of their tellers.

As an Indigenous person who is on a lifelong healing journey from intergenerational trauma through Jesus, I always search for a thread which would connect me to my learning so I can meaningfully engage with it. As Indigenous peoples, without this interconnectedness – the cornerstone of Indigenous ways of knowing and being – learning is impeded. Consequently, when I was unable to locate Indigenous literature which reflected my identity as a Jesus following Indigenous person, I was reminded of why so many Indigenous people solitarily walk this path and some in secret from their families and Indigenous communities. Reflecting on this, I felt tied to Indigenous peoples who I had not yet met but knew existed. With this knowledge, Jesus spoke heartily to my spirit. He would love me the same if I didn't pursue this research path, but He revealed to me that I had Indigenous brothers and sisters who needed to be told that they were not alone. For an Indigenous person, this could mean a literal matter of life and death. Once I understood this, I could not look away. Accomplishing this endeavor would aid in validating their healing path as Indigenous peoples and provide a warm fire for them to sit beside and gain sustenance from, so they could step out of their isolation and onto the path that the Creator of the universe had in waiting for their lives. I knew this to be true for this was my story too. Thus, it is my intention that by adding my people's stories to Indigenous literature, this will provide a touching stone for those like me who enter higher education and cannot find their reflection in the narratives of our people. Through this endeavour, my people can reject the claims that they have denied their Indigeneity due to their chosen path to healing and begin to walk their truth as wholly Indigenous among our people without shame.

In regard to contributions to social work practice, faith-based healing modalities for Indigenous peoples are non-existent in mainstream social work despite the many Indigenous people seeking or living this specific healing path. As an Indigenous person working in the helping sector over many years, I have walked beside many Indigenous families who disclosed that they follow Jesus and attribute their healing and ability to thrive and live a healthy lifestyle to their belief in Jesus Christ. Sadly, many shared that they walked this path alone as social work programs or Indigenous programs geared towards faith-based healing could not be found. What is important for social workers working alongside Indigenous communities to recognize is that there are many Indigenous peoples, and even Nations, who have embraced following Jesus and attribute their wellness to Him. Furthermore, this healing path has in no way weakened their traditional identities as Indigenous peoples, but has brought them to develop a deeper, fuller, and strengthened embodiment of their Indigenous identity through Jesus, their Creator.

In social work, we strive to create safe space for Indigenous peoples to connect them with supports and services reflecting traditional Indigenous ways of healing without the understanding of the vast diversity of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. As Indigenous peoples, we both celebrate and identify with one another the similarities we share in our practice of spiritually, fundamental character qualities, connection and stewardship of land, sacred teachings, and a shared experience of colonization that bring us together as a people (United Nations, 2019). However, we often forget the God-gifted beauty of our diversity and distinctiveness. Indigenous knowledges were/are not created in a vacuum and are intrinsically interconnected to not only our experiences of today, but to the experiences, and ways of knowing and being of our ancestors yesterday. Indigenous knowledges defy limitations. As Indigenous peoples, the knowledges which surface from our innermost being *are Indigenous knowledges*. Because our people

followed the teachings of the Great Spirit since the beginning of time, as like any mortal, we learn, we make mistakes, we grow, and we pass on the torch to the next generation to further strengthen the existence of our people. However, this was never an endeavour in which we were meant to accomplish outside of our relationship with the Creator at the centre of our circle or being – mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional (Elder Mike Arnouse, 2020).

To say in social work that we must adhere to one Indigenous traditional healing path is detrimental. There is no linear Indigenous healing path and none more significant than the other. Engaging in ceremony and smudging as a cleansing practice may be how one Indigenous person finds their source of healing and balance, but to demean another Indigenous person who does not practice these as part of their healing is a violent assault to that person's spirit causing pain and wounds they may never recover from. As Indigenous people, we must weigh the worth of our Indigeneity by the practicing of character qualities passed down from the Creator to our ancestors for it is from this spring where the tenets to carry out our responsibilities as Indigenous peoples flow. One of these teachings are humility. I strongly believe that we fail in all other of the sacred teachings if we are not practicing each in humility. Without humility, we fall prey to ego and pride. This is where our own Indigenous teachings of interconnectedness and rejection of individualism and privileged knowledges weaken and we fall prey to self-serving, partisan learning.

De-othering, or bringing Indigenous peoples who follow Jesus into a state of equality with their people, reduces fragmentation within their communities and the isolating impact of inaccessible social services and supports offered. Bringing forth the healing narratives of Indigenous peoples will reinstitute the roles imbedded within them which have been taken from our people as warriors, leaders, healers, care givers, teachers, and knowledge keepers. One can

not begin to take up their rightful traditional positions within their Indigenous communities and within their personal lives if they are living shunned by their communities. Through Indigenous personal narratives, we can create empathy, understanding, connection, and promote transformative discussion (Episkenew, 2009).

Because there is limited reference to Indigenous healing narratives in the literature, these stories lend a unique aspect to under-documented and under-disseminated Indigenous knowledge within society and academia. Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing and being are steeped in our ancestor's willingness and Creator given ability to store knowledge within ourselves through stories, legends, and traditional teachings for the purpose of transmission to future generations. In an effort to preserve and revive this passing on of knowledge, it is important for our people to continue the traditional way of bearing witness these special landmarks along our spiritual pathways. While we have the gift of documentation through ink and paper, and technological data bases, we must never underestimate the ways of our ancestors and the power of holding our sacred knowledges within our spirits close to our hearts. Losing these ways means losing our identity and sovereignty as Indigenous peoples. Identity is central to my people's existence and is what we lean into when the western, modern world suffocates and becomes difficult to navigate. Like our connection to land is the basis of our survival and wellness as Indigenous peoples, the passing on of our stories remains integral to how we walk upon the land the Great Spirit gifted us.

This knowledge gathering has been a necessary step to creating further movement within reconciliation initiatives and decolonizing social work practice. As Indigenous peoples continue to heed the Creator's teachings including stewardship of the land, values, and ways of knowing and being, bringing forth a broader scope of these understandings through Indigenous followers

of Jesus are crucial to bridging dialogue between my people and churches and social workers who are committed to finding ways to participate in reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2012) Call to Action #48 called upon churches, faith groups, and interfaith social justice groups to officially assume and implement as a framework for reconciliation, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007) as follows:

- i. Ensuring that their institutions, policies, programs, and practices comply with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- ii. Respecting Indigenous peoples' right to self determination in spiritual matters, including the right to practise, develop, and teach their own spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies, consistent with Article 12:1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- iii. Engaging in ongoing public dialogue and actions to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (p. 24-25)

While I will not delve into a full examination of how my research can lend itself to each of the aforementioned calls to action, reflected here are my people's plea to inclusivity, sovereignty, and need to be heard and understood. This research reveals how my people can become leaders and teachers within these organizations as they bring forth their intimate relationship with the Creator of all things. This is not only about reconciliation but reaches beyond and situates Indigenous peoples as teachers of their faith the way the Great Spirit intended His ways to be lived out and shared. As Indigenous peoples, we carry a wealth of insight into what it means to live out the teachings of the Creator in all facets of our lives and in

caring for the earth He gifted us. We must no longer be viewed as the learners, but also as the teachers (Twiss, 2000).

Decolonizing social work practice must also acknowledge that there is great diversity among Indigenous peoples, that healing paths differ, and that Indigenous peoples remain Indigenous within their DNA and spirit no matter which healing path they follow. It must be understood that our healing brings us closer to our Indigenous identities, thus breaking the chains of intergenerational trauma and leading us into the fullness of who the Creator designed us to be. In the pursuit of social justice, social workers seek to remove barriers for and with Indigenous peoples, not create them. With the knowledge these stories offer, decolonizing social work practice models can become more inclusive of Indigenous peoples healing journey paths and can be the catalyst with which we strive to remove barriers of non-inclusivity for Indigenous peoples.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, my motivation for taking up this work can be summed up in just a few words – “find the truth of your people and bring it forward” (Meyer, 2013, p. 252). There were times I worried whether I was making the right decision. In these times, I remembered that “the Elders say that if it comes from the heart and is done in a good way, our work will count” (Kovach, 2009, p. 8). If the knowledge gathered “is that which helps people move forward in their lives” and holds what is needed to help one person, or possibly many people (Kovach, 2009, p.72), then I will have fulfilled my duty in service to my people.

The stories contained within these pages are now free to speak into the hearts of our people in ways we will never be able to fully comprehend. The stories within these pages and the sacred teachings reveal the truth about how intergenerational trauma seeks to destroy and

annihilate my peoples' minds, bodies, and spirits. These stories showed how Jesus Christ leaves His fold and seeks us out, yearning to bring us into the safety of His embrace. In Jesus, no one walks alone. As He hung upon the cross He was nailed to, my people were at the forefront of His mind. As He took the burdens and suffering of the world upon Himself, He broke the heavy chains of oppression, fear, illness, and conquered death so my people could find protection under His wing for eternity. Stories of my peoples encounters with Jesus Christ reveals how the Creator provided a way for all man to *not* have to live under the torment of darkness (Payne, 2020).

In closing, I must humbly reiterate that there are many who have come before me who arduously blazed a trail forcing western academia to recognize Indigenous sovereignty over our knowledges. Because of their unrelenting strength, perseverance, and tenacity, I am able to proclaim that “Research is Ceremony” (Wilson, 2008) and “Research is Resistance” (Strega & Brown, 2015). I have heard these war cries proclaiming that we are “Taking Back Our Spirits” (Episkenew, 2009) using implements derived from our “Strong Helpers’ Teachings” (Baskin, 2016). Because of the labours of Indigenous educators, activists, knowledge keepers, and allies, we can now look to “Indigenous Methodologies” (Kovach, 2009) as a means to take up our people’s knowledges and secure their place beside western knowledges. There is no longer room for discord or confusion about what constitutes valid Indigenous knowledges. For as Indigenous peoples, we each carry both personal and tribal epistemologies, axiologies, and ontologies – and *these are the sacred Indigenous knowledges of my people.*

## References

- Aboriginal Correction Policy Unit. (2006). *A matter of faith: A gathering of Aboriginal christians*. Ottawa, ON: Department of public safety and emergency preparedness Canada.
- 100 Huntley Street. (2017, May 15). Ray Aldred: First peoples voices pt. 1. Burlington, ON, Canada. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTz\\_IJ1dRdo&t=284s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTz_IJ1dRdo&t=284s)
- Absolon, K., & Willett, C. (2005). Putting ourselves forward: Location in Aboriginal research. In S. Strega, & L. Brown (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches to research* (pp. 97-126). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar Press.
- Aguiar, W., & Halseth, R. (2015). *Aboriginal peoples and historic trauma: The process of intergenerational transmission*. Prince George, B.C. , Canada: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.
- Airini. (2016). Being who we were called to be. *Knowledge Makers*, 1(1), 34-35.
- Alfred, T. (2005). *Wasase: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.
- Allan, B. (2018, September 13). SOCW 521 topic 4 podcast part 1 [Audio Podcast]. *Topic 6 podcasts*.
- Allan, B. (2018). SOCW 521 topic 6 podcast part 2 [Audio Podcast]. *Topic 6 podcasts*. Retrieved from <https://coursespaces.uvic.ca/mod/folder/view.php?id=1048264>

- Amnesty International. (2021). *Indigenous peoples in Canada*. Amnesty International. Retrieved from Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.ca/our-work/issues/indigenous-peoples/indigenous-peoples-in-canada>
- Arnouse, E. M. (2020, August). (D. Mohammed, Interviewer)
- Baskin, C. (2016). *Strong helpers' teachings: The value of Indigenous knowledges in the helping profession* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Basso, K. H. (1996). *Wisdom sits in places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Bessarab, D., & Ng'andu, B. (2010). Yarning about yarning as a legitimate method in Indigenous research. *International Journal of Indigenous Studies*, 3(1), 37-50.
- Boyd, G., McLaren, B., Cavey, B., & Zahnd, B. (2017, January 29). *Native American/First Nations Oppression: Confessions of a Christian Nation*. Rexharsinfilms. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXt1m9\\_dwFk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXt1m9_dwFk)
- Butler, J. (2017). Who's your mob? Aboriginal mapping: Beginning with the strong story. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, (3), 22-26.
- Carlson, J., & Dumont, A. (Eds.). (1997). *Bridges in spirituality: First Nations christian women tell their stories*. Toronto, ON: The United Church Publishing House.
- Decontie, J. (2011, November-December). Following Jesus as an Indigenous person. *Indian Life*, 32(3), 8.  
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A275921676/CPI?u=uvictoria&sid=CPI&xid=2d716400>

- Dickason, O. P., & Newbigging, W. (2010). *A concise history of Canada's First Nations*. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Drahm-Butler, T., Wingard, B., & Johnson, C. (2015). *Aboriginal narrative practice: Honouring storylines of pride, strength and creativity*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.
- Drake-Terry, J. (1989). *The same as yesterday: The lillooet chronicle - The theft of their lands and resources*. Lillooet: Lillooet Tribal Council Press.
- Dussault, R., & Erasmus, G. (1996). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Ottawa: Canada Communication Group.
- Retrieved from: <http://data2.archives.ca/e/e448/e011188230-01.pdf>
- Elders of Four World's Development Project. (2014, May 29). *Traditional Native Code of Ethics*. Retrieved from Aboriginal Neighbours: <https://aboriginalneighbours.org/traditional-native-code-ethics/>
- Episkenew, J.-A. (2009). *Taking back our spirits*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.
- Ferrara, N. (2017). Intergenerational trauma. *The Sage Encyclopedia of Abnormal and Clinical Psychology, 1*, 1861-1862.
- Geia, L. K., Hayes, B., & Usher, K. (2013). Yarning/Aboriginal storytelling: Towards an understanding of an Indigenous perspective and its implications for research practice. *Contemporary Nurse, 46*(1), 13-17.

- Government of Canada. (2017, December 4). *Indigenous peoples and communities*. Retrieved from Government of Canada: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303>
- Greenhalgh, T., Russell, J., & Swinglehurst, D. (2005). Developing research and practice: Narrative methods in quality improvement research. *Quality and Safety in Health Care*, *14*(6), 443-449.
- hooks, b. (2001). *All about love*. New York: HarperCollins.
- ICWRN. (2011, April 27). *Robina Thomas on storytelling*. Retrieved from YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41qiRng9jIU>
- Koptie, S. W. (2009). Indigenous self-discovery: "Being called to witness". *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, *5*(1), 114-125.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Kwame, A. (2017). Reflexivity and the insider/outsider discourse in Indigenous research: my personal experiences. *AlterNative*, 218-225.
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. *Essays on the verbal and visual arts*, 12-44.
- Leblanc, T. (2012). Global theology in evangelical perspective: Exploring the contextual nature of theology and mission. In J. P. Greenman, & G. L. Green (Eds.) *Global Theology in evangelical perspective: Exploring the contextual nature of theology and mission* (165-178). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- LeBlanc, T. (2014, March). How Native theology reclaims Native culture. *Sojourners*. Retrieved from <https://sojo.net/magazine/march-2014/how-native-theology-reclaims-native-culture>
- LeBlanc, T., & LeBlanc, J. (2011, January). Contextual mission, Indigenous context. *Missiology: An International Review*, XXXIX(1), 87-92.
- McIvor, O. (2019). *Brain your learning: Indigenous languages CCUNESCO*. Retrieved from BC Museums Association: <http://museumsassn.bc.ca/brain/tools-and-resources/indigenous-culture/indigenousslanguagesccunesco/>
- McKenna, P. (1993, April). Aboriginal spirituality. *Scarborro missions*. Retrieved from [https://www.scarborromissions.ca/Scarboro\\_missions\\_magazine/Issues/1993/April/aboriginal\\_spirituality.php](https://www.scarborromissions.ca/Scarboro_missions_magazine/Issues/1993/April/aboriginal_spirituality.php)
- Meyer, M. A. (2013). The context within: My journey into research. In D. M. Mertens, F. Cram, & B. Chilisa (Eds.), *Indigenous pathways into social research* (pp. 249-260). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press Inc.
- Ngugi, M. W. (2018, March 23). *Mukoma Wa Ngugi: What decolonizing the mind means today*. Retrieved from Literary hub: <https://lithub.com/mukoma-wa-ngugi-what-decolonizing-the-mind-means-today/>
- Northern Canada Evangelical Mission. (2021) *Tribal Trails*. Retrieved from <https://tribaltrails.org/>
- Ono, A. (2012). You gotta throw away culture once you become christian: How 'culture' is redefined among Aboriginal pentecostal christians in rural New South Wales. *Oceania*, 82(1), 74-85.

- Pardo-Kaplan, D. (2017, May 15). Jesus, the frybread of life. *CT women*. Retrieved from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2017/may/jesus-frybread-of-life.html>
- Patterson, W. (2008). Narratives of events: Labovian narrative and its limitations. In M. Andrews, C. Squire, & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Payne, E. A. (2020, November 16). Scripture examination interview. (D. Mohammed, Interviewer)
- Peelman, A. (2013). Native American spirituality and christianity. In C. Cornille (Ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Ramirez, L. C., & Hammack, P. L. (2014). Surviving colonization and the quest for healing: Narrative and resilience among California Indian tribal leaders. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 51(1), 112-133.
- Seigneur, C. (2012, February 16). A Native faith: Richard Twiss shapes Portland's youth and beyond. *Christianity Today*, p. 1.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44.
- Spirit Talk Gathering. (2011). *Seven Philosophies*. Retrieved from Spiritalk Gathering: [www.spiritalk.net/native-americans-7philos.html](http://www.spiritalk.net/native-americans-7philos.html)
- Strega, S., & Brown, L. (2015). *Research as resistance: Revisiting critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

- Thiong'o, N. w. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Today's New International Version Bible. (2001/2005). *Today's New International Version Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. Winnipeg, MB: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
- Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409-428.
- Twiss, R. (2013, January 28). *Drumming, chanting, and other Christian things* [Video file]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1-yF\\_-tHjU&t=306s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1-yF_-tHjU&t=306s)
- Twiss, R. (2000). *One church many tribes: Following Jesus the way God made you*. Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books.
- Twiss, R. (2015). *Rescuing the gospel from the cowboys*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Twiss, R., Martell, S., & Martell, R. (2017). *Dreamcatching: Following the steps of Richard Twiss*. Cleveland, TN: Cherohala Press.
- United Nations. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. New York, NY: United Nations.

United Nations. (2019). *The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. New York: United Nations.

Wali, O. (1963). The dead end of African literature. *Transition*, 2, 330-335.

Wiktionary. (2019, September 28). *Churchianity*. Retrieved from Wiktionary:

<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Churchianity>

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

## Appendix A: Recruitment Letter



Dear Indigenous Community and Indigenous Peoples,

August 6, 2020

Please accept this as an invitation to participate in a gathering of knowledge which would contribute to the body of Indigenous knowledges.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a School of Social Work, University of Victoria grad student seeking Indigenous people who would like to share their story of healing from intergenerational trauma through Jesus Christ. You may be asking, "What is intergenerational trauma?" If so, intergenerational trauma is the passing down of trauma from one generation to the next in various forms (mental health, substance misuse, abuse, violence, neglect, unhealthy relationships, etc.). As part of my master's (Indigenous Specialization) degree completion, I chose to write a thesis on Indigenous healing through Jesus. After entering post-secondary school, throughout my undergrad and now in grad school, I felt overlooked as I was unable to find myself reflected in the literature pertaining to Indigenous healing. I knew that there were many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island and around the world who had also found their healing through Jesus and felt a need for our truths to be added to the stories of our people. If you would like to participate in this knowledge gathering through the telling of your story, please read on to see if you are eligible:

**Eligibility criteria:** You identify as Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit, or Metis) and are living in the Kamloops, BC area. You are at least 19 years of age or over. You have found your healing through Jesus Christ and would like to share your story.

**Option of confidential sharing:** You have the option to keep your identity confidential to the public. Your story would be used to write my thesis, but names, locations, Nation of origin, for example would be omitted or changed.

**Time commitment required:** 1 or 2 preliminary phone meetings before the actual sharing of your story. A minimum of 2 uninterrupted hours to share your story. Time to read my thesis to give me approval of your part before it is submitted. And 1 or 2 follow up phone calls.

**How?:** Face to face online or phone call are the two options provided for sharing your story (depending on your comfort level). **Please respond through someone you trust or yourself to me at:**

Once you contact me, I will send detailed information for you to review before making a decision.

**With Respect,**

## Appendix B: Participant Consent Form



**University  
of Victoria**

### *Participant Consent Form*

---

#### **Intergenerational Trauma and Stories of Healing Through Jesus**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Intergenerational Trauma and Stories of Healing Through Jesus that is being conducted by Dionne Mohammed.

Dionne Mohammed is a Graduate Student in the department of Social Work at the University of Victoria, and you may contact her if you have further questions by calling

As a Graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a master's degree in Social Work Indigenous Specialization. It is being conducted under the supervision of

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to provide an opportunity for Indigenous peoples to share their story of intergenerational trauma healing through Jesus and offer their truth as part of their Indigenous identity to academia. For example, due to the deficit in the literature, Indigenous peoples already facing alienation from their Indigenous communities due to their chosen healing path may enter post-secondary schooling and feel a sense of detachment within the school setting and culture. The telling and documentation of these stories have the potential to not only empower Indigenous peoples, but to bring them out of the "outsider" state and closer to their identity as Indigenous peoples.

#### **Importance of this Research**

Research of this type is important because when social workers walk beside Indigenous peoples, most hold little to no knowledge that many Indigenous peoples have found their healing through Jesus Christ, thus supports and healing models are geared toward paths of healing which do not align with their chosen faith. Bringing forth Indigenous stories of healing through Jesus will introduce social workers,

academia, and the larger community to how many Indigenous peoples have overcome great adversity in their lives and thrive as healthy traditional Indigenous peoples today through Jesus. Furthermore, there is potential for division within Indigenous communities to become lessened as more literature reflects diverse Indigenous healing paths. Finally, I am purposeful in my decision to move away from deficit based Indigenous knowledge gathering in my choice to focus on what is aiding Indigenous peoples in their desire to overcome intergenerational trauma, rather than what perpetuates it.

### **Participant Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have identified yourself as an adult Indigenous person who has found healing through Jesus from intergenerational trauma due to colonization who would like to share their story.

### **What is Involved?**

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include:

1. One meeting by telephone or online visit will be approximately 2 hours. The visit will include discussing how you would prefer to provide your consent – verbal or a signed document. The visit will also include time for you to ask any questions or concerns you might have and will give me the opportunity to tell you about myself and my background. The remainder of the time will allow you to tell your healing story.
2. I will be using elements of yarning/storytelling and experience-centered narrative-research. Yarning/storytelling are conversation-based Indigenous methods used in Indigenous knowledge gathering. Experience-centered narrative-research is used as an approach to gather knowledge from people who have had a similar experience. The elements of these combined provide me with a way to gather your story while honoring your unique and diverse Indigenous oral traditions and values.
3. Before the storytelling takes place, we will discuss whether you would prefer to be recorded while you share your story through an audio recording device, or if you would prefer for me to take notes during your storytelling instead of being recorded. From the audio recording or notes, I will write a transcription.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including time commitment before the actual visit to schedule a preliminary meeting to go over dates, times, questions you might have, and to give me the opportunity to introduce myself and provide you with my background and connection to this topic.

If you are a parent, guardian, or caregiver, you may need to arrange for

childcare or care of your loved one during the time the story telling is to take place. Your participation requires at least 2 hours of uninterrupted time.

### **Time Commitment**

After the knowledge gathering takes place and I have transcribed the audio or notes, I ask that you provide me with some time to ask for your approval to use quotes and paraphrases of the transcript. There may also be a time commitment to have you read my final thesis and to approve that your story has been represented and told in the way you intended and within the context you wish it to be presented. These time commitments after the visit will take place throughout my thesis writing and may take up to two months thereafter.

Time required will not exceed more than 3 hours spread out over time following the visit to after the thesis is written in its entirety and will be asked of you at times which are convenient for you.

### **Risks**

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include emotional risks where telling your story may unintentionally trigger unsettling emotional, mental, physical, or spiritual reactions. If you decide to tell family members or those within your Indigenous community that you are sharing your story of healing through Jesus, there is always a risk that this may not be well-received and could cause tension in these relationships if those whom you disclose to do not agree with your chosen healing path.

To prevent or to deal with these risks the following steps will be taken:

1. Regarding emotional, mental, physical, or spiritual reactions, I am leaving the 2 hours of time together open-ended on my part to ensure that if any triggering takes place during your story telling that we have enough time together to talk through the reactions, relax your spirit, and take part in prayer or any other form of spiritual settling or cleansing you are comfortable with ending our time together with.
2. Regarding emotional, mental, physical, or spiritual reactions, please know that this knowledge gathering is interested in your story of healing and wellness as an Indigenous person, therefore, you will never be asked to share anything that focuses on the negative aspects of your life or parts which cause you discomfort. You will only share what is comfortable for you to share and are welcome to focus on the healing rather than the harm.
3. Regarding emotional, mental, physical, or spiritual reactions which may arise from the telling of your healing story, please know that because I am well

connected I am making myself available to you to connect you to a counsellor or helper in your community who respects your chosen path of healing and will walk beside you for a time while you work through any unaddressed issues in your life that you may have encountered during our visit together.

4. Regarding the potential of your story as bringing tension to your relationships, family members, or community, please know that all measures to keep your identity confidential will be maintained. For example, I can use an alias/pseudonym when referring to you when writing my thesis within the body and the reference section and provide only vague identifying details and only when necessary. Please know that you will have the opportunity to review my thesis before it is submitted so that you may revise any potentially identifying information you do not wish to share. What you share during our meeting belongs to you, not me. Therefore, after the audio or notes are transcribed and my thesis is being written, I will ask you to review the transcription and provide me with approval to use it in my thesis. This will also give you the opportunity to withdraw from the knowledge gathering project, to provide approval for only selected parts of the transcript to be presented or provide approval for the entire transcript to be presented within my thesis. Please note that you can withdraw your consent to participate in the research project at any time without consequence.

## **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include:

Your participation in this knowledge gathering will provide you with an opportunity to share your story of healing through Jesus. Whether you choose to disclose or not disclose, your story will become a part of a unique aspect of Indigenous knowledge which is under documented and disseminated within society and academia. Providing your narrative of healing from intergenerational trauma as a result of colonization reveals that many Indigenous peoples find their healing through Jesus and allows others who may feel isolated in their decision to follow the same path to feel connected to an Indigenous community of others who live lives of wellness and health through this faith while still remaining traditional Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing and being are steeped in our ancestor's ability to store up knowledge within ourselves and pass these knowledges on through stories, legends, modelling, and traditional teachings. In an effort to preserve and revive this passing on of knowledge, ceremony, milestones, songs, dances, prayers, and traditional ways, it is important for our people to continue the traditional way of bearing witness these special landmarks along our spiritual pathways. While we now have been given the gift of documentation to write with pen and ink, and now in technological data bases, we must never underestimate the ways of our ancestors and the power of holding our sacred knowledges in our spirits and close to our hearts for the passing on to future generations. If we lose these ways, we lose our identity. Identity is central to our existence and is what

we lean into when the Western world feels suffocating and difficult to navigate. Just like our connection to land is the foundation of our survival as Indigenous peoples, the passing on of our stories, is integral to how we walk upon the land the Great Spirit has gifted us. Your participation in this gathering of knowledge will contribute to our Indigenous knowledges to reflect the diversity of our peoples across Turtle Island and other corners of the world.

### **Compensation**

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given a \$20 fuel or grocery gift card and a gift memorializing the time and knowledge you have shared.

***The participant understands that they can withdraw their consent at any time without consequence including retracting compensation provided.***

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, your data will not be used, and any written transcription will be either returned to you or properly disposed of (paper shredded) with your consent.

Compensation provided will remain yours in gratitude for your time and knowledge sharing even if you decide to withdraw your knowledge from the research project.

### **Researcher's Relationship with Participants**

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as mother/daughter, previous colleague, cousin, auntie/niece, uncle/niece, friend, or acquaintance.

To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion have been taken:

1. Project recruitment letter will not be given directly to the potential participant from myself, but by email, mail, or through a third party.
2. Responses can be provided to me by email, text, mail, telephone, or the third party to whom the information regarding the project was delivered to potential participant.
3. After receiving the information, you (the potential participant) will be given 2 weeks to decide whether you would like to participate in the knowledge gathering project.
4. During these 2 weeks, you can email me any questions you might have

regarding the project and I will answer these questions directly and honestly without using persuasive language, veering off topic, or requesting a decision before the 2 weeks provided for determining your decision.

5. Deciding not to participate in the project will not, in any way, damage existing relationships, bring tension to or halt collegial relationships, or cause my respect of the potential participant to be minimized in any way whatsoever.
6. I understand that our healing journeys have many facets and intersecting pieces and that to share this journey is sacred and personal. I understand that when one shares such a personal part of themselves, a vulnerability is exposed, and therefore to whom and in what setting your sacred story is shared is of utmost importance. Due to this understanding, I desire to make saying “no” to this project, not a rejection of becoming a part of my project, but a response to wanting to keep your story internally sacred, your desire to avoid the potential risk of harm to treasured relationships or may represent the stretch of path you are on your healing journey.
7. To ensure coercion does not take place, intentionally or unintentionally, I would like to state that responding with “no thank you” to being a part of this project will be viewed as an embracing of your autonomy and strength as an Indigenous person who may not always feel that they have the right to decline in many areas of their lives. I commit to equally honor your decision to either participate or to decline.

### **Ongoing Consent**

If I intend to ever use the story you shared with me in future research or in any other form outside of what you consented to, I will seek and obtain permission from you. ***The participant understands that they can withdraw their consent at any time without consequence.***

### **Anonymity**

The audio and notes I take of your storytelling; the transcription of the audio or notes belong to you. I will only be using these for the writing of the thesis and then will give you the transcript and will delete the recording or notes. You can indicate whether you would like a copy of the recording or notes before it is deleted or if you would like me to safely store it for possible future research or projects.

In terms of limitations to your anonymity, please be aware that once my thesis is written, I will send you a copy for approval as discussed above, have it approved and marked by my supervisors (committee members), have it undergo a defense procedure, and thereafter it may be placed in a public university forum as academic literature accessed by the university and those outside the university.

***Important Note:*** You decide whether you would like to use your own name or a chosen or given pseudonym or alias to either be an anonymous participant ***or*** to have yourself identified.

When my supervisors review my thesis, **unless you have chosen to be identified** by your own name, **your identities will not be shared with committee members** in order to honour and protect your privacy. Again, **unless specified otherwise by you, all identifying information about yourself will be removed from your data prior to sharing any of my writing with my committee for review and feedback.**

### Confidentiality

Your anonymity and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by:

1. I will be using only secure approved technology by the University of Victoria. Skype, Facetime, and Zoom are the secure, approved options available. Cell phones are also approved as secure devices to record and store audio recording. I will also be using password protected file storage on my laptop and cell phone.
2. I will not be using cloud storage of the data on my cell phone or laptop ensuring that your sharing is inaccessible to any third parties.
- 3. Returning the transcript to you once it is no longer needed to write my thesis and deleting my electronic copy or notes.
- 4. Get your approval to delete recording or store the recording safely on a USB and given to you before deleting. If notes are used, have notes shredded at a professional shredding business (Staples) or stored safely in a sealed envelope and given to you directly or mailed to your home address.
- 5. Committing to not share your name with my supervisors, the university, in public, or to anyone I come into contact within the future. (if you choose not to disclose your identity)
- 6. Use an alias in the thesis instead of your name (if you wish not to disclose your identity).
- 7. Will not use information that may directly identify you including places, names, locations, Nations of origin, etc. (if you wish not to disclose your identity).

### Limitations to Confidentiality

If you decide that you would like your anonymity and confidentiality to be protected, please be aware of the following limitations:

1. If you choose to disclose to someone else that you are participating prior to participating or any time thereafter. If you choose to have the interview take place in your home over the phone or online, a family members home over the phone or online, outdoors over the phone or online, or through use of a public space.
2. If you choose to have a third party communicate with me on your behalf at any time during the research process.

All the above situations have risk of your anonymity or confidentiality being breached. For example, if you decide to have the interview in your home, you cannot control who

may stop by unannounced.

Please also understand that complete anonymity is not possible for this research due to me knowing your identity. However, I will do all that is within my control to maintain your confidentiality and anonymity (outside of myself) if you so choose by following the anonymity and confidentiality protection procedures under the “Confidentiality” section of this agreement.

### **Verbal Consent Option**

Because I respectfully acknowledge how signed documentation in Indigenous communities has historically been utilized, unknowingly and knowingly, to dishonor and exploit Indigenous peoples **you can choose to provide verbal consent as opposed to signed consent** for this or any other reason you deem necessary. Therefore, I, Dionne Mohammed, will sign my name or my initials where required on this consent to participate form as a witness to the participant’s consent to contribute their story to this gathering of knowledge with the participant’s full understanding of the conditions of participation in this study. You will have the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher before you verbally consent to participate in this research project. **Providing verbal consent does not mean that you cannot withdraw your consent at any time without consequence.**

### **WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY - PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:**

- I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to

provide initials) Or

\_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher to provide initials)

- I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to

provide initials) Or

\_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher to provide initials)

**CONSENT FOR USE OF ALIAS/PSEUDONYM – PLEASE INITIAL STATEMENT only if you consent:**

- I **would not** like to have my name used when referring to my story throughout the researcher’s thesis, nor in the reference list or in any other form of communication that might identify me:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to

provide initials) Or

\_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher to provide initials)

**Please check *one* of the boxes below only if you would not like to have your own name used** in the researcher’s thesis. If you decide to use a pseudonym or alias, you can use a term like “Participant A”, a name that is culturally significant to you, or a name of someone who has been significant to you in your life:

- I **would like to** use the following pseudonym or alias:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to

provide initials) Or

\_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher to provide initials)

- I **would like** the researcher to provide a pseudonym or alias for me which **will be approved by me** during my review of the thesis before it is submitted to the committee for review:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to

provide initials) Or

\_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher to provide initials)

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will/may be shared with others in the following ways:

- Website
- Directly to other participants in the project
- As a published article
- Through my thesis
- Through a presentation

## Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of (if you provide consent for them to be):

- Electronic data will be erased
- Paper copies of transcript will be shredded

## Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

- I consent to the use of my data in future research:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to

provide initials) Or

\_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher to provide initials)

- I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to

provide initials) Or

\_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher to provide initials)

- I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to

provide initials) Or

\_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher to provide initials)

## Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include:

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you

might have, by contacting

### Verbal Consent

My signature below indicates that you have chosen verbal consent as opposed to signed consent as I respectfully acknowledge how signed documentation in Indigenous communities has historically been utilized, unknowingly and knowingly, to dishonor and exploit Indigenous peoples. Therefore, I, Dionne Mohammed, sign my name as a witness to the participant's consent to contribute their story to this gathering of knowledge with the participant's full understanding of the above conditions of participation in this study. The participant has had the opportunity to have their questions answered by the researchers and has consented to participate in this research project. ***The participant understands that they can withdraw their consent at any time without consequence.***

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Researcher's Signature*

---

*Date*

### Signed Consent

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project. ***The participant understands that they can withdraw their consent at any time without consequence.***

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature*

---

*Date*

***A copy of this consent will be mailed or scanned and emailed to you. A copy will remain with the researcher.***