

Beyond the Sixties Scoop: Reclaiming Indigenous identity, reconnection to place, and reframing understandings of being Indigenous

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 1993
M.A., School for International Training, USA, 2003

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Abstract

This study used life experience methods to gather the narratives of seven adult Indigenous transracial adoptees who have reclaimed their Indigenous identities after experiencing closed adoption during the late 1950s through to the early 1980s. Participants had been members of Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) communities at birth but were then raised outside their Indigenous nations in non-Indigenous families. Through analysis of their stories, I identified four themes that marked their trajectories to reclamation: Imposed fracture (prior to reclamation); Little anchors (beginning healing); Coming home (on being whole); Our sacred bundle (reconciling imposed fracture). Their stories of reconnecting to their Indigeneity, decolonizing and healing illustrate their shifts from hegemonic discourse spaces that characterized their lived experiences as “other” to spirit-based discourses that center Indigenous knowledge systems as valid, life affirming, and life changing. This dissertation contributes to the debate on state sanctioned removal of children and the impacts of loss of Indigenous identity in Canadian society. My findings indicate that cultural and spiritual teachings and practices, as well as, the knowledge of colonization and its impacts on Indigenous families, communities, and nations, all contributed to adoptees’ healing and ability to move forward in their lives. Key recommendations include: further exploration of the concept of cultural genocide in relation to settler-colonial relations in Canada; further examination of the intersection of counter-narratives, resistance discourse, and colonial violence; increased investigation of the connections between Indigenous knowledge systems, living spirit-based teachings and educative aspects of community wellness; and more research examining education beyond formal schooling, including the formative effects upon Indigenous youth of social values, public policy, and legal frameworks.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Dedication.....	x
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Purpose and Research Questions	6
Overview of Research Process.....	7
Life-story interviews.....	9
Sharing circle.....	10
Analysis of stories.....	10
Significance of the Study.....	11
Definition of Terms.....	13
Overview of the Chapters.....	17
Chapter Summary.....	18
Chapter Two: Literature Review & Theoretical Perspectives.....	19
The Sixties Scoop Literature.....	20
Phase One – Child well-being (1950’s to 1970’s).....	21
Phase Two: Self-governing Indigenous welfare agencies (mid 1970s-1990s).....	24
Phase Three: Issues of adoptee identity (2000-present).....	26
Theoretical Perspectives.....	30
Post-colonial Indigenous identities.....	31
Indigenous understandings of education.....	40
Decolonization Practices.....	47
Indigenous Resurgence.....	55
Conclusion.....	59
Chapter Summary.....	59
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	61
Research Assumptions and Guiding Principles.....	61
Research Methods/Approaches.....	63
Life-experience stories.....	65
Narrative inquiry.....	68
Establishing respectful research relationships.....	70
Spirituality.....	70
Relationship Building.....	73
Community Reciprocity.....	75

“Self Work” in preparation.....	76
Develop-eyes.....	78
Colon-eyes.....	80
Indigen-eyes.....	81
Spiritual-eyes.....	83
Reclaiming identity: a spirit-based discourse.....	84
Participants.....	87
Data Collection Procedures.....	90
Data Analysis.....	98
Theoretical frames – critical race theory and education.....	98
Analysis of interviews.....	102
Chapter Summary.....	104
Chapter Four: Findings.....	106
Introduction.....	106
Analysis.....	106
Demographics: An Overview.....	107
Interview Themes.....	108
Theme 1: ‘Imposed Fracture’ – Before Reclaiming Identity.....	110
Disconnection.....	110
Marginalization and bullying.....	113
Racism and internalized racism.....	115
Theme 2: ‘Little Anchors’ – Beginning the Healing Process (Reacculturating).....	120
Pathways to Initial Healing.....	123
Internal emotional processes.....	124
Being introduced to culture and ceremony.....	128
Theme 3: ‘Coming Home’ – On being whole.....	132
Connection to Place.....	133
Internal processes of becoming a spiritual being.....	138
Theme 4: ‘Our Sacred Bundle’ – Reconciling the imposed fracture.....	141
Participant contributions today.....	143
Kanika Tsi Tsa.....	144
Lisa.....	145
Colleen.....	145
Duane.....	146
Elizabeth.....	147
Shawn.....	148
Raven.....	149
Conclusion.....	149
Chapter Summary.....	151
Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations.....	152
Introduction.....	152
Discussion.....	153

How have adults who were fostered or adopted from their communities during the Sixties Scoop reclaimed their Indigenous identity?.....	153
Does this reclamation include connection to place? If yes, what does connection to place mean to the former adoptees?.....	158
Role of Extended Family.....	160
Knowing the Place of My Ancestors and the Land.....	161
Belonging to an Indigenous community.....	162
Through the process of reclaiming identity, have participants' understandings of being Indigenous changed? If so, how?.....	163
Hegemonic discourse.....	163
Spirit-based discourses.....	165
Unexpected Findings.....	167
Limitations.....	169
Implications and Recommendations.....	170
Implications for theory: Living spirit-based teachings	170
Future scholarly inquiry: Healing from colonial violence.....	172
Challenging hegemonic discourse with counter-narratives.....	173
Education practice: Decolonization and reconciliation.....	175
Reframing Education Discourses.....	175
An example of mindful practice in post-secondary practice.....	177
Reconciliation: The Truth & Reconciliation Commission.....	179
Conclusion.....	181
References.....	184
Appendix.....	199
Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer.....	200
Appendix B: Participant Consent Letter.....	201
Appendix C: Introduction & Recruitment Script IAG.....	204
Appendix D: Recruitment Script Participants.....	206
Appendix E: Participant Verbal Consent.....	208
Appendix F: Ethics Certificate of Approval.....	209
Appendix G: Participant Interview Questions.....	210
Appendix H: Participant Sharing Circle Questions.....	211

List of Tables

Table 3.1. Brief Participant Information.....	p. 90
Table 4.1. List of themes and subthemes in the findings.....	p. 109

List of Figures

- Figure 2.1. Four Theoretical Perspectives that inform my research question.....p. 30
- Figure 2.2. Fourth census of Canada, 1901. Schedule No. 1, Population.....p. 34
- Figure 3.1. A Theoretical Framework of Reformulating Indigenous Adoptee Identity:
unlearning hegemonic discourse and relearning spirit-based discourses...p. 78
- Figure 5.1. Indigenous adoptees processes of reclaiming identity and living spirit-based
teachings.....p. 171

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the families impacted by the Sixties Scoop.
And to my children who I get to wake up with every day.

Chapter One

Introduction

I realized that I was born Cree, and therefore I am Cree. It is important in our graduate school experiences as Indigenous peoples that we do not lose sight of our own ways of being and knowing. We must embrace these powerful and living traditions of our ancient ways and realize the strength they continue to give to us. On my own journey I have much to learn and discover about Cree wisdom and knowledge. (Steinhauer, 2001, p. 185)

When I was eight years old, just before my Mormon baptism, I looked in the mirror in the church bathroom searching for myself. There was a mirror in front of me and a mirror behind me creating the illusion of infinity and a multiplicity of selves. I knew I was adopted, I knew I was Native, I knew I wasn't supposed to talk about where I came from or ask any questions. What I didn't know was that my adoption was part of a larger movement of transracial adoption known today as the Sixties Scoop. This phenomenon is described as a large-scale effort by social work professionals to assimilate Indian children by removing them from their homes and adopting them into white families. From the late 1950s through the early 1980s approximately 20,000 First Nations, Metis, and Inuit children were apprehended and adopted out of their communities (Johnston, 1983; Kimelman, 1985). This large-scale adoption project represents one of the many approaches to the colonization – or subjugation – of Indigenous populations not only in Canada, but throughout the world.

At eight years old I knew being baptized would bring me closer to my adopted family and I understood how important my baptism was for them. That story of the

mirror in the church bathroom carried me through my teenage years when I reconnected with my family on northern treaty 8 territory, also referred to as the Wood Buffalo Park region of the Northwest Territories and Northern Alberta. I was so shocked by my family's poverty and saddened by my inability to fit in that, after a few years of painful reconnections, I distanced myself from both of my families and left the country as a means of escape. I ended up living outside of Canada for eight years.

Throughout my twenties I travelled to many countries in the world. Most formatively, I lived in Nicaragua for five years. During this time, I worked on education projects with Nicaraguan educators and practiced critical pedagogy (Freire, 1993). I sought ways to empower learners, yet through this process I came to critique the First World teachings that were embedded in my ways of knowing, and wondered how I could empower Nicaraguan students and educators when I saw myself as "other". The only way I could explain my experience of transracial adoption was from a hegemonic lens that included a settler story of "the Indian problem." In other words, I saw my Native identity as a problem that I was born of and rescued from when I was adopted into a non-Native home.

I returned home to the Northwest Territories in my thirties and spent ten years reclaiming my identity, reconnecting with family and the land, and reframing my understandings of being Indigenous. I have forgiven. I have learned boundaries in relationships. And I don't carry "white guilt" or "Native shame" anymore. My children know their grandmas and their kokum – it brings healing to hear my children address their nēhiyaw (Cree) grandmother in the language.

Their grandpa—my adopted father—has visited us many times in the Northwest

Territories and has reframed his own experience from forty-five years ago, when he was a young white teacher in the NWT fostering a little Native girl. Now that I am allowed to be Native, the multiplicity of selves does not daunt me. I can look at my reflection and am not surprised to see image upon image because my life is this multiplicity of experiences and realities. My first language was *nēhiyawewin* and yet it is also English as I left our home when I was a baby. I am from a small northern community in northeastern treaty 8 territory. We have a rich history that comes from being land-based people with a spiritual connection to all living beings. My grandparents up north were called trappers; my mother and her siblings were born on the land, and being of the land was their way of life. I was also raised by a settler family in the suburbs of one of Canada's largest cities where all my food came from the grocery store. There was no understanding of my Indigenous family's worldview where I was raised. When I moved back north as an adult some teachings came easily as they live in genetic memory while other things were so hard I felt like a toddler again. It is not easy sometimes. I have used alcohol to overcome shyness, numb my feelings, and escape from acknowledging pain yet over the years this deep-rooted pain has been relieved by reframing what it means to be Indigenous, including returning to my home territory, meeting relatives all over the north, and spending time on the land. When I consider myself as connected to the cosmos—this large web of relations—and I am in the bush sitting by the fire, or being guided in spiritual practices, I am at peace. This does not change what happened to me as a child but it does transform the way in which I live in this world. I now know that I am not alone.

Scholars and community-based activists have spoken back to processes of

colonialism and it is now recognized that the Sixties Scoop is part of the colonial story of Canada (Helcason, 2009; Sinclair, 2007a). Several researchers identify commonalities between children adopted out during the Sixties Scoop and Residential School Survivors, including culture and language loss, internalized racism, and isolation within their own communities, as well as, in mainstream society (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009; Fournier & Crey, 1997; Sinclair, 2007b).

In their literature review and annotated bibliography focusing on aspects of Aboriginal child welfare in Canada, Bennett and Blackstock (2002) suggest the child welfare system became the new agent of assimilation and colonization after residential schools began to be phased out. Episkenew's (2001) work *Aboriginal policy through literary eyes*, accounts for historical "policies of devastation" that chart colonial public policy (in Hargreaves, 2012, p. 97). Bonita Lawrence contests that these policies have been designed to manufacture the "elimination of Indigenous peoples as a legal and social fact" (in Hargreaves, 2012, p. 97). From this perspective, the transracial adoption of Indigenous children has been characterized as cultural genocide, forcibly transferring children from one group to another. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples estimates over 11,000 Aboriginal children were adopted out of their communities between 1960 and 1990. These numbers are growing as the Truth & Reconciliation Commission has opened the door to an examination of the child welfare system. It is now estimated over 20,000 children experienced the Sixties Scoop and while concerns "led to moratoria on the adoption of Aboriginal children" (Sinclair, 2007b, p. 68) there are now over 30,000 Indigenous children in care. Fee (2012) states: "more Aboriginal children are in care now than were in residential schools at their height" (p. 10). Some researchers

suggest this is a punitive system that will ensure another lost generation of Indigenous children who do not have their Indigenous identity.

According to Mussell (2008) “colonization occurs when one people is conquered by another people through destroying and/or weakening basic social structures in the conquered culture and replacing them with those of the conquering culture” (p. 4).

Growing up as an Indigenous transracial adoptee I was “other” and my culture was presented as inferior to the culture into which I was adopted. Pon (2009) suggests that individuals become “othered” when the colonizer pathologizes the “other’s” worldviews and practices. Until the late 1980s, the hegemonic discourse of the colonizer described Native peoples as culturally “deprived” and incapable of properly parenting their children. In my own case, I was told my mother was a Native alcoholic who didn’t want me. End of story. Indeed, such hegemonic discourses attempt to totalize a particular discourse over all other narratives. It employs well-thought-out, well-planned and divisive tactics, such as the Doctrine of Discovery¹, to subdue other narratives (Iqbal, 2008). This dissertation is a way to speak back to such hegemonic discourses. Hudson and McKenzie (1981) have presented the relationship between the child welfare system and Native people as one of cultural colonialism. That is, the dominant group uses policies that devalue the culture of a subjected people, believing itself to be the sole carrier of a valid culture. Therefore, in order to change the narratives and stories of

¹ The Doctrine of Discovery: “The papal bull *Romanus pontifex*, issued in 1455, serves as a starting point to understand the Doctrine of Discovery, specifically, the historic efforts by Christian monarchies and states of Europe in the fifteenth and later centuries to assume and exert conquest rights and dominance over non-Christian indigenous peoples in order to take over and profit from their lands and territories.” (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2010, p. 8) In these decrees, it was instructed to vanquish or convert the non-Christian kingdoms while exploring the world.

colonialism, to stop living in a hegemonic space, Indigenous people need to start with our own stories, to articulate our worldviews and identities as Indigenous peoples. Stories and narratives that provide insight into spaces where diverse voices have been silenced can contribute to our own transformation and the collective community.

Purpose and Research Questions

The Sixties Scoop, a term coined by Patrick Johnston in 1983 refers to the tens of thousands of First Nations, Inuit and Metis children that were forcibly removed from their homes through closed adoption into primarily non-Indigenous homes. To date most literature on the Sixties Scoop has been rooted in social work practices. There is little research on how Indigenous adults have reclaimed their identities after being adopted out. Yet an important element of any child's education is to learn or develop a healthy identity. The purpose of this study was to gather the stories of adult Indigenous transracial adoptees who have reclaimed their Indigenous identities after experiencing closed adoption² during the late 1950s through to the early 1980s.

My theoretical perspectives bring together Indigenous understandings of education, the literature on post-colonial Indigenous identities, processes of decolonization, and Indigenous resurgence scholarship in order to better understand how Indigenous adults who were raised away from their families and home communities reclaim their Indigenous identities. The three questions that guided this study are:

²In closed adoption birth records are sealed and there is no contact between birth parents and adoptive parents. The adoptee's birth certificate is changed and adoptive parents are named as the birth parents thus erasing birth identity. For transracial adoptees, erasure of culture and nationhood are additional impacts. Adoption is regulated by province or territory and closed adoption was common practice in Canada until the 1980s and 1990s.

1. How have adults who were fostered or adopted from their communities during the Sixties Scoop reclaimed their Indigenous identity?
2. Does this reclamation include connection to place? If yes, what does connection to place mean to the former adoptees?
3. Through the process of reclaiming identity, have participants' understandings of being Indigenous changed? If so, how?

In order to participate in this study, each participant must have had membership in an Aboriginal community (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) at birth and then have been removed from this community and raised without connection to their Indigenous nation (including the reserve, settlement, or community). In addition, each participant needed to identify as being in their own process of decolonization and willing to share their journey of healing. Together we engaged in a process of co-constructing and co-participating in stories of reclaiming Indigenous identities. These stories provide insight into the processes of shifting from hegemonic discourse that place Indigenous experiences as “other” to spirit-based discourses that center Indigenous knowledge systems as valid, life affirming, and life changing. This dissertation is a contribution to the debate on the impacts of loss of identity and concrete processes of reclaiming identity. My findings indicate cultural and spiritual teachings and practices, as well as, the knowledge of colonization and its impacts on Indigenous families, communities, and nations, contribute to adoptees' healing and ability to move forward.

Overview of Research Process

A national movement of Indigenous adoptees has been gathering momentum since 2013. The Indigenous Adoptee Gathering Committee (IAG) was formed as a result

of a roundtable hosted in 2013 by Manitoba's Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Eric Robinson. As a result of that meeting, Manitoba adoptees entered into a process of forming a provincial body to provide information and services to adoptees returning back to their Indigenous homelands and communities. In addition, in early 2014 Canada's Aboriginal Affairs ministers asked the country's premiers to look at compensation and counselling for Indigenous children adopted into white families. The first national gathering for Indigenous adoptees was hosted by the IAG in September 2014. The second national gathering was held in August 2015. A Manitoba Indigenous Adoptee Gathering was held in July 2015, the workshops included information on the Manitoba Sixties Scoop class action lawsuit. For jurisdictional reasons, class action lawsuits are provincial and territorial in scope, based on the province or territory from which a child was adopted. There are currently class action lawsuits in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

Both of the national Indigenous Adoptee Gatherings focused on healing and wellness for adoptees. This group's mandate is to create a forum for survivors, at a national level, to express their stories and to learn strategies from other survivors related to their illegal removal and displacement across Canada, the US and Europe. (National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network, 2016) This is currently the only national network by and for Indigenous survivors of child welfare. In 2016, the organization was incorporated and renamed *National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network (NISCWN)*. This organization has led rallies on parliament hill, has written letters to government officials, hosts information sessions in community and education settings, and hosts gatherings for adoptees. There are thousands of Indigenous adoptees connected

to this network who were adopted out in Canada, the US, England, New Zealand, and elsewhere.

This project was endorsed by the *National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network*. My study involved travelling across Canada in the summer of 2015 to visit with each participant in their respective communities for two to three days and conduct life-experience story interviews during the visits. This was followed by a Sharing Circle with six of the participants in November 2015. Both life-experience story interviews and the sharing circle are explained below. Protocols and ceremony were adhered to throughout this process. The objective was to gather life-experience stories on healing from the Sixties Scoop. Life-experience stories is one method of storywork (Archibald, 2008) whereby space is created for Indigenous people to have conversations to “share our stories in our own way and create discourses based on our Indigenous knowledge systems” (Archibald, 2008, p. 19). By sharing these stories, insight is provided into Indigenous lived experiences, and in a research context, recommendations to address correlating Indigenous issues. The three main parts to this study are gathering life-experience stories through interviews, stories in the sharing circle, and the analysis of these stories.

Life-experience story interviews. To distinguish from other life-story approaches, Chilisa (2012) presents the *focused life-story interview* as a post-colonial Indigenous interview method. The focused life-story interview “valorizes the web of connections that people have with those around them and with the land and the environment” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 209). In order to have these interviews, I decided I needed to spend time with each participant in their respective communities. I worked

with each participant's schedules and spent time in their communities in July, August and September 2015. Visits and interviews were held in: Victoria, Vancouver, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto and Ottawa. During this time, I travelled to each participant's community and spent two to three days visiting. The tape-recorded interviews were conducted at a time and place suggested by each participant and lasted 60-90 minutes. Meals and honoraria were provided during my visit. Transcripts were sent to each participant for their review and edits. Editing ranged from no changes to rewriting each response.

Sharing circle. To further the conversations and sharing of stories of healing from the Sixties Scoop, I held a sharing circle with six of the seven participants in Vancouver in November 2015. Accommodation was provided at one of the adoptees' parents' home for the weekend. I provided rides to/from the airport and secured a budget for meals for the weekend. I used some of my SSHRC Doctoral scholarship funds to assist with some of the airfares. This greatly reduced costs and allowed for a more welcoming environment. A trained facilitator assisted me with leading the circle that was held on the second day of the visit. This was a four-hour circle that was tape-recorded and each participant was offered the opportunity to read and edit the transcript. Sharing circle protocols were adhered to and gifts were given to everyone who participated.

Analysis of stories. The data analysis section of my dissertation and any reference to each participant's story has been reviewed and edited by each participant prior to being printed in my dissertation. Each participant chose whether to use their name or an alias in the study. Gifting includes an audio copy of their story.

Significance of the Study

The Sixties Scoop is garnering increasing attention in Canada. In March 2014 a roundtable of Sixties Scoop survivors was held in Manitoba by the provincial government. This was followed by a national Indigenous Adoptee gathering in Ottawa 2014, a Manitoba Indigenous Adoptees gathering in 2015, and national Indigenous Adoptee gatherings in Ottawa, 2015 and 2017. In addition, there are lobbying efforts to raise awareness, class action lawsuits to seek compensation for damages, and healing initiatives. As a result of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the Residential School system in Canada and the resulting TRC: Calls to Action (2015), the child welfare system and the resulting Sixties Scoop are becoming recognized as acts of colonial violence and cultural genocide. As will be discussed in the Literature Review chapter, no studies were found that have looked at the educative implications of Indigenous adult adoptees' reconnection to community and repatriation to birth culture.

The stories provide first-hand accounts of how seven Indigenous adult transracial adoptees regained their identities. These stories support a framework for reformulating Indigenous adoptee identities that is a result of unlearning hegemonic discourses. This is important because lived experiences provide insight into phenomena that cannot be conveyed in third person narratives. A community outcome of this project is the audio format of each story that I committed to providing each participant. Some participants immediately expressed interest in having their audio stories shared on webspaces. It became apparent in the process of data analysis that this study is a first step in a longer process of providing adoptees with resources to heal and have a voice. With the support and collaboration of participants, we envision creating a curriculum resource based on

this study to accompany the audio podcasts with the purpose of reaching both informal and formal education settings that include youth and adult learners. These developments will support the Truth & Reconciliation: Calls to Action (2015) recommendations that address the legacy of the Child Welfare System, as well as the education recommendations that call for curriculum & educational resources. These stories further our understandings of processes of decolonization and healing through spirit-based understandings of the world.

Identity formation is an important part of an individual's development. One of the main socializing processes contributing to identity development in all societies is education. Understanding how former Sixties Scoop adoptees reclaim their Indigenous identities provides an important lens for understanding the broader role that education systems play in the lives of individuals – particularly Indigenous adoptees. A secondary outcome of this study pertains to the importance of the methods I used for gathering life-experience stories and Indigenous approaches to data collection. This work can inform others who are seeking to understand effective and appropriate research approaches for working with Indigenous communities.

Findings can be used to spawn future research on frameworks for Indigenous resurgence and reconciliation that can inform government policies; methods for community-based research and repatriation of Indigenous people with their nations; curriculum development about Indigenous experiences in the child welfare system; as well as post-secondary programs and support services for current and former Youth in Care. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has created a forum for Indigenous nations across Canada to address the historical colonial policies that have

impacted Indigenous communities, including the child welfare system. This project removes shame from the Sixties Scoop narrative and contributes to the collective community healing process.

Definition of Terms

Aboriginal: Canadian government terminology adopted in the Constitution Act of 1982 to include First Nations, Inuit, and Metis in relationship with the Canadian state.

Ceremonies: Sacred practices of each nation's teachings. There are many types of ceremonies including celebratory, kinship, for purification, and rites of passage for different stages of life. Protocols are adhered to and based on the nation's teachings and holistic worldviews. (RCAP, 1996)

Culture: "Culture we understand to be the whole way of life of a people. We focus particularly on the aspects of culture that have been under assault historically by non-Aboriginal institutions: Aboriginal languages, relationship with the land, spirituality, and the ethics or rules of behaviour by which Aboriginal peoples maintained order in their families, clans, communities, nations and confederacies." (RCAP, 1996, p. 589)

First Nations: "A term used to describe Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Métis nor Inuit. This term came into common usage in the 1970s and '80s and generally replaced the term 'Indian', although unlike 'Indian', the term 'First Nation' does not have a legal definition. While 'First Nations' refers to the ethnicity of First Nations peoples, the singular 'First Nation' can refer to a band, a reserve-based community, or a larger tribal grouping and the status Indians who live in them."

(Indigenous Foundations website) For example, the Cree Nation is a larger tribal,

linguistic, and cultural kinship that includes First Nations (bands) in Treaty 4, Treaty 5, Treaty 6, and Treaty 8 territories.

Identity: Post-colonial Indigenous identities include legal, biological, cultural, personal, and spiritual identities. Much of legal, biological, cultural, and personal identities are defined by or in response to the colonial systems in which we live. (Garrouette, 2003) To heal and move forward, Garrouette proposes a focus on spiritual identities which she defines as an “identity founded in kinship (that) responds to at least two themes that one encounters across a range of tribal philosophies. One of these reflects a condition of being, which I call relationship to ancestry. The second involves a condition of doing, which I call a responsibility to reciprocity.” (Garrouette, 2005, p. 175)

*Indian*³: “The term ‘Indian’ refers to the legal identity of a First Nations person who is registered under the Indian Act. The term ‘Indian’ should be used only when referring to a First Nations person with status under the *Indian Act*, and only within its legal context. Aside from this specific legal context, the term ‘Indian’ in Canada is considered outdated and may be considered offensive due to its complex and often idiosyncratic colonial use in governing identity through this legislation and a myriad of other distinctions (i.e., “treaty” and “non-treaty,” etc.). In the United States, however, the term ‘American Indian’ and ‘Native Indian’ are both in current and common usage.” (Indigenous Foundations website)

Indian Act: Adopted in 1876, a set of policies that separate the original inhabitants of what is now Canada from settlers. Persons governed under the Indian Act are wards of

³ The definitions for Indian, Indian Act, Native, First Nations, Aboriginal, and Indigenous are taken or adapted from the University of British Columbia’s Indigenous Foundations website: <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca>

the state, each person is assigned a number and a corresponding reserve. Persons under the Indian Act were only allowed to vote prior to the 1960s if they denounced their Indian status and became enfranchised. From 1884-1951 the Potlatch law made practicing ceremonies punishable by imprisonment. In 1920 the Indian Act was amended to include mandatory separate schooling (the residential school system). The last residential school was closed in 1996. One important effect of the Indian Act was the immense authority of Indian Agents who served as chief administrators of the Ministry of Indian Affairs. While not legislated in the Indian Act, a pass system was in effect from 1885 through 1951 in which Indians were not allowed to leave their reserves without a pass signed by the Indian Agent. The power of the Indian Agent affected all aspects of life on reserve.

Indigeneity: Champagne (2014) states: “The strong attachments of identity to ways of indigenous life are, in part, embedded with the fusion of indigenous concepts of culture, community, nation, land and government.” (Understanding holistic Indigenous cultures, para. 2) Further, “indigenous resistance to assimilation is about preserving and living within a culturally holistic indigenous community” (Understanding Holistic Indigenous Cultures, para. 3)

Indigenous: Current terminology used widely, globally to identify the original inhabitants of a specified territory and the connection to territory is often described in creation stories. “In the UN, ‘Indigenous’ is used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others.” (Indigenous Foundations website) In Canada, Indigenous is inclusive of First

Nations, Metis, and Inuit, however regulatory bodies and land rights differ for each group.

Native: Growing dissatisfaction with the term Indian in the 1960s resulted in the adoption of this term, a broad and vague term, often viewed as less derogatory than Indian and can be viewed as a precursor to Aboriginal. Both Native and Aboriginal do not specify any nation. This term was commonly used by Indigenous scholars in the 1970s and 1980s and can be linked to the common usage of Native American in reference to the original inhabitants of what is now the United States.

Oppression (system of): “Systems of oppression, such as racism, heterosexism, ableism, and so on, are systemic, directional power relationships among social identity groups, in which one group benefits at the expense of other group” (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007).

Racism – “An ideology of racial domination” (Wilson, 1999, p. 14) “in which the presumed biological or cultural superiority of one or more racial groups is used to justify or prescribe the inferior treatment or social positions(s) of other racial groups” (Clair, Denis, 2015, p.857). Racism can be individual, cultural, or institutional. (Jones, 1997)

Reacculturation: To be reacquainted with the Indigenous cultural teachings and to practice these, to reconnect with the understandings and worldview that one entered into this life with and was removed from, specific to this paper, removed through the child welfare system. (Sinclair, 2007)

Spirituality: “Spirituality, in Aboriginal discourse, is not a system of beliefs that can be defined like a religion; it is a way of life in which people acknowledge that every element of the material world is in some sense infused with spirit, and all human behaviour is affected by, and in turn has an effect in, a non-material, spiritual realm.” (RCAP, 1996, p.

589) We are spiritual beings having a human journey. This means we are in relationship with all living beings, including the land, and have conscious connection to the spirit world. (Hart, 2010) A spirit-based discourse is grounded in this worldview or way of understanding the world. (Wright Cardinal, 2016)

Teachings: Every nation has teachings that explain our roles and practices as a sacred part of creation. Sometimes teachings are referred to as laws; these are natural or spiritual laws that instruct us how to live in a holistic way. (McAdam, 2015; Simpson, 2008a)

Trauma: “Generally defined by stress events that present extraordinary challenges to coping and adaptation” (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005, p. 196). The American Psychiatric Association (2000) defines trauma as physical, psychological, and emotional threats; further Helms, Nicolas, & Green (2012) contend that racism and ethnoviolence can be traumatic stressors whether recent exposure or past events.

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 1 has outlined the purpose and background to this study including the historical context of the Sixties Scoop and current mobilization of survivors. In chapter 2, I provide an overview of the Sixties Scoop literature and a theoretical framing of four perspectives that informed my approach to the study: Post-colonial Indigenous identities, Indigenous understandings of education, decolonization practices, and Indigenous resurgence scholarship. Chapter 3 discusses salient features of Indigenous research including: spirit-based contextualities, Indigenous knowledge systems, and a contribution to Indigenous issues. In addition, I discuss the rationale for using the life-experience story method and processes for gathering stories in respectful ways. Although I did not start my study using a Critical Race Theory lens, I include this in Chapter 3 as it came through

as a vital theoretical perspective in my analysis and understanding of the data. In Chapter 4, four themes identified in the data are presented to illustrate the ways in which research participants reclaimed their identities. Each theme includes sub-themes and an analysis centered on quotations by participants that connects the research to the existing literature. In chapter 5, I provide a theoretical contribution to Indigenous identity development and healing, as well as, research recommendations for scholars and education practitioners to address the impacts of colonization on Indigenous identity development and hegemonic discourse.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I provided an overview of the context of this study linking the identifying features of the Sixties Scoop with the Residential School system, as well as, the purpose of this study and research questions, through which I explored how adults who were removed from their communities as a result of the child welfare system reclaimed their identities. I described the three-part research process that included life-story interviews, a sharing circle, and analysis of the stories and the potential contributions of this study to support the TRC Calls to Action, specifically stories of healing from trauma. In the next chapter I will provide my theoretical framework that informs this study and the literature review that led me to my research question.

Chapter Two

Literature Review & Theoretical Perspectives

In recent years, the negative legacy of the Indian residential schools has imprinted itself on the consciousness of Canadians due to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But as historian James Miller has noted, residential schools “were merely one important cog in a machine of cultural oppression and coercive change” (Miller, 1996, p. 427). That is, there have been multiple initiatives within the colonial project that have shaped the lives of Indigenous children throughout Canada. A colonial initiative that has received much attention in the social work literature but has been relatively unexplored by scholars of other disciplines is the Sixties Scoop, defined as a wide-scale national apprehension of Indigenous children placed in primarily non-Aboriginal homes in Canada, the U.S. and overseas from the late 1950s through the early 1980s (Johnston, 1983; Kimelman, 1985). Recent estimates suggest over 20,000 First Nations, Metis, and Inuit children were removed from their families (National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare, 2016).

The Sixties Scoop is part of Canada’s colonial story in which the prevalent assimilative force has been disconnecting Indigenous children from their families and understandings of the world. Fournier & Crey (1997) suggest that the child welfare system became the new agent of assimilation and colonization after the Canadian government decided to wind down the residential school system in the 1950s. Commonalities between children adopted out during the Sixties Scoop and residential school survivors include culture and language loss, internalized racism, and isolation from familial communities, as well as mainstream society (Bombay et al, 2009; Fournier

& Crey, 1997; Sinclair, 2007). Indeed, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 calls to redress the legacy of residential schools supports Justice Ed Kimelman's insights that this forced assimilation of Indigenous children through the child welfare system can be described as genocide.

In this chapter, I examine what is currently known – and not known – about the Sixties Scoop through an examination of the research literature. Furthermore, my understanding of the literature has been informed by four theoretical perspectives which I also discuss in this chapter: post-colonial Indigenous identities, Indigenous understandings of education, decolonization practices, and Indigenous resurgence scholarship.

The Sixties Scoop Literature

This literature review used content analysis to examine the discourse that has been generated pertaining to the Sixties Scoop. The discourse was first collected by entering the search terms "Sixties Scoop" and "Transracial Adoption" into various search engines, such as WorldCat, EBSCO and JSTOR. Searches generated approximately 140 monographs, reports, journal and newspaper articles of which the majority included a broader discussion of transracial adoption. Elimination of non-Indigenous transracial writings resulted in a much smaller body of academic and grey literature on Indigenous transracial adoption and the time period which constitutes the Sixties Scoop. From this corpus, content analysis techniques were used to determine key concepts and terms. The analyses yielded three critical phases within the literature: Phase One (mid 1950s-1970s) encompassed concepts of child well-being; Phase Two (mid 1970s-1990s) witnessed the development of self-governing Indigenous welfare agencies; and Phase Three (2000-

present) has highlighted issues of adoptee identity. This body of literature situates the experience of transracially adopted Indigenous children within the colonial context and underscores the experience of disconnection from Indigenous ways of knowing and being. It is discussed in the next section.

Phase One – Child well-being (1950’s to 1970’s). The early literature documenting the Sixties Scoop focused mainly on the characteristics of individual adoptees and their adoptive families with an emphasis on evaluating the success of Indigenous transracial adoption. The Indian Adoption Project (1958-1967) was undertaken by the Child Welfare League of America and included 29 percent of the 341 families who adopted children in the US during the decade from 1958 to 1967. Its purpose was to stimulate the adoption of American-Indian children on a nation-wide basis and was described by Fanshel (1972) as “a significant effort to use the vehicle of adoption as a possible solution to the lifelong dilemma faced by minority group children whose parents [had] been defeated by life’s circumstances” (p. iii). Hired by the Indian Adoption Project, Fanshel conducted a ten-year study to develop: 1) systematic knowledge about the characteristics of the couples who adopted the children, and 2) a picture of the experiences of families and children for a five-year period after the children were placed.

In a series of five interviews over five years, Fanshel collected data with each set of adoptive parents on background to adoption and the early experience; mothers’ and fathers’ social perspectives on transracial adoptions; parents’ views on how the children fared; and in the final interview, adoptive mothers’ final thoughts. The data were scored on a continuum that ranged from faring well to not faring well. In a series of interviews

on mothers' social perspectives a table titled *Index of Child's Indian Appearance* rated the extent to which their children's Indian characteristics made them different and created unpleasant incidents (Fanshel, 1972, p. 130). Another table displayed the frequency of maladaptive symptoms such as: immature behaviour, thumbsucking, masturbation, daytime wetting, nocturnal wetting, soiling, tics and mannerisms, and nail biting then scored with weighted points based on the mother's opinion of the severity of the problem.

Fanshel (1972) concluded that "the placement of Indian children in white homes" represented a "low level of risk for the children with respect to safeguarding their physical and emotional well-being" (p. 339). Further, the interviewers had "strong impressions that the children were very secure and obviously feeling loved and wanted in their adoptive homes" (p. 339). However, adjustment was viewed as somewhat problematic as the children got older due to maladaptive symptoms. Overall, Fanshel's (1972) research provided evidence to consider transracial adoption as "quite viable from the perspective of the adoptive parents themselves" (p. 339).

Nevertheless, Fanshel's research was hampered by methodological challenges. All of the data were based on adoptive parents' perceptions of their children's behaviour and their interpretations of social interactions. This study did not include the adopted children's own voices. This study also embodied racial biases from the 1960s that: 1) Indian parents were not as capable as white parents of overcoming life challenges; 2) Indian children were viewed as risky to adopt due to their Indian deficiencies, and 3) looking Indian was problematic in mainstream society.

According to Ward (1984), until the 1950s, few children of minority races in Canada were adopted unless during infancy (p. 3). Ward speculates that the number of

Indian adoptees increased during the 1960s due to “both a decrease in the number of white babies available and a growing idealism and desire to break down racial barriers” (p. 6). Yet a fundamental problem in Indigenous transracial adoption was the approach of removing Indigenous children from their homes. Rather than providing much needed support for families on reserves that had been affected by one hundred years of colonial policies, a deficit model was created to remove children from the community and place them in white families. This approach extended to Indigenous families off reserve, including the apprehension of Metis and Inuit children.

In 1967 Saskatchewan established its Adopt Indian Metis (AIM) program to advertise the availability of 150 Indian and Metis preschool children for adoption. The AIM newspaper articles and the advertisements of “child of the week” also demonstrated the racialized values of North American society during this era. The advertisements suggested that white families needed to be convinced that Indian and Metis children were safe to adopt and could be assimilated. In doing so, families would be saving these children from a “perilous” fate in their Indian and Metis homes (Fournier & Crey, 1997).

Ward (1984) indicated there was growing controversy in the early 1970s over transracial adoption, specifically pertaining to African American children in the United States. In 1978, Ward conducted an inquiry “to discover whatever responses agencies and welfare departments across Canada might have made to pressures from those concerned, for political and psychological reasons, about interracial adoptions” (p. 1). The purpose of her survey methods was to find out current practices in Native children adoption and observe changes that may be due to growing concern over transracial placements and Native requests to keep their children. (Ward, 1984, p. 41) She described her study as a

progress report that did not provide any decisive answers. The summary of literature included: Native cultural patterns, foster care and adoption, interracial placement, in-racial foster and adoptive homes, and problems in service delivery. She did provide a historical account of interracial adoption from its inception in the 1950s through the controversial period of the 1970s. Particularly noteworthy were the statistics on Native children in government care. By the mid-1970s, the percentage of Native children in government care varied considerably. Natives represented only 9% of children in care in Ontario, whereas they constituted 39% in British Columbia and 40% in Alberta. Most striking, 60% of all children in care in Saskatchewan and Manitoba were Indigenous. “For many children the choice was between growing up in a white foster home or homes, and being adopted by white parents” (Ward, 1984, p. 23). These are staggering numbers when one considers that Aboriginal children “formed less than 4 percent of the national population” (Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 83).

In summary, the first phase of the social work literature on the Sixties Scoop has indicated that white families needed to be encouraged to adopt Indigenous children; there was hesitation based on racial difference; and adopting babies was preferred (Fanshel, 1972; Ward, 1984). Nevertheless, the ratio of Native to non-Native children in care indicated both a growing trend to adopt Indigenous infants and the child welfare system replacing the residential schools as a repository for Indigenous children.

Phase Two: Self-governing Indigenous welfare agencies (mid 1970s-1990s).

After First Nations people were federally enfranchised in 1960, First Nations leaders had the opportunity to become more politically active within the Canadian state and over the next two decades lobbied for the right to administer child welfare on reserve, among

other rights (Sinclair, 2007). In Morse's (1984) study, Native clients were presented as "victims" of the child welfare system, suggesting that a "weak socioeconomic situation in Indian, Metis, and Inuit communities created the appearance of material, if not also physical, deprivation on the part of their children. Social workers tend to conclude that these children were in unacceptable family situations requiring apprehension" (p. 22).

Fournier & Crey (1997) describe the Sixties Scoop phenomenon as follows:

Aboriginal children typically vanished with scarcely a trace, the vast majority of them placed until they were adults in non-aboriginal homes where their cultural identity, their legal Indian status, their knowledge of their own First Nation and even their birth names were erased, often forever. (p. 81)

The situation was further complicated when Indigenous social workers began replacing white social workers with the same role of child protection (Helcason, 2009). Helcason (2009) recounts:

As one of only two social workers of Aboriginal descent within an agency of hundreds, I was often prevailed upon by the perinatal team to assist them in counselling young mothers into relinquishing their children. Regrettably my naivety and need for secure employment caused me to comply more than I was comfortable with. This is a situation about which I am haunted to this day. (p. 51)

While Indigenous self-governing models for child welfare were being implemented, the structures and approaches to working with children and families were deeply rooted within colonial policies and practices that the communities inherited. Swift (1997) states: "The tripartite agreements developed in various jurisdictions since the

1980s, most prominently in Manitoba, appeared at first to provide a solution by sharing authority among the involved parties. However, it is now apparent that power sharing is only part of the answer” (p. 17). Swift’s recommendations included examination of new service approaches with a focus on “development of new and/or intensified programs for serving children and families in their own homes” (p. 17). Thus, during phase two of the Sixties Scoop, apprehension continued to be the main model for dealing with child welfare with a growing recognition that this model was not effective.

Studies in the second phase inform self-governing agency development. These studies did not, however, confront the loss and deficit models that resulted from removing Indigenous children from their familial homes. Thus, we see a shift from the first phase that presumed transracial adoption was positive for the child to the second phase that emphasized Indigenous control of the child welfare system, while critiquing the value of apprehension.

Phase Three: Issues of adoptee identity (2000-present). The third phase of the literature on the Sixties Scoop emphasizes issues of adoptee identity. In her article *Identity lost and found: Lessons from the sixties scoop*, Sinclair (2007) has proposed that a paradigm shift is required in Aboriginal transracial adoption ideology. She makes three recommendations. First, Sinclair suggests that adoptees have a unique cultural identity that is a mix of their birth heritage and their adoptive heritage, combined with their personal experiences, choices, and understandings of the environment. Second, social workers need to reject the myth that cultural and ethnic heritage can be instilled vicariously through books and other non-familial means, since these present a façade of the culture and not the culture as it actually exists and is experienced by children in an

embodied way. Further, she believes many adoptees are facing identity issues because of being socialized and acculturated into middle-class “white” society (p. 69). Third, Sinclair recommends “constructing a bi- or multi-cultural family stance... which reconstitutes the cultural entity of the entire adopting family identity” (p.76). At a policy level, cultural considerations may influence adoptive parent screening strategies and transracial adoption procedures such as adoptive family preparation.

Sinclair (2007) questions why current research reports the majority of adult adoptees as succeeding in life despite the problematics of Aboriginal transracial adoption reported in earlier findings on the Sixties Scoop. While several studies show evidence of traumatic identity crises, psychological trauma and behavioural problems, Sinclair states that more research is needed, specifically in the areas of resiliency amongst adoptees and “the influence of repatriation to birth culture” (p. 75). She speculates that reconnecting with birth culture provides “vital cultural mirrors necessary for self-validation; a cultural reframing from which to review and re-perceive their experiences” (p. 75). Connecting with cultural identity was a critical source of healing and renewal for many participants in Sinclair’s study with some being able “to perceive their experiences as a socio-political act rather than as a consequence of personal deficiency (for the first time)” (p. 76).

The purpose of Nuttgens’ (2013) study was to bring greater understanding to the experiences of Aboriginal children raised in non-Aboriginal families. Using narrative inquiry, he focused on the identity formation of four participants and collected his data with audio-taped unstructured interviews of 45-90 minutes in duration. Nuttgens identified seven narrative threads: stories of disconnection; stories of passing, described as “escaping the subordination and oppression accompanying one identity and accessing

the privilege and status of the other” (Ginsberg, 1996, p. 2); stories of diversion, described as attempts participants made to divert their attention away from psychological distress (p. 7); stories of connection; stories of reconnection; stories of surpassing; and stories of identity coherence. According to Nuttgens “the experience of reconnecting with members of one’s birth family is a neglected aspect within transracial adoption research. None of the studies reviewed during the preparation for this research included information on this topic” (p. 10).

Helcason (2009) also emphasized the need for respect of an adoptee’s community of origin. Transracially adopted children need to know where they are from and have connection to their community in order to have a healthy sense of identity. Otherwise these children hold colonial stories of their birth heritage that negatively impact their identity, including self-esteem. As early as 1972, Canada’s Assembly of First Nations was pointing to the necessity of Indigenous children receiving Indigenous teachings in order to develop a healthy identity. In the 1972 policy paper *Indian Control of Indian Education* the National Indian Brotherhood, precursor to Assembly of First Nations presented their statement on Education that included the rationale for local First Nations control of First Nations children’s education. The authors explained “we modern Indians want our children to learn that happiness and satisfaction [come] from: pride in one’s self, understanding one’s fellowmen, and, living in harmony with nature. These are lessons which are necessary for survival in this twentieth century” (p. 1). Furthermore, the authors indicated that “unless a child learns about the forces which shape him; the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being” (p. 9).

Being removed from one's culture does not support healthy identity formation.

Ash (2003) recalls his experience of the Sixties Scoop:

I had to live in a society which denied the true Indian peoples' spirit. They were the invisible ones who drank and did nothing good for the world, as the media picture goes. I knew that I needed to develop certain survival techniques so I told my good buddies that I was a Hawaiian - it was cooler and more acceptable at the time. (p. 1)

Further, Ash fantasized about his unknown parents as the 'Noble Savage' from Disney. "Their way of life was teepees, canoes, serenity and a close relationship with nature. My fantasies were idealistic and way too romantic" (p. 1). He speculates this is a common escape for others in his situation "when faced with filling the void created by an attempt to erase one's culture" (p. 1).

Wagamese (2009) has described the trauma of the Sixties Scoop as "the primal wound" (p. 12). He also reflects on reconnecting with community, noting:

When I found my people again it got better. Every ceremony, every ritual, every phrase I learned in my language eased that wound and eventually it became easier, more graceful, to walk as an Indian person. I began to reclaim the history, culture, language, philosophy, and way of being that the Sixties Scoop had deprived me of. (p. 13)

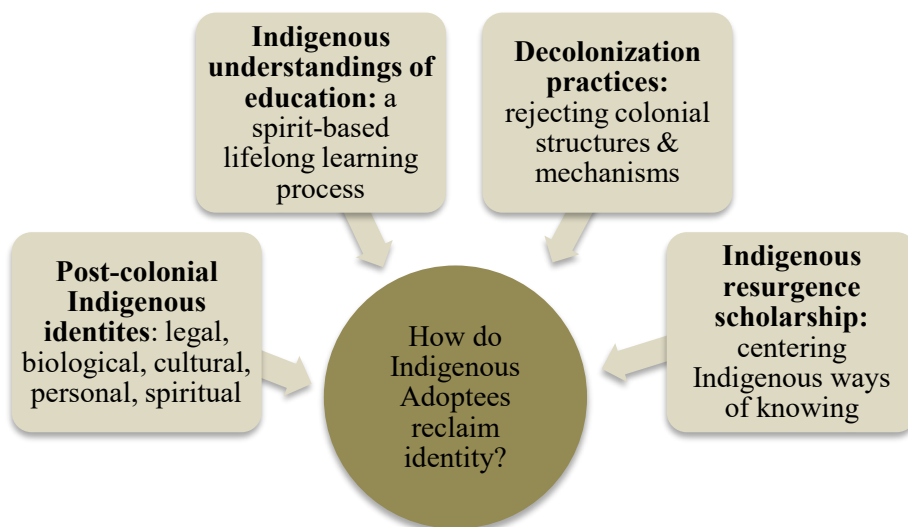
Therefore, the current literature is opening the dialogue on Indigenous transracially adopted children's identity formation, adoptee (dis)location, and the importance of reconnection to community.

To summarize, scholarship addressing the phenomenon known as the “Sixties Scoop” has proceeded through three distinct phases. Phase One illustrated the racial biases of North American society during the 1950s to the mid-1970s and justified the apprehension of Indigenous children and their placement in non-Indigenous homes. The dominant theme of the literature during Phase Two (late 1970s to the 1990s) was the reclamation of child welfare practices by Indigenous organizations that perpetuated the cultural and racial hegemony of apprehension. Phase Three (2000s to today) has begun to explore the experiences of Indigenous transracial adoptees. Nevertheless, the discourse remains firmly within social work policy and practice. We have yet to explore educational aspects of this phenomenon.

Theoretical Perspectives

My understanding of the literature was informed by four perspectives: Post-colonial Indigenous identities, Indigenous understandings of education, decolonization practices, and Indigenous resurgence scholarship; each perspective also informs the approach to my study as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1. Four Theoretical Perspectives that inform my research question



Post-colonial Indigenous identities. Indigenous identity has been framed differently than mainstream western conceptions of identity. Whereas Indigenous identity encompasses the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual self, many Western concepts of identity⁴ present a mind-body binary. In their book *Indigenous Bodies: Reviewing, Relocating, and Reclaiming* (2013) editors Jacqueline Fear-Segal and Rebecca Tillett attribute the beginning of the mind-body binary to the writings of Plato in 400 BC and his separation of matter and form. This was carried into the new world from Descartes' 17th century scientific philosophy that separated minds from bodies (p. x). Fear-Segal and Tillett (2013) acknowledge the power of this Western binary, as well as "its dominance and endurance" today (p. ix). Culturally diverse Indigenous peoples "were – and continue to be – forced to confront and engage with the imposition of the Western mind-body binary as part of a legacy of conquest" (p. x). Within this legacy of conquest is the experience of historical trauma.

Historical trauma is multigenerational and cumulative over time. It extends beyond the life of an individual who has experienced the brunt of colonialization. The losses are not historical in the sense they are in the past but rather they are ever present, represented by one's economic position, discrimination, dysfunctional socialization and a sense of cultural loss. (Frideres, 2008, p. 319)

Healthy Indigenous identity development specifies an ongoing inward spiritual process driven by community interaction (Ermine, Sinclair, & Jeffery, 2004; Hart, 2010). This inward spiritual process involves education and healing from historical trauma, as well as, a shared worldview. Frideres (2008) explains: "For Aboriginal people, worldview is at

⁴ Not all western identity theories use this binary.

the core of community identity (p. 323)” and “there are common elements that make up the worldview and serve a community’s identity in time and place. Because all things are viewed as interconnected, relationships among people also are critically important; the notion of religion and spirituality have a communal rather than individual basis” (p. 324). Indigenous spiritualities correlate the wellness of self to the wellness of all living beings including all of cosmology.

The Medicine Wheel is often presented as an Aboriginal wellness model. To my knowledge Medicine Wheel teachings originated from the Cree, Anishnaabe, and Blackfoot nations that are now referred to as the Plains peoples of North America. Typically, the Medicine Wheel has four quadrants representing childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and elderly with corresponding teachings per stage of life. (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996) Medicine Wheels are not pan-Indigenous and have been adapted by other nations, as well as, non-Indigenous scholars, and practitioners. “Medicine Wheel concepts teach the idea of balance in human development in order to maintain the sustenance of all living beings, including all aspects of the planet, which is considered a healthy being” (Wenger-Nabigon, 2010, p.150). While Indigenous notions of identity do include different stages of life, the entire life journey is one of personal identity development within spirit-based worldviews.

During the 17th century, Indigenous peoples were named “savages” due to their connection with nature, “sauvage” in French means “wild”, and this value of nature as a teacher was viewed as lesser than the explorers’ and settlers’ values due to the pervasive value of dominance over nature. Thus, Indigenous notions of identity, which are grounded in the spiritual understanding that we learn from our non-human relations, were

not valued. Further, the notion of achieving cognitive maturity is apparent in the prejudicial Canadian legislation: The Gradual Civilization Act, 1867 by the Parliament of the Province of Canada, and the Indian Act, 1872. These acts refer to Indigenous people as childlike and infantilized wards of the crown due to cognitive immaturity. A primary purpose of the Indian Act has been to reeducate Indigenous people on who they are and how they live in Canada. Bonita Lawrence (2003) suggests that the Indian Act is much more than a body of laws that has controlled Indigenous people for over a century; it “provides ways of understanding Native identity, organizing a conceptual framework that has shaped contemporary Native life” (p. 3). This links back to the importance of spiritual identity development in Indigenous frameworks.

I frame my discussion of Indigenous identity around Garrouette’s (2003) book *Real Indians* because her research is thorough and heavily cited by Indigenous scholars in their discussions on the complexities of post-colonial Indigenous identities. She provides a thorough examination of the purposes and challenges of four definitions of post-colonial Indigenous identity: legal, biological, cultural, and personal (self-identification). These definitions are problematic and often contentious. For this reason, at the end of her discussion, in the final chapter *Allowing the Ancestors to Speak: Radical Indigenism and New/Old definitions of Identity* she proposes a way forward to define post-colonial Indigenous identity that is spirit-based. Since the publication of her book in 2003, spirit-based identities have been written about extensively and support the claim that I am making regarding healing through spirit-based discourses. Garrouette’s work is situated in the United States and while there are significant differences between American and Canadian law, the categories of identity: legal, biological, cultural, personal, and spiritual

are equally applicable and encompassing of post-colonial Indigenous identities in both jurisdictions.

Garrouette (2003) suggests current legal definitions of being Indigenous are wrapped up in 19th century Western biological definitions of race. In the U.S. this is overt in the use of *blood quantum* to determine tribal citizenship. Blood quantum is the phrase used to refer to the amount of Indigenous blood a person possesses. In the United States a person requires 1/16th blood quantum to receive tribal membership. While blood quantum is not used in Canada, the Indian Act regulates who is eligible for First Nations status and it is also a racialized system based on the number of status Indian grandparents one has (Frideres, 2011). We see the basis of this racialized classification system in the Canadian census of 1901, as depicted in the figure below.

Figure 2.2. Fourth census of Canada, 1901. Schedule No. 1, Population.

Two sections of Schedule No. 1, Population:

Personal Description							
Name of each person in family or household on 31 st March, 1901.	Sex.	Colour.	Relationship to head of family or household.	Single, Married, widowed, or divorced.	Month and date of birth.	Year of birth	Age at last birthday.

Column Headings and interpretation

Column 5. Colour

- Denoted by the letter “w” for whites (people of European descent), “r” for red (Native Canadians), “b” for black (people of African descent), “y” for yellow (people of Japanese or Chinese descent).
- Children who were of mixed Caucasian and other heritage (that is, red, black or yellow) were to be designated as members of the appropriate non-white race.

Citizenship, Nationality and Religion					
Country or place of birth.	Year of immigration to Canada.	Year of naturalization.	Racial or Tribal origin.	Nationality.	Religion.

Column Headings and interpretation

Column 14. Racial or tribal origin

- Generally traced through their father.

- Aboriginal people were to have their “racial or tribal origin” traced through their mothers, with the specific name of the First Nation entered.

Source: Government of Canada. Library and Archives Canada. Census of 1901.

<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/about-census.aspx#d>

Census data was collected in communities across Canada including Indian reserves.

However, according to Library and Archives Canada, the data from reserves is incomplete and not all Indigenous people were enumerated. Personal description included the column Colour and people were listed as: white, red, black, or yellow. In the column Racial or Tribal origin, in addition to the specific name of the First Nation reserve traced through the mother, the use of "breed" and "half-breed" indicated a person of mixed Native and other background, as noted in the following examples that were used in census 1901:

- Fb (French breed)
- Eb (English breed)
- Sb (Scottish breed)
- Ib (Irish breed)
- Ob (other breed)
- Cree fb (Cree and French breed)

To this day, these racial classifications affect who has legal Indigenous identity in Canada.

Garrouette (2003) suggests that tribes in the United States are viewed as less qualified to determine their own citizenship than other nations such as the U.S., Egypt and other African countries. The same is applicable in Canada. “No one asks how much Egyptian Naguib Manfouz is, nor do they require that J.M. Cootzee provide proof that his citizenship and identity is embodied in tribal African nationhood” (Garrouette, 2003, p.

57). Several Indigenous scholars theorize this is due to differing levels of mutual respect between nations. (Alfred, 2008; Garrouette, 2003; Lawrence, 2012; Morito, 2012) This ties into my theoretical discussion of Indigenous resurgence and the need for respectful nation to nation relations. For example, does Canada view the treaty with Nisga'a nation, the Tlicho nation, or other First Nations as equal to modern treaties that Canada has entered into such as NAFTA and G8 agreements? Simply put, Canada was built on stolen land and Indigenous people were assigned two choices: assimilate and lose claim to the land or live under the Indian Act with state imposed parameters of legal identity based on 19th century biological (race) determinants that were anticipated to be washed away within a number of generations.

Further to this, the Canadian Government has a long history of negotiating with Aboriginal peoples for the surrender of land (Alfred, 2009; Corntassel, 2012; McAdam, 2015). Eliminating the Indian through assimilation or genocide was an overt objective of the colonial agenda. Today, the Canadian government is obligated by law to provide for and compensate each First Nation (band) based on the number of status Indians and the specifics of the treaty to that territory and Indian Act legislation. This is an expense that is falsely presented in the media and schooling as a burden to the Canadian taxpayer. Without accessible public information on the Indian Act and the reserve system the obligations of these nation-to-nation agreements are misrepresented.

For decades, this controversial and intrusive piece of federal legislation governed almost all aspects of Aboriginal life, from the nature of band governance and land tenure systems to restrictions on Aboriginal cultural practices. Most critically, the Indian Act defines the qualifications for being a “status Indian,” and as such has

been the centre-piece of Aboriginal anger over federal attempts to control Aboriginal identity and membership. (Coates, 2008, p. 1)

It is evident that legal and biological Indigenous identities are complex and state driven identities contentious. Indigenous cultural identity is also complex. Garrouette points out that cultural identification has importance and significance within community yet definitions also have limitations as these can create stereotypes and expectations of how an Indigenous person should dress, act, and perform and therefore, what is not considered Indigenous. “American Indians remain locked in the confines and time warps of American iconography so that, even in this time of multicultural America, we are typically accepted and recognized only in our crudest forms – as generic, buckskin clad warriors and exotic maidens.” (Grande, 1999, pp. 307-8) Cultures are fluid and to expect Indigenous people to look and act as they did in the portrayal of the first Thanksgiving or cowboy and Indian movies while settlers move forward with modern clothing, language expressions, and habits is prejudicial and limits Indigenous identity to historical spaces of “other”.

In addition to the “frozen in time” nature of popular identity, the role of cultural identity is problematic in other ways and Indigenous cultural identification is more nebulous than legal or biological Indigenous identification in post-colonial times. For several decades cultural ceremonies were banned under the Indian Act. These ceremonies represent the knowledge systems of Indigenous nations and generally require a land-base to do these ceremonies. While ceremonial bans were lifted by the 1950s, colonial policies of erasure and dispossession have impacted each generation’s access to language and land-based practices. In Deer’s (2011) discussion of the social space between Aboriginal

identity and non-Aboriginal identity in Canada, he describes an area of overlap that “is not one where elements of one set are combined with another and reflected by showing common elements. In this interpretation, elements of one set obscure similar elements of another” (p. 7). Deer (2011) names this overlap “a EuroCanadian obfuscation of Indigenous identity” (p. 7). The illegalization of Indigenous cultural practices coupled with the obfuscation of Indigenous identity over several generations results in a nebulous cultural environment and a challenge to Indigenous people today. Thus, we end up with romanticized images of Indigenous cultures as nature oriented people or “savages” to be tamed; or adapting and assimilating; without a deeper understanding of a belief system.

A fourth definition of post-colonial Indigenous identity is personal or self-identification. In 1982, Canada’s constitution was amended to acknowledge Aboriginal peoples including First Nations (status and non-status Indians), Inuit, and Metis. In 1985, Bill C-31 was passed, an act to amend the Indian Act in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that allowed women who married non-status Indians and their offspring to be reinstated as tribal members. These two changes in legislation, as well as the modern treaty processes that have ensued since the 1970s between the government of Canada and various Indigenous nations, allow for more persons to identify as Indigenous in Canada. In the past, Indian agents and other Canadian state officials would determine one’s First Nations, Metis, or Inuit status in Canada through treaty negotiations, Canada census, and other colonization efforts. It is now often up to individuals to demonstrate their lineage to any Indigenous nation that is in relationship with the state in order to become part of that nation and receive any entitlements from the Canadian government.

Corntassel (2012) suggests that undoing the generations of racial bias since early confederation would not only be an incredibly lengthy process but would also lack merit to the Canadian state as reinstating more Indians would cost more money. Thus, the onus is on individuals to demonstrate their Indigenous lineage and make application for Indigenous citizenship just as immigrants make application for Canadian citizenship. The irony of this is that when Census Canada collects data no identification cards are required so the numbers of individuals who self-identify as Aboriginal are much higher than the numbers of persons registered in First Nations, or Inuit or Metis nations. It is important that people can self-identify due to the negative impacts of state imposed identity; however, self-identification can be taken to the extreme whereby a person feels they are Indigenous and therefore are Indigenous but may not be viewed as such by any particular nation as they do not have membership in an Indigenous nation or the ability to demonstrate lineage within an Indigenous family (Garrouette, 2003).

Garrouette (2003) proposes that we retain these four definitions of identity: legal, biological, cultural, and personal, in part because some of these definitions are so entrenched in law and policy that it would create further problems of identification for Indigenous communities. Such a problem was evident when Prime Minister Trudeau proposed the White Paper in 1969, a policy to eliminate the Indian Act. The National Indian Brotherhood wrote a scathing response, the Red Paper, which resulted in national political mobilization of Indigenous leadership. Essentially, the Brotherhood had no appetite to fall under provincial jurisdiction for various services, arguing that Indigenous peoples should negotiate on a nation-to-nation basis with Canada.

After a robust discussion of the post-colonial definitions of Indigenous identities, Garrouette (2003) proposes spiritual identity which she names as a definition of kinship. This definition reflects, first, a condition of being, which she calls relationship to ancestry, and second, a condition of doing, which she calls responsibility to reciprocity (p. 118). Her perspective supports the work of later scholars who invite us to look to the traditional teachings of our respective Indigenous nations to understand identity. Here we will find our spirit-based relationships, how we come into relationship with human and non-human relations, and our connections to the natural world which includes language, relationship to land and to each other.

There is a history of colonial policy that has disrupted Indigenous identity formation. Smith (1999) explains that “many Indigenous activists argue that such things as mental illness, alcoholism, and suicide are not about psychological and individualized failure but about colonization or lack of collective self-determination” (p. 153). The literature suggests that healthy Indigenous identity comes from the collective learning foundations that happen in community. Indigenous transracial adoptees have the unique experience of being born into an Indigenous family and assigned a legal Indigenous identity at birth: First Nations, Inuit, or Metis; then, being forcibly removed for the purpose of assimilation and raised in non-Indigenous homes. They have subsequently found their Indigenous identities in adulthood. The processes of reclaiming Indigenous identity – the focus of this dissertation – will be discussed in Chapter 4 - Findings.

Indigenous understandings of education. One of the main socializing processes contributing to identity development in all societies is education. Indigenous peoples throughout the world have always viewed education as a broader, lifelong concept that

encompasses physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth (Absolon, 2011; Anuik, Battiste, & George, 2010; Battiste, 2005; Battiste, 2013; Kirkness, 2013; Kovach, 2009; Wilson 2008). A growing number of Indigenous scholars have asserted that schooling is merely a sub-component of the broader concept of education, despite the fact that the two terms tend to be used interchangeably. Education within Indigenous knowledge systems involves a broader, lifelong notion of experience “gleaned from interaction with one another, with all of nature (seen and unseen) as well as with all of the cosmos” (LaFrance, 2000, p. 101). This lifelong learning process is an inner journey that encompasses people’s physical, mental, and emotional development, culminating in the spiritual self. It is from this space of spirituality that growth and learning emanates (Absolon, 2011; Anuik, Battiste, & George, 2010; Battiste, 2005; Battiste, 2013; Kirkness, 2013; Kovach, 2009; Wilson 2008).

Some scholars warn about “essentializing” – or generalizing - Indigeneity and we see these challenges in the previous discussion of post-colonial cultural Indigenous identities (Deloria, 1969; Grande, 1999; Kuper, 2003). As described in Chapter 1 in Definition of Terms, the United Nations use of “Indigenous” refers broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others. This current terminology is used widely, globally to identify the original inhabitants of a specified territory and the connection to territory that these people have is often described in their creation stories or natural laws. Careful to avoid essentialism, scholars have nevertheless identified some principles and understandings that land-based peoples who view the world with a cosmological lens have in common.

For example, Hart (2010) discusses Simpson's seven principles of Indigenous Worldview⁵, the seventh of which is that human beings are the least important of the world's elements. A hierarchical model of education values individual's knowledge; in Indigenous worldviews, knowledge is collective and human beings are a small part of the cosmos. Further, much of what we learn is through reflective practices. According to Kovach (2009), for example, "From a Nehiyaw epistemology, attention to inward knowing is not optional...From a traditional Cree perspective, seeking out Elders, attending to holistic epistemologies, and participating in cultural catalyst activities (dream, ceremony, prayer) are all means for accessing inward knowledge" (p. 50). Connection to spirit and spiritual practices are so important to understanding Indigenous identities. Each Indigenous nation has its own natural laws and spiritual practices which cannot be understood without being lived.

Ermine (1998) explains: "Learning and spirit are foundational to the ethos of Aboriginal culture and pedagogy" (p.26). To illustrate this, I discuss two principles. The first is relationship to land and the second is relationship to animals. Nadasdy (2005) describes a conversation between a Kluane Elder and her grandson in the bush. The Elder asks her grandson what he is doing. He says "I'm working". He is a land claims negotiator and is walking around with a map. The Elder says: "What do you mean 'working'? You are just walking around with a map". When the young man describes the purpose of the land claims process and that he is walking around to determine which land belongs to them and which land belongs to the white man she says that is a crazy thing to do as no one owns the land. She is very disappointed because she thought "land claims"

⁵ These seven fire teachings are often attributed to the recordings of late Saulteaux Elder Danny Musqua.

meant that the government and First Nations people were working together to figure out how to keep the land and animals safe for their children and grandchildren. This story is a glimpse into the challenges of framing Indigenous ways of knowing within settler structures, and the ethos of relationship with the land.

There are two principal ideas about land and land ownership, or title: (1) the working of the land leads to entitlement to that land; and (2) land that is not worked is not owned by anyone – it is waste. Both of these ideas have worked well in Europe but not in Aboriginal territories, where people did not (a) unilaterally “work” the land without acknowledging it or (b) consider any part of land as “waste”. Land, it is to be remembered, is considered a living entity known to the ancient Nuu-chah-nulth as Haw’ilume, or Wealthy Mother Earth, and, consequently, no part of this land could possibly be waste. (Atleo, 2011, p. 115)

In Indigenous worldviews, education must also reflect other principles of learning, these include the concept of respect. Nadasdy (2005) illustrates the concept of respect when he describes a Yukon ad campaign that shows an Aboriginal hunter packing meat out of the bush. Not wasting meat is an assumed shared meaning of “respect” for animals. However, if we look more deeply at the Kluane and other Indigenous peoples’ relationships with animals, we will notice that the kinship ties between humans and “non-human” relations are such that animals are relatives who offer themselves in the hunt. Cote (2010) in her description of the offering of the whale to the Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth explains it is out of respect that the animal is killed and eaten to nourish the hunter, their family and members of their community. Indigenous knowledge systems include this notion of being in relationship with all living beings and honouring the spirit of each

being. Therefore, in Indigenous knowledge systems the concept of respect for animals is much more fulsome than not being wasteful.

Archibald et al (2008) attribute Urion's (1999) editorial *Changing Academic Discourse about Native Education: Using Two Pairs of Eyes* as a milestone article for challenging and truly exemplifying Aboriginal educational discourse. Urion emphasizes the importance of Elders as teachers, learners engaging in creating the discourse, and the multidimensionality of this process, stating that Elders have expertise in metaphorical teaching and metaphor is not just poetic but "can carry a huge information load with it because it can be interpreted at many different levels and in many different contexts" (p. 11). Urion (1999) asks that we think deeply and compassionately about First Nations discourse in education. It is a discourse that is inclusive of everyone's integrity and learning is a transcendent experience.

Education is at the heart of the struggle of Aboriginal peoples to regain control over their lives as communities and nations. The promise of education is that it will instruct the people in ways to live long and well, respecting the wisdom of their ancestors and fulfilling their responsibilities in the circle of life. (Brant Castellano, Davis, Lahache, 2000, p. xviii)

Another highly cited article is Kirkness & Barnhardt's (1991) *First Nations and Higher Education: The Four Rs – Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility* in which the authors state:

the need for a higher educational system that *respects* [First Nations students] for who they are, that is *relevant* to their view of the world, that offers *reciprocity* in their relationships with others, and that helps them exercise *responsibility* over their

own lives. (p. 1)

There are two broad themes in this discussion of Indigenous understandings of education: education as a lifelong journey and education as more than formal schooling. In *Toward a Redefinition of American Indian/Alaska Native Education*, the Choctaw educator Eber Hampton (1993) questioned whose knowledge is being reproduced in the education system. He identified qualities that were important in the move to construct an “Indian theory of education”. The twelve standards he identified include: spirituality, service, diversity, culture, tradition, respect, history, relentlessness, vitality, conflict, place, and transformation⁶.

In *Learning from Promising Programs and Applications in Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, Anuik, Battiste, and George (2010) draw from three decades of research on Aboriginal epistemologies and conclude that there are few studies regarding First Nations students’ educational challenges, successes, the contexts that create this, or the communities’ collective learning foundations. Indigenous scholars have argued for the inclusion of spiritual growth in education processes as it forms the fundamental aspect of First Nations beliefs – as exemplified by Nadasdy’s (2005) description of the Kluane relationship to land and to animals. Anuik et al (2010) describe the “quest for the learning spirit” as part of an Aboriginal approach to life: a learning journey that starts at birth and continues throughout one’s lifetime. They reference Elder Musqua who shares the story of the spirit(s) who enter(s) the body at birth and travel(s) with a person throughout life, “providing inspiration, guidance, and nourishment to fulfill the purpose of the life

⁶ Hampton went on to become President of the First Nation’s University of Canada (FNUC). Formerly the Saskatchewan Federated Indian College (SFIC) and the first post-secondary institution in Canada to implement Indigenous perspectives on education as its mandate.

journey” (Anuik, Battiste, & George, 2010, p. 67).

Ermine (1995) states that at the time of contact European explorers were on a physical journey, “an uncharted destination in outer space the physical” when they met First Nations people “who had already accomplished the physical knowing and were on a delicate path into inner space, the metaphysical”. (p. 66) The metaphysics of inner space emphasizes the importance of perception, how one interprets their experiences, their experiential insight as an epistemology. (Ermine, 1995; Hart, 2010) This process of how we come to know is critical to Indigenous understandings of education. Ermine suggests that recognizing two distinct worldviews and philosophies exist, or existed at the time of contact, is essential to creating space for Aboriginal ethics.

Recognizing that Indigenous nations have distinct ways of knowing and doing provides an opening to dialogue on approaches to formal schooling. This also brings forward the debate on valid forms of knowledge and objective truth. Ermine (1995) states that acquired knowledge and information, such as the European voyages and discoveries, became the only valid source of knowing in the dominant discourse and “the alternative expeditions and discoveries in subjective inner space by Aboriginal people wait to be told” (p. 101). In her examination of Ermine’s work, Weenie (2008) states: “First Nations’ search for their inner knowledge came from the connections they had made with those physical and metaphysical elements in their territories and has become the source of knowing that remains the core of Indigenous knowledge and the foundations of personal development and of Aboriginal epistemology” (p. 545). Significant to this study is that early settler discourse has become validated as objective truth in Canadian history,

law, policy, and schooling while Indigenous discourse currently remains on the margins of education.

Indigenous peoples' understandings of the world do not happen in isolation. Traveling through one's learning journey is a relational process in which individuals are accountable to one another and guided by Elders. Ermine, Sinclair, and Jeffery (2004) explain community as: "[t]he knowledge of many people developed through this process of experiencing totality, wholeness, and inwardness, effectively created a unified consciousness that transformed the collective into a participatory organism known as community" (p. 29). Therefore, education can be defined as a lifelong process that is an inner spiritual journey and as part of the community collective.

Given that Indigenous children who were adopted out during the "Sixties Scoop" were disconnected from their Indigenous teachings and had limited to no access to Indigenous approaches to education while being adopted out, it can be assumed that their Indigenous identities were not fully formed. This phenomenon prompts the questions that have guided this study: how do adoptees reformulate their identities as adults? How did Indigenous adoptees regain this understanding of life as a spirit-based inner journey?

Decolonization Practices. The formal schooling of Indigenous people in Canada – as elsewhere – has been seriously circumscribed by the forces of European colonization. In recent decades, scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous have challenged educators and scholars to decolonize or deconstruct "the ideological, legal, legislative, operational, textual and other institutionalized structures sustaining unequal and discursive relations of power between non-first Nations and First Nations citizenries" (Binda & Caillou, 2001, p. 2). In *Post-Colonial Remedies for Preserving Indigenous*

Knowledge and Heritage, Mikmaq educator Marie Battiste (2005) argues that educational institutions in Canada have a pivotal responsibility to transform relations between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society, a responsibility that has not yet been realized. Reflecting the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996), she argues that while universities and other educational institutions include the education of Indigenous peoples as a priority in their mission statements or mandates, education continues to be grounded in colonial practices. Battiste describes colonized education as using Eurocentric curricula, rooted in the colonial history of education, and perpetuated by cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values (Battiste, 2005). On Eurocentrism in schools, Battiste & Youngblood Henderson (2000) explain “[schools] perpetuated damaging myths about Indigenous knowledges and heritage, language, beliefs, and ways of life. It also established Eurocentric science as the dominant mode of thought.” (p. 86)

Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (2012) explains, colonialism has disrupted our relationships with the natural world (p. 87) and estimates 5,000-8,000 Indigenous nations around the world trapped within 77 different countries as peoples for the state to ‘manage’ (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 13)

The problems of land claims in Canada were created, in part, by the peculiar ideas, propagated by philosophers like Locke, about land and how title to it is acquired. These ideas, which included the erroneous conception that Aboriginals were childlike, instinctive, savage, and barbaric, were translated into the provisions of the Indian Act. It is for this reason that it was thought to be unnecessary to get Aboriginal consent regarding where First Nations people

would live, how they would live, how and where they would be educated, and whether they could be considered fully humans. [...] Politicians, lawyers, judges, philosophers, academics, researchers, and leaders have all been trained within an educational system that has, until very recently, been completely biased in its representations of Aboriginal histories and cultures. (Atleo, 2011, p. 115-116)

Decolonization, as a concept and practice, acknowledges and seeks to redress the systems of oppression that resulted from the colonization of Indigenous nations such as the colonization of Canada. At the heart of decolonization is the acknowledgement that Canadians live on stolen homelands and colonialism has imparted violence on Indigenous peoples. Anishnaabe educator Sheila Cote-Meek (2014) frames colonization as “violent, ongoing, and traumatic” (p. 16). Historical trauma is a central concept that informs her case study on how Aboriginal students confront colonial violence in the post-secondary classroom. As discussed previously in this chapter, historical trauma is multigenerational, cumulative over time, and ever present. Corey Snelgrove, a white male settler, concurs that his family does not have to “think about, let alone experience, the violent processes of dispossession and disavowal of Indigenous governance structures” (p. 5). He describes the mechanisms that allow him to feel at home in other’s homeland(s), as well as, the emotions of “shame, frustration, alienation, and anger towards myself, other settlers, as well as the structures of settler colonialism” (p. 5). He challenges himself to look at the sources of these feelings and with accountability and respect, to participate in transforming the negative relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples and supporting good relations.

Battiste (2013) proposes trans-systemic knowledge which requires institutional and systemic change to include previously excluded knowledges. Battiste offers a way forward guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and an ethical space inspired by the work of Cree ethicist Willie Ermine. Like Fanon (1963, 1967), Battiste (2005, 2013) describes cognitive imperialism as cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values which are validated through dominant discourses and public education. Battiste (2005, 2013) proposes post-colonial education that crosses disciplines and serves as a counter-force to cognitive imperialism, arguing that it will create new space where Indigenous knowledge and identities can be included in global and contemporary frameworks. As Hampton (1995a) stated: “No aspect of culture is more vital to its integrity than its means of education (p. 7)”.

In Cote-Meek’s (2014) discussion of the institutions of education and child welfare, she claims both represent “forms of violence that worked on each individual’s sense of who they were and how their Indianness was valued” (p. 53). Further, “parents, and grandparents, who were usually acknowledged as the primary producers and transmitters of knowledge, were no longer considered part of the educational process of children (p. 53)”. Within the field of education, decolonization calls for Indigenous and settler educators to work together on projects that invite us to rethink the norms that we are working in and challenge the structures of oppression that are embedded in the policies and processes of our society and offer curriculum that encourages critical thinking.

As educators, we have the responsibility to ensure that the learning environment is conducive and safe for all, not only for the dominant group. Further, when we consider how Aboriginal peoples have been oppressed, marginalized, and subjected to ongoing forms of colonial violence in larger society, we also have to question how systems of domination are reinforced and perpetuated in sites such as the classroom through the positionality of educator, the use of pedagogy, the relationships with others and through the curricula itself. (Cote-Meek, 2014, p. 33)

In order to engage in processes of decolonization we need to be willing to view ourselves, our privileges or lack thereof, and our actions, within the world we live in. Paulo Freire (1970) calls this praxis: action and reflection upon the world in order to transform it. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) describes a new relationship between teacher, student, and society, whereby the student is a co-creator of knowledge. This approach to learning can create a *collaborative conscientization*: an education struggle to sensitize Eurocentric consciousness, and displace cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2005, 2013). However, bell hooks (1994) cautions that Freire's work has often been brought into the university from "a voyeuristic standpoint" (p. 46) where students and teachers see two locations in the work: "the subject position of Freire the educator and the oppressed/marginalized groups he speaks about" (p. 46). If approached this way, students and teachers become observers removed from the critical process that Freire is encouraging us to engage in. Decolonization requires praxis, an active process of delegitimizing colonization. (Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005, p. 3)

Acknowledging our own positionality, also referred to as self-location, is a critical first step in decolonization practices. According to Kovach (2009) “anti-oppressive inquiries integrate self-location to identify and then mitigate power differentials in research” (p. 110) and from Indigenous perspectives, self-locating is often “intuitive, launched immediately through the protocols of introduction” (p. 110) and “it shows respect to the ancestors and allows community to locate us” (p. 110). In the following quote Dhamoon explains what is required in the process of self-locating, Rita Dhamoon, whose family is from Punjab, India, states:

“To settle” is an attitude, a way of being that gets fixed in one’s heart and mind, such that I don’t have to think about the violence against Indigenous peoples if I choose not to; it is to presume permanency, a temporality without an end; it is a way to establish authority over others, as the State and its settlers seek to do over Indigenous peoples; it is a mode of masculinity in which the land is married to exploitative capital; to settle does not require all settlers to own private property, but like many settlers I do. I now have citizenship in Canada, I was born and educated in the UK, and later further educated in Canada, I speak English with a western accent, I have a middle-class income, I carry no over religious markings, and I have settled on stolen Indigenous land (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, pp. 6-7).

Once we self-locate we can determine what our roles will be and how we will participate in decolonizing practices.

Freire’s work has influenced critical, feminist, and Indigenous pedagogies that nurture critical consciousness and make space for voices that have been silenced or

“othered”. Engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994) emphasizes well-being. “Teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being (p. 15)” in order to empower students and support them in their own processes of self-actualization. hooks (1994) includes the concepts of teacher as healer, teaching as a spiritual vocation, and the “whole” person. Horsman (1999) also contends that pedagogy should incorporate the whole person into the learning and may take various forms. Whole person or holistic pedagogy includes the mind, body, spirit and complements Indigenous views on identity formation that encompass the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual self. Like hooks (1994), Metis educator Emma Larocque (2002) critically examines which knowledge is privileged in dominant discourse, the use of “voice”, and the importance of engaged pedagogy. Larocque (2002) describes resistance scholarship as “a critical scholarship not only based on Aboriginality but one borne out of colonial experience” (p. 214).

Practices of decolonization in education arise in response to the colonial systems and institutions we experience and, thus, the discussion on both education as schooling and education as part of a lifelong spirit-based journey. Several Indigenous scholars emphasize the role of Elders as teachers that need to be included in formal schooling (Anuik, Battiste, George, 2010; Cajete, 1994; Cote-Meek, 2014; Urion, 1999) just as they are included in other informal learning spaces. Elders provide metaphorical teaching that is contextual and learner centered (Urion, 1999). In *Schalay’nung Sxwey’ga^[1]_{SÉP}* *Emerging cross-cultural pedagogy in the academy*, Dr. Lorna Williams of Lil’wat Nation, and Michele Tanaka, a graduate student at the time

of participation, describe the process of offering a course to pre-service teachers and graduate students in the Education Program at the University of Victoria:

Thunderbird/Whale Protection and Welcoming Pole: Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World was first offered in the fall of 2005, and was pedagogically based in an Indigenous teaching and learning experience—the construction and installation of a Thunderbird/Whale house pole. The course was designed within the Indigenous ways that include the essential elements of inclusivity, community building, and recognition and celebration of individual uniqueness. (Williams & Tanaka, 2007, p. 2).

They describe the transformation that occurs for students with scientific understandings of the world who leaned over the cedar tree and thanked “old man” cedar for giving himself. They explain the Lil’wat teaching of *Kamucwkalha*: the energy current that indicates the emergence of a communal sense of purpose. Williams and Tanaka observe that Indigenous ways of knowing are beginning to emerge in mainstream pedagogical dialogues but their significance is yet to be fully appreciated by the dominant culture (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

When looking at the many ways that the remnants of Canada’s colonial past continue on in society today, there is obvious and extreme cultural favouritism in how schools and universities are organized and how learning and teaching occurs within them. (Marker, 2004; Menzies, Archibald & Smith, 2004 in Williams and Tanaka, 2005, p. 4)

Everyone has the opportunity to embrace decolonizing practices. This involves questioning colonial or Eurocentric ideologies of dominant discourse, self-locating,

then determining approaches to participating in transformative pedagogies. Peggy McIntosh's (1989) *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* is a seminal article on white privilege by a white scholar. Cote-Meek (2014), LaRocque (2011), and St-Denis & Schick (2003) discuss the anger that can happen when colonial myths are dispelled. Decolonizing work requires self-reflexivity: the ability to critically question one's praxis. We have all been impacted by colonization. Specific to Indigenous people, Battiste (2005) states a post-colonial⁷ framework requires Indigenous people to "renew and reconstruct the principles underlying their own worldviews, environments, languages, and forms of communication, and re-examine how all these elements combine to construct their humanity" (Battiste, 2005, p. 227). She calls upon Indigenous people and non-Indigenous allies to undertake this important work together; a challenge that Snelgrove, Dharmoon, and Corntassel (2014) suggest is the potentiality for settler activists and academics to co-opt dialogue and efforts that delegitimize, or make secondary, Indigenous voices. Their solution is place-based, relational approaches, centering Indigenous resurgence, which I will discuss in the next section.

Indigenous resurgence. On the surface, decolonization and Indigenous resurgence may seem similar concepts. In fact, conceptually, Indigenous resurgence calls us to remember Indigenous holistic cultural frameworks that existed prior to colonization. Whereas decolonization is the act of undoing or dismantling colonialism with roles for both Indigenous and settler peoples, Indigenous resurgence is a call specifically for Indigenous people to reclaim our respective nations' teachings and practices that are

⁷ The term post-colonial is largely contested in other fields and in relation to Indigenous struggles that are ongoing. Post-colonial suggests we are no longer in a colonial era.

upheld in natural laws. “Being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one’s relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization” (Corntassel, 2012, p. 88). While we all have the opportunity to acknowledge that we live on stolen land and operate in colonial structures of oppression, when we discuss this dispossession and violence, for Indigenous people this is our history. On the other hand, for settlers it is discomfoting but it’s not their experience. “Othered” – that is, marginalized – people stay othered by centering their knowledge and identities in the systems of the oppressor.

Radical Indigenism urges resistance to the pressure upon Indigenous scholars to participate in academic discourses that strip Native intellectual traditions of their spiritual and sacred elements. It takes this stand on the ground that sacred elements are absolutely central to the coherence of our knowledge traditions and that if we surrender them there is little left in our philosophies that make any sense. (Garrouette, 2005, p. 172)

Radical Indigenism and other Indigenous resurgence scholarship provide language, theoretical frameworks, and future research directions rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems. Grande (2000) defines Red Pedagogy as:

1) the quest for sovereignty and the dismantling of global capitalism as its political focus; 2) Indigenous knowledge as its epistemological foundation; 3) the Earth as its spiritual center; and 4) tribal and traditional ways of life as its sociocultural frame of reference. (p. 355)

Both Garrouette and Grande are identifying place-based, relational knowledge.

Indigenous resurgence literature emerges from the knowledge and experience of Indigenous communities themselves, not from within systems created by oppressors. The concept of Indigenous resurgence begins with individual and community level “reconstruction” and “reorganization” of identities and institutions (Alfred, 2009, p. 34). In Canada, this has profound and specific implications for Indigenous-Canadian relations. Alfred (2009) states that mental and spiritual decolonization is critical for the development or implementation of a “‘new’ *Onkwehonwe*-Settler relationship” that is just and achieves “long-term peaceful co-existence between our peoples” (p. 180). In the absence of a “neat model of resurgence” Alfred and Corntassel (2005) propose “directions of movement, patterns of thought and action that reflect a shift to an Indigenous reality from the colonized places we inhabit today in our minds and in our souls” (p. 14). Corntassel (2012) suggests the crisis facing Indigenous Canadians is “spiritual ... just as much as it is ... political, social, and economic” (p. 88).

In decolonization efforts, conversations constitute responses to the colonizing systems and practices with which Indigenous peoples currently live with. These discussions can create a reactionary space of “other” and, in trying to undo or work differently in existing systems, we can forget that Indigenous systems existed prior to colonization and are still accessible to us. In *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nēhiyaw legal systems*, Sylvia McAdam (2015) reminds us that prior to colonization Indigenous nations had complete and complex systems of governance whereby the physical and spiritual world were interconnected. She invites us to spend time with Elders and knowledge holders of our own nations to learn the sacred spiritual laws that are

shared orally and through ceremonies. In sharing Cree teachings that can be written down, McAdam writes:

Everything in creation has laws and these are called *manitow wiyinikewina*. The human laws are called *nēhiyaw wiyasiwewina*. The Indigenous people are not lawless people; the Creator's laws are strict and inform every part of a person's life. It is these laws that governed and guided in the days when Europeans did not walk the territories of Indigenous people. These laws still exist and can be revitalized. (p. 23)

Simpson (2008) states that an “Indigenist theoretical framework promotes liberation, the retraditionalization of Indigenous institutions, and decolonization of Indigenous Nations and the Canadian state” (p. 15). She defines Indigenist principles as relationships with the land and knowledge holders of their respective nations; believing in “the uniqueness and diversity of our cultural teachings and ways of knowing”; cherishing and protecting the diversity of Indigenous cultures; and being “skeptical of the power our role as academics affords us in colonial society” (Simpson, 2008, p. 16).

Therefore, I propose that reclaiming Indigenous identity is both an act of decolonization and a process of being in relationship with one's nation. That is, to reclaim Indigenous identity, one must question colonial constructs of identity and, through alliance with one's community, learn the teachings from the land and from the knowledge holders. These teachings can be language as a contribution to Indigenous resurgence scholarship. Indigenist paradigms encourage us to dream and vision our futures within Indigenous ways of knowing. The experiences of Indigenous adult transracial adoptees who have reclaimed their identities will present language and

frameworks to inform Indigenous resurgence scholarship and transformational educational paradigms.

Conclusion

The theories that have framed my understanding of post-colonial Indigenous identities in North America draw from legal, biological, cultural, and personal (self-identification) conceptions of identity, each with their purpose and limitations, stemming from 19th century race politics, and illustrating the complexities of Indigenous identities. A fifth understanding of identity with focus on tribal teachings and spiritual understandings of identity is suggested as a way forward. Binda and Caillou (2001) have challenged educators and scholars to decolonize education by deconstructing “the ideological, legal, legislative, operational, textual and other institutionalized structures sustaining unequal and discursive relations of power between non-first Nations and First Nations citizenries” (p. 2). Acts of decolonization might seem synonymous with Indigenous resurgence but the two discourses are different as Indigenous resurgence invites Indigenous people to reclaim their identities through knowledge systems that existed prior to colonization. The literature suggests that to effectively decolonize both Indigenous and settler minds and hearts requires a fuller understanding of the many forms of oppression through which Indigenous people have been “educated” – including transracial adoption.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a literature review of the Sixties Scoop. The analyses yielded three critical phases within the literature: Phase One (mid 1950s-1970s) encompassed concepts of child well-being; Phase Two (mid 1970s-1990s) witnessed the

development of self-governing Indigenous welfare agencies; and Phase Three (2000-present) has highlighted issues of adoptee identity. I also provided an overview of the four theoretical perspectives that informed my approach to this study: 1) post-colonial definitions of Indigenous identity; 2) Indigenous understandings of education; 3) decolonizing practices; and 4) Indigenous resurgence scholarship. In the next chapter, I present my methodology for this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research Assumptions and Guiding Principles

The purpose of this study was to explore how Indigenous adults who were fostered or adopted as children by non-Indigenous parents during the Sixties Scoop reclaimed their Indigenous identities. The research has been shaped by certain assumptions and guiding principles, derived mainly from the work of Indigenous scholars. Indigenous researchers' attitudes, capabilities and experiences inform the possibility of *doing research in a good way* (Wilson, 2008) which Archibald (2008) terms *respectful research relationships*. Decolonization requires an active resistance to colonial paradigms and critical perspectives on history. Further, we are at a juncture in 2017 where we can draw from a growing body of Indigenous scholarship that is naming theories, methods, and approaches to research that come from Indigenous knowledge systems. Battiste (2005) states that many scholars are working on decolonization of Eurocentric thought, however, the experiences of Indigenous people engage decolonization in a distinct manner (Battiste, 2005, p. 224), therefore Indigenous people need to know and understand theory and research from their own perspectives and for their own purposes. Several Indigenous scholars remind us that Indigenous people and communities need to be leading the dialogues on Indigenous issues and space needs to be made for these dialogues after which settler scholars can join in and work together. (Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2005; Battiste 2013; Wilson, 2008)

Gathering stories of healing from the Sixties Scoop experience forms the basis of an emerging theoretical framework of decolonization and Indigenous resurgence rooted

in repatriation with Indigenous communities. Ultimately, stories of reconnection to community replace colonial narratives. This study contributes to decolonization and Indigenous resurgence scholarship and informs approaches to education, concepts of identity within education discourses, and methods for Indigenous education research.

Several scholars assert we are currently in an Indigenist Research Phase in which Indigenous scholars have the opportunity to create their own Indigenous research paradigms, approaches to research, and data collection methods (Absolon, 2011; Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). The purpose of Indigenous research is to counter the colonial narratives that disenfranchise Indigenous peoples and devalue Indigenous knowledges and replace these with strength-based Indigenous discourses. Based on a literature review of Indigenous methodologies and a self-reflexive praxis that involves returning to community, both my home territory and adoptee community, throughout the five years of attending university to complete the PhD process, I have learned to select methods and approaches to gather stories in a respectful way and to implement a research design that honours relational and collective knowledge, with the aim of contributing to decolonization practices and Indigenous resurgence scholarship.

Smith (1999) describes the decolonizing aim as reclaiming, reformulating and reconstituting Indigenous cultures, languages and nationhood. Further, Indigenous methodologies are born of a unique relationship with Indigenous lands (Kovach, 2009). The Sixties Scoop has been researched as a social and historical phenomenon (Helcason, 2009), resulting in associated recommendations for child welfare policy. However, how adoptees reclaim identity after experiencing removal from community is both understudied and under-theorized. My goal, therefore, was to examine how Indigenous

adults who were adopted as part of the Sixties Scoop have learned to reconnect with their communities and homelands and reframe their identities. The question that guides my research is: *how have adults who have experienced the Sixties Scoop claimed, connected and reframed who they are within their community/Nation of birth?*

Research Methods/Approaches

In this section, I describe the methods and approaches I used and discuss the relationship between these elements that contributed to a successful Indigenous research project. Indigenous research is a paradigm; it is not defined by the particular methods we use, but both the methods and approaches centered on an Indigenous worldview:

Indigenous methodologies are a paradigmatic approach based upon an Indigenous philosophical positioning or epistemology. Thus it is not the method, per se, that is the determining of characteristics of Indigenous methodologies, but rather the interplay (the relationship) between method and paradigm and the extent to which the method, itself, is congruent with an Indigenous worldview. (Kovach, 2010, p. 40)

For gathering data, I used Indigenous storied methods (Archibald, 2008). I also relied on principles of narrative inquiry used predominantly by feminist and critical research scholars as a secondary lens to inform both my data collection and data analysis process. To successfully gather and analyze stories, I focused on the following important principles that I discuss in this chapter: spirituality; relationship building; community reciprocity; and “self work”. First, I discuss story and narrative as the underpinning to Indigenous research, followed by a discussion of Indigenous storied methods and narrative inquiry. Then I discuss the four approaches to building respectful research

relationships that I implemented in my research.

Stories are understood as ways of transmitting knowledge since time immemorial. Storied/narrative methods are advocated by various Indigenous scholars, including Smith (1999), Wilson (2008), Kovach (2009), Absolon (2011), and Chilisa (2012). As Kovach (2009) explains, there is an “inseparable relationship between story and knowing, and the interrelationship between narrative and research within Indigenous frameworks” (p.94). Thus, story is both method and epistemology. While the use of story is not unique to Indigenous communities, the ways in which stories are used and understood in Indigenous research are specific to Indigenous knowledge systems (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009). There are two types of stories: traditional stories and life-experience stories.

Traditional stories hold the laws and teachings of a nation. Within these stories and through the storytellers’ orality we understand the knowledge and cultural values of a nation (Maracle, 1992; Cajete, 1994; Archibald, 2008), “Oral tradition reflects the belief system and consciousness of a people” (Archibald, 2008, p.25). Archibald’s (2008) *Indigenous Storywork* centers on gathering stories from three Coast Salish and 13 Sto:lo Elders that were storytellers or versed in storytelling. In this project she learned seven principles⁸ necessary to First Nations storytelling that she terms “storywork” and that create a Sto:lo and Coast Salish theoretical framework for making meaning from stories and for using these stories in educational contexts. (Archibald, 2008, p.ix) As part of her study, Archibald engaged in a method she calls *life –experience stories* to learn how the persons she interviewed became storytellers.

⁸ The seven principles are: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. (Archibald, 2008)

Life-experience stories. Archibald describes *life-experience stories* whereby space is created for Indigenous people to have conversations to “share our stories in our own way and create discourses based on our Indigenous knowledge systems” (Archibald, 2008, p.19). Archibald provides the example of Cree educator Verna J. Kirkness compiling the autobiography of Chief Simon Baker of the Squamish Nation. Dr. Simon Baker’s autobiography is an example of how “life-experience stories can teach about culture, nature, history, politics, leadership, family, relationships, and the importance of Elders” (p.22).

I was born and raised by the river. Water is very important. Our old people used to say, “water is your best friend.” They would tell us to go and swim even when we were just toddlers. Mother Earth gave us water and we were taught ... It goes in a cycle. If we didn’t have water we would perish ... water gives you a new life, a good feeling (Kirkness 1994, 155 in Archibald, 2008, p. 22).

Archibald (2008) also references *life-experience stories* about the experiences of children in residential school and the intergenerational trauma of residential-school abuse in documents such as the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report (p.15). In these accounts, Indigenous people share their stories of lived experiences and by sharing these stories insight is provided into Indigenous issues.

In Chilisa’s (2012) *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, the focused life-story interview is presented as a postcolonial Indigenous interview method. The focused life-story interview “valorizes the web of connections that people have with those around them and with the land and the environment” (Chilisa, 2012, p.209). Kovach (2009)

describes the conversational method in Indigenous Research “as a means for gathering knowledge through story” (p. 40).

To receive stories in Indigenous research, Indigenous protocols of being in relationship must be adhered to. In Archibald’s discussion of protocol, she asked “how do I approach people with whom I would like to talk?” (Archibald, 2008, p.62). Archibald had a strong familial bond with the Elders over many years and also had the support of the staff that worked with the Elders in order to carry out her research. For the participants she didn’t know, it was suggested to her that staff from the Cultural Centre involved in the study could go with her to meet them. Being introduced by someone trusted is important in Indigenous protocols; this is a relational approach to research, and helps people understand how the researcher is connected to the community. Archibald (2008) attributes the success of her project to the support of the staff at the Cultural Centre and her personal history with the Elders (p.62).

Life stories can be individual conversations or group conversations. Absolon (2011) describes *having conversations* as:

travelling over the land to meet people in spaces that we both agreed upon. Searching for Indigenous scholars to converse with led to the bluest of blue blueberry patches. While travelling and having conversations about how we search for knowledge. I met with leading Indigenous scholars and we shared and wove our stories together. My baskets of knowledge were full and I felt content with this harvest. (p. 32-33)

Group conversations in Indigenous approaches are often called *sharing circles* or *talking circles*. Lavallee (2009) notes the principles of a sharing circle are distinct from a focus

group (p. 29): “Circles are acts of sharing all aspects of the individual – heart, mind, body, and spirit – and permission is given to the facilitator to report on the discussions” (Nabigon, Hagey, Webster, & MacKay, 1999 in Lavallee, 2009, p. 29). Absolon (2011) called the group conversation *The Learning Circle of Giving Back*. She described this as “a small group format where the process benefits those who participate in exchange and sharing of ideas and experiences” (p. 35). Archibald (2008) described the process of *talking around the circle*, in which people have respect for one another. While they may not always agree, everyone is treated equally and “a speaker talks without verbal interruption until she/he is finished” (p.63). In her study, each person was given the opportunity to speak and, if they chose not to, this was respected.

With regards to recording the stories and community reciprocity in Archibald’s 2008 study, the participants agreed to have each meeting tape-recorded and they discussed publishing a book based on these tape-recorded discussions. Archibald agreed they could use the book royalties for whatever purpose they chose. Archibald emphasizes the educational importance of stories, both the traditional stories that hold the teachings of specific nations, and the life-experience stories of individuals, which can give us insight into Indigenous issues as we learn from the lived experience of people sharing their life stories. Many Indigenous researchers agree that we are our stories (these lifelong inward journeys); narrative (the telling of these lifelong inward journeys) is central to our knowledge systems. I believe that the life-experience story method is suitable to document the stories of seven Indigenous adoptees who reclaimed, reformulated, and reconstituted their Indigenous identities.

Both Kovach (2009) and Chilisa (2012) suggest it is possible to also draw from

Western theories and practices while conducting an Indigenous research project. Because Indigenous research methodology is a nascent area and I am studying in a mainstream education program, I also looked to critical methods within education research to glean further information on how to approach gathering stories. After an extensive literature review, I was drawn to feminist, anti-racist, and queer research methods, including autoethnography, hermeneutics, and narrative inquiry, to name a few. Narrative inquiry, described as a powerful tool to be used in research to understand others' stories (van Manen, 1997), provided me, an emerging scholar, with further insights into the research process of gathering stories.

Narrative inquiry. Most narrative inquiries start with researchers interviewing or having conversations with participants sharing stories of their experiences. (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). This can be done in one-to-one situations or in groups. In one-to-one situations, participants can respond to more or less structured interview questions; engage in conversation or dialogue; or tell stories prompted by various artifacts such as photographs or memory box items (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Texts are created from these stories and analyzed. Usually, the researcher's role is to interpret these stories, often in order to analyze the underlying narrative that the storytellers themselves may not be able to identify. However, narrative inquiry is not only the retelling of stories but the understanding that, in the retelling of stories, "other events, actions, happenings are also a part of the research and are woven into the stories that are retold" (Trahar, 2009, par. 10). Clandinin and Huber (2010) describe narrative inquiry as ongoing conversations with participants where they tell their stories or living alongside participants in a particular place or places.

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) describe narrative as “both the method and the phenomena of study” (p. 4). It is a recursive process of being in the field, composing field texts, drafting and sharing interim research texts, and composing research texts. Stewart (2005) used this method for her Masters thesis *Indigenous Teachers: Narratives of Identity and Change* and suggests:

Narrative inquiry is well suited to the ideological and lived experiences of Aboriginal/Indigenous educators. This approach provides opportunities to balance the story of the individual with the larger social, political, and economic contexts that frame it, which are reinforced or challenged by individuals’ actions and responses. (Stewart, 2005, p.31)

Nuttgens (2013) used narrative inquiry to better understand the identity concerns among Aboriginal children raised in non-Aboriginal families. He interviewed four adult participants and believed his study adds to previous research on identity development through “providing contextual information needed to understand how the storied outcome of a participants’ life is influenced by their unique relational landscapes, that is their relationship with family, community, culture, and society, all situated within a specified time and place” (p.15). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) characterize the narrative inquiry process as a recursive process whereby at the beginning of the search there is no specific answer to the research question (p.124).

From my literature review on narrative inquiry, I determined this research method closely aligned with the Indigenous life-experience story method and helped inform the process of documenting the stories of seven Indigenous transracial adoptees who shared their lived experiences of reclaiming their Indigenous identities. Whether mainstream or

Indigenous methods, or both, are used in an Indigenous project, axiology in Indigenous research design is built upon the concept of relational accountability, including all relations, our spiritual connections, and community accountability. (Wilson, 2008) To this end, what distinguishes my project from mainstream narrative inquiry is 1) the purpose of the life-story interviews is to contribute to addressing an Indigenous issue, and 2) this project was approached with respectful relationships in research, that adhered to Indigenous protocols, which I will discuss next.

Establishing respectful research relationships (Doing research in a good way). One of the ways I prepared myself for this project was to review the literature on working respectfully with Indigenous communities. Archibald (2008) describes respectful research relationships as:

Showing respect through cultural protocol, appreciating the significance of and reverence for spirituality, honouring teacher and learner responsibilities, and practising a cyclical type of reciprocity are important lessons documented here for those interested in First Nations/Indigenous methodology. (Archibald, 2008, p.x)

I will outline below four areas that I paid attention to in order to go about this project in a respectful or “good” way: spirituality; relationship building; community reciprocity; and “self work” in preparation for the study.

Spirituality. Indigenous research paradigms are situated in Indigenous knowledge systems and a shared understanding across Indigenous nations is that people are spiritual beings with multiple relationships to be nurtured through the research process (Archibald, 2008; Chilisa, 2012). Hart (2010) emphasizes that Indigenous peoples’ cultures recognize and affirm the spiritual through practical applications of inner-space discoveries. “Key

people for this process are Elders and practitioners who have undergone processes to develop this ability. Happenings may be facilitated through rituals or ceremonies that incorporate dreaming, visioning, meditation, and prayer” (Hart, 2010, p. 8). There are ceremonial aspects to Indigenous research that may or may not be part of the written dissertation but are necessary in order to do Indigenous research. “Establishing respectful relationships with Spirit forms a basic methodological principle.” (Absolon, 2011, p. 121) I relied on the spiritual work that I do, much of which is with guidance from Elders and knowledge holders with whom I am already in relationship with, and on certain ceremonies, in order to be ready to do this study.

Depending on the university and the department, there are diverse arrangements to include the role of Elders and Indigenous knowledge holders on a graduate project. In my case, I have an informal Elder advisor, Margaret Thom of Deh Gah Gotie, Fort Providence, Northwest Territories, who has provided me with teachings and practices to help me stay spiritually connected and able to do the inner work required for this research project. In the department where I study, an Elder advisor relationship is not recognized formally; Margaret is not on my academic committee and does not participate in the university process. However, she is named as the Elder who guides me in my participant letter that was approved by the University of Victoria HREB. We have been in relationship for eight years and are connected through extended family and being from a shared territory.

Some examples of how she has supported me include: in the research design phase, we prayed for direction on this project from the ancestors so that this project would unfold in a good way with participants presenting themselves when the time came,

and asked that participants' stories would be received by our communities. We also presented together at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference in Education (WIPCE) 2014 on some of the traditional medicines from our territory that we use in spirit-based practices and discussed how Margaret supported my spiritual growth and readiness to do this PhD study. When she was in Victoria on other business, we made time to visit and I paid for her hotel as needed, so that we could spend time at the university together. I have also visited her at home as I returned to our territory on several occasions since starting the PhD. In our visits I updated her on my project and sought guidance on the holistic elements of my study. Since Margaret does not have accountability to my committee or the university, this is a self-directed aspect of my work where I am learning how to approach this study with spiritual integrity.

Another aspect of spirituality is the spirit-based discourses that can present during data collection. In Chilisa's (2012) discussion of the narrative interview from a critical discourse point of view, she put forth an Indigenous perspective on storytelling and spirituality. She referenced Polly Walker's 2001 study on conflict transformation in which Indigenous interviewees were invited to narrate their life experiences. The interviewees "naturally interject[ed] the spiritual aspects of their experiences into the research" (Walker, 2001, p.20 in Chilisa). Further, in describing their approaches to resolving conflicts, Walker's participants spoke about the role of spirits and ancestors (Chilisa, 2012, p.148). As discussed in the Indigenous understandings of education section of Chapter 2, spirits accompany us through the life journey, this is a foundational aspect of Indigenous worldviews.

There are other aspects of spirit-based research during data collection. In

Research is Ceremony, Shawn Wilson (2008) emphasizes the importance of setting the stage for research endeavours properly. This can include the offerings researcher and participants make prior to the conversations (individual or group), as well as, the offerings the researcher makes to participants for taking part. Absolon (2011) noted the Indigenous scholars in her study had “methodological tendencies in all of the search processes [that] included sacred medicines such as sage, cedar, tobacco and sweet grass (p. 121)”. A final aspect of spirituality that I applied in this research is the understanding that everyone in the research process needs to be ready for ceremony. Wilson (2008) states: “Indigenous research is a life changing ceremony” (p. 61). He reminds us it is important to set the stage properly and everyone in the research process needs to be ready to accept a raised state of consciousness. I will describe the ceremony of data collection in more detail in the participant section.

Relationship building. It is not possible to engage in Indigenous research without building relationships first (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Wilson (2008) says we are the relationships we hold. Smith (1999) states “researchers, policy makers, educators, and social service providers who work with or whose work impacts on indigenous communities need to have a critical conscience about ensuring that their activities connect in humanizing ways with indigenous communities” (p.149). For too long, Indigenous peoples have been the subject of research without consideration of the communities’ needs, priorities, or approaches to projects. Relationship building involves understanding Indigenous knowledge systems and why these systems centre on relational and collective knowledges. Research topics should come from an identified need.

I chose my research topic based on a gap identified by Indigenous scholar and Sixties Scoop survivor, Dr. Raven Sinclair. In her work on the Sixties Scoop in the field of Social Work she identified how Indigenous adoptees reclaim their identity as an understudied topic (Sinclair, 2007). Prior to starting my study, I contacted Dr. Sinclair to seek permission to pursue this topic. When I met with her, I gifted her as per protocol to thank her and acknowledge her for her contributions. The act of gifting also symbolized that we were entering into a sacred relationship. I asked if she would be interested in an advisory role on my committee and in response she offered to be a participant. Further, this relationship has proved invaluable as she introduced me to many Indigenous adoptees that are making contributions to address the negative impacts of the child welfare system on Indigenous families.

To further build relationships, I attended the first national Indigenous Adoptee Gathering in September 2014. As a member of this community and by participating authentically in the event, in workshops and ceremony, I initiated the relationship building required so that participants could present themselves when the time came to join this study. I believe my opportunity to attend this event and meet Indigenous adoptees resulted from my ceremonial work that I engaged in with the Elder who has guided me. Therefore, I engaged in relationship building prior to my study with a knowledge holder that was willing to guide me in spiritual practices, I engaged in relationship building at the onset of my study with persons already doing work in the area, and I continued building relationships with the community I would be accountable to throughout the study. I will discuss in more detail the relationship building with each participant in the Participants section of this chapter.

Community reciprocity. Indigenous research projects by nature involve community. Generally, research projects address Indigenous issues and advance wellness for Indigenous communities (Archibald, 2008; Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). As Absolon (2011) concluded in her review of the master theses and doctoral dissertations of eleven Indigenous scholars, Indigenous researchers are engaged for “a cause greater than the production of a graduate dissertation” (Absolon, 2011, p.71). They are seeking to contribute to the collective good of the community, nation or “Indian situation” in Canada. The community I am accountable to for this project is the National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network (<http://niscw.org/>), a national network of Indigenous adoptees who endorsed and participated in this study.

Referencing Indigenous transracial adoptees (such as the Stolen Generation in Australia and the Sixties Scoop in Canada), Smith (1999) states: “being reconnected to their families and their culture has been a painful journey for many of these children, now adults” (p.148). The national Indigenous Adoptee Gatherings focus on healing and wellness for adoptees and foster care survivors of child welfare. This group’s mandate is to create a forum for survivors, at a national level, to express their stories and to learn from other survivors’ strategies as a result of their removal and displacement across Canada, the US, and internationally. (National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network, 2016) This is currently the only national network by and for Indigenous survivors of child welfare in Canada.

In 2016, the national organization was incorporated and renamed *National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network (NISCWN)*. This organization has led

rallies on parliament hill, written letters to government officials to seek action on the issue, host information sessions in community and education settings, and host gatherings for adoptees. They are interested in the findings of this study to assist a network of thousands of adults who experienced the Sixties Scoop. I am also accountable to the community of participants that trusted me to gather their stories in respectful ways and create a document that will help adoptees.

“Self Work” in preparation. Abosolon (2011) noted in her PhD project that situating self involved “the relationships between self, Spirit, responsibility, knowledge and truth” (p.76). I am an emerging Indigenous scholar who is on the road of reconnection to nēhiyaw identity and repatriation to the nēhiyaw nation of treaty 8 territory. I situate myself as a Northern nēhiyaw woman who experienced transracial adoption during the Sixties Scoop and I put forward my own framework for my decolonization that describes my journey of reclaiming my Indigenous identity and reconnection to place. This is an autoethnographic piece and necessary background work to situate myself in relation to the research topic. Many Indigenous educators including Archibald (2008), Battiste (2013), and Kirkness (2013) refer to this as the heart work. In doing so, I am contributing to the creation of a sacred space that allows for the implementation of Indigenous storied methods on this topic.

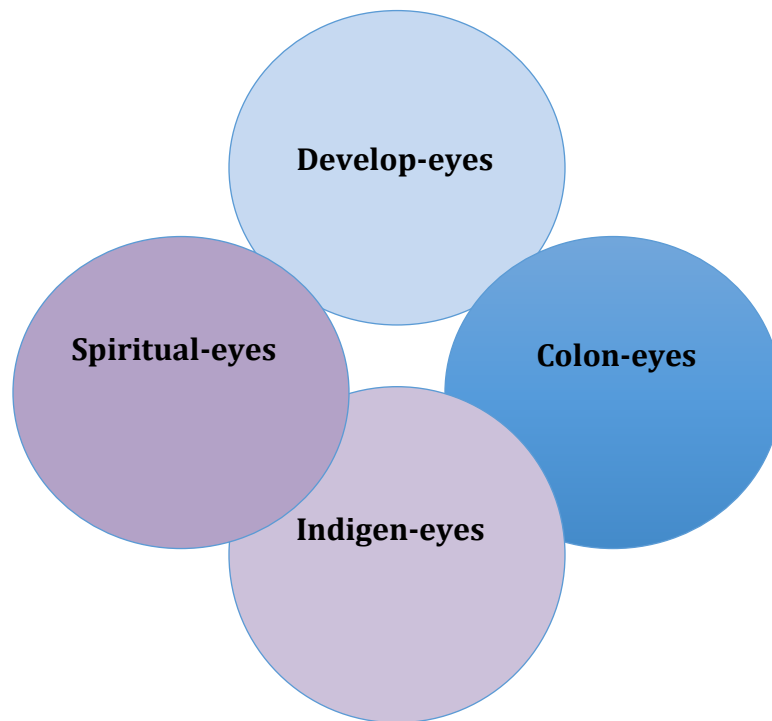
I needed to look back at my process of maturation, specifically how I framed my lived experience as an Indigenous adoptee, and how this has shifted over the years as I continue to reclaim my Indigenous identity. In doing so, I have developed a theoretical framework of Indigenous adoptee identity reclamation that is grounded in Indigenous Education (Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2013; Kirkness & Bernhardt, 1991; Kirkness, 2013;

Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008), Indigenous resurgence scholarship (Absolon, 2011; Alfred, 2009; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Chilisa, 2012; Claxton, 2008; Gaudry, 2011; Simpson, 2008) and based on my lived experiences (an autoethnography) in order to articulate my process of reclaiming identity, reconnecting to community and reframing who I am as an Indigenous adult. This framework was published as the journal article “A framework for Indigenous adoptee reconnection: Reclaiming language and identity” (Wright Cardinal, 2016). I chose the Canadian Journal of New Scholars in Education (CJNSE) because it is an on-line open access journal and I wanted the article to be easily accessible to Indigenous and non-academic audiences seeking resources on the Sixties Scoop. I am aware of a link to my article on the NISCWN website, the Turtle Island Native Network website, the University of Victoria’s Centre for Youth & Society e-newsletter, and First Call – BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition e-newsletter.

I conceptualized this framework in my first year of doctoral studies through ongoing discussions about decolonization. I found myself using the term ‘lens’ to describe the different views people have on life experiences and their understandings of colonization. I read Wilson and Yellowbird’s (2005) *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, and asked myself how my ‘eyes’—the two eyes through which I look—have changed during my own process of decolonization and healing from the Sixties Scoop. In an early collage of the framework, I used photographs of my eyes. To create a curriculum resource in an accessible format, I have simplified the model, using four circles, as depicted in the figure below. The framework’s first two lenses: *Develop-eyes* and *Colon-eyes* are in a hegemonic space that is represented by the blue colour. The third and fourth lenses: *Indigen-eyes* and *Spiritual-eyes* are in a spirit-based space that is represented by the

purple colour. The four circles are interconnected to represent my lived experiences and the intersectionality of my proposed theoretical framework of Indigenous adoptee identity reclamation.

Figure 3.1. A theoretical framework of reformulating Indigenous adoptee identity: Unlearning hegemonic discourse and relearning spirit-based discourses



Develop-eyes. Berg and Lune (2012) assert that qualitative research is often community action-oriented. My master's research (Wright, 2003) was action-oriented and grounded in feminist and critical theory. However, I worked with a framework within a hegemonic space. I was an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher, teaching an undergraduate 400 level Research Methods course for EFL pre-service teachers in Nicaragua. I assisted Indigenous student teachers to be successful in the discourses that surrounded them, rather than the discourses of their families or their communities. I

encouraged students to find their voice, make meaning from the materials we studied, and create their own action-research projects, yet this was still within a framework of English education for global participation.

I worked with a Miskito educator at the Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University (BICU) over a period of several months. With a team of educators, we created the first local English Language textbook to be used for undergraduate learners. We did not consider Miskito, Sumu or Rama ways of learning and knowing. We used local stories to create texts that would fit within the academic structure of English language proficiency testing so that local people could become part of the Western academic tradition. While I may have been an ally to Indigenous Nicaraguan teachers, I now wonder how English language proficiency supports self-determination and empowerment of Indigenous nations? Can we participate in critical transformation if we are othered and view ourselves as ‘other’? What happens when, in retrospect, we find ourselves choosing hegemonic projects for emancipatory actions?

As I developed my ‘eyes’, I started to be curious about my “Indianness” and understood that the Settler story of contact was both a convenient and oversimplified explanation for complex relationships. The longer I lived in Nicaragua, the more I saw political similarities between Indigenous-Nicaraguan state relations and (Northern) Indigenous-Canadian state relations. I observed that while there were regional governance structures in place and a local university, communities operated within Nicaraguan legal structures, such as the use of Nicaraguan passports and Nicaraguan currency—despite the 1987 agreement that established these lands as the Autonomous

Regions of Nicaragua. This—as well as the 1999 establishment of Nunavut as a territory—compelled me to move back home to the Northwest Territories.

Colon-eyes. My critical consciousness was awakened by my experiences in Nicaragua and I was able to look back at the colonial discourses of my childhood from another lens. I relate my childhood experience to the views of a fellow Indigenous adoptee, Richard Wagamese (2009), who recalls:

INDIANS NEVER GOT MENTIONED IN ANY OF THE SCHOOLBOOKS EXCEPT FOR being the guides for the brave explorers discovering the country. I could never figure out how you could say you were out discovering something when you needed a guide to help you find it...We were either heathen devils running around killing people or simple savages who desperately needed the help of the missionaries in order to get straightened out and live like real people...(pp. 12-13)

This rings true with my experience of being raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, informally known as the Mormon church. *The Book of Mormon* presents history from a Settler perspective. There is one lost tribe in *The Book of Mormon*, the Lamanites, who are the Indigenous peoples of the world. I was raised to believe that being a Lamanite was inferior to the other eleven tribes. Both of my adopted parents were from the tribe of Ephraim. From a young age, I was told that I was a Lamanite and I dreaded turning eighteen because I did not want confirmation of this status in my patriarchal blessing. My thoughts turned to suicide and I abused alcohol and drugs to cope with my conflicting identities and low self-esteem.

From the lens of *Colon-eyes* I was “other” and my culture was being presented as inferior to the culture into which I was adopted. Until the late 1980s, the hegemonic colonial discourses described Native peoples as culturally deprived or incapable of properly parenting their children. In my own case, I was told my mother was a Native alcoholic who didn’t want me. End of story. Indeed, such hegemonic discourses attempt to totalize a particular discourse over all other narratives (Iqbal, 2008). I see our stories of healing as a way to speak back to such hegemonic discourses. To challenge the narratives and stories of colonialism, we need to share our own stories, to articulate our worldviews and identities as Indigenous peoples. Stories and narratives that provide insight into silent spaces (including curriculum) contribute to our communities and our own transformation.

Indigen-eyes. When I moved home fourteen years ago, I had a colonial story to explain the injustices in my life and I held on to this story when I was in conflict with others. One day I used this story to explain “yet another injustice” that befell me. Afterwards, two knowledge holders who were visiting shared with me that when we push and fight to be right we are only pushing and fighting ourselves. I understood from their teaching that I need to feel in my heart that I am whole, and then act from this space. I call this a spirit-based space, an opening to ways of knowing and being in which healing and wholeness are present. My adult introduction to this space included the notion of being stewards of the land, living in community, and reacquainting myself with ancestors’ presence in all living beings. Thus, I experienced a reawakening of my corporeal memory prior to my adoption.

In his Indigenous research paradigm for application in social work, Hart (2010) proposes that we consider the perspective of local community values and aspirations and

recognize family and social network approaches that emphasize the relational self. For me to gain Indigenous eyes, I needed to go home and live in community. Now, when I consider relational accountability, I recognize that I cannot always differentiate myself from others as I see the interconnectedness and the effect that my actions have on other human and non-human relations. I also recognize that there are deeply entrenched perspectives between the Denesuline, nēhiyaw, Metis and Settlers in the territory that I am from. As an adult, I continue to learn the tribal histories and the post-colonial complexities of this land.

With *Indigen-eyes* I am able to see the entanglement of Indigenous nations with the Canadian state. These entanglements include treaty relationships that have been misused while building a new Settler nation state and the policies that have unfolded which impact Indigenous families' autonomy and decision-making. Indigenous people are not the stereotypes and cultural descriptors used in hegemonic discourses to either foster the neo-liberal agenda of individualism (*Colon-eyes*), nor the social justice programs to 'help' the oppressed (*Develop-eyes*). While social justice is important to inform policy and program development, I have observed that many efforts in hegemonic spaces regenerate othered peoples.

As discussed in chapter two, Indigenous resurgence scholarship emerges from the theoretical development of an Indigenous paradigm that is rooted in the knowledge and experiences of Indigenous communities. We require mental and spiritual decolonization in order to create a new relationship between Indigenous and Settler peoples. (Alfred, 2009, p. 180). *Indigen-eyes* acts as a lens of awakening in order to better understand my political and cultural identity. I propose that reclaiming Indigenous identity is an act of

decolonization that can be languaged as a shift from hegemonic discourses to spirit-based discourses that centre on healing and wholeness.

Spiritual-eyes. Over the past fifteen years, by reconnecting to my community, my relations, and the land, I came to understand what Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Bernhardt (1991) described as the 4 R's *Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility*. In Indigenous worldviews, knowledge is collective and much of what we learn is through reflective practices. When research is approached from an Indigenous worldview (axiology), ways of knowing (epistemology) and ways of being (ontology) are inseparable (Wilson, 2008). This knowledge extends beyond social formations to the realm of metaphysics to include our spiritual understandings of cosmology and the connections that we have to all living beings. Many laws and creation stories are expressed in the relationships that animals and people have with the universe. This knowledge cannot necessarily be explained by reason and is often realized in sacred ceremonies or through prayer. This is a powerful understanding that has profoundly shaped my epistemological and ethical orientation. The Cree scholar Margaret Kovach defines ethics as *miyo-wicehtowin*, or “good relations, the heartbeat of ethical responsibilities within Indigenous research practice” (2009, p. 19). *miyo-wicehtowin* encompasses ethics as methodology, reciprocity and an ethical starting place. Indigenous scholars are borrowing traditional ways of knowing and framing these in the context of modern academic research. I consider the dynamics of community, the power of story and narrative, and both the necessity to ground myself in an Indigenous worldview and also recognize the limitations of pre-existing social and political constructs.

In other words, *Spiritual-eyes* moves beyond the settler socio-political frameworks that we have inherited, to Indigenous ways of knowing: places such as dream and vision, where time shifts from temporal space and critical theory lands in another dimension. Being reintroduced to the land with the guidance of knowledge holders, and in ceremony, has reshaped my adult identity and I have found myself moving away from a hegemonic space of disconnection. In this spirit-based space, I can see the web of connections that is my life, including the ground where my ancestors walked and how they come to me now. It takes conscious effort for me to stay in this spirit-based space: to be clear minded, to be pure hearted and to be walking with forgiveness, compassion, and love. I recognize that I can slip back into colonial stories and see myself as victim when I lose connection to the land, the cosmos, and I caution myself that being in an Indigenist research space of theory in the university, without spiritual practice, can bring me back to a hegemonic space of colonial frustration. I better understand political and cultural identity with *spiritual-eyes* and view political and cultural projects without spiritual understandings as incomplete.

Reclaiming identity: A spirit-based discourse. This theoretical framework of reformulating Indigenous identity by unlearning hegemonic discourses and relearning spirit-based discourses is based on my life experiences and is a lifelong process. I apply the framework to articulate the practice of reclaiming Indigenous identity, reconnecting to community and reframing my identity as an Indigenous adult. I now identify wealth with community knowledge and the abundance of our land. I view status and prestige in the ways one reciprocates and shares knowledge. I treasure the stories of my family, the territory I am from, and the land that sustains us. Throughout this process of

decolonization, my values have changed. I no longer see myself through colonial narratives: such as the neglected daughter of a drunken Indian on welfare. That is not my narrative. Now I know I was born nēhiyaw in northern Treaty 8 territory. I am a nēhiyaw woman. Living within a spirit-based discourse brings me healing and wholeness.

As an adoptee that was removed from my community, my focus is repatriation or “stepping closer to the fire” (Alfred, 2009). It is an ongoing process for me to live with *spiritual-eyes* and learn from knowledge holders. I recognize that story and narrative are central to Indigenous knowledge systems and sharing my narrative is a necessary step in this project. Sharing my story and gathering the stories of others on a similar journey of Indigenous identity reclamation allows me to honour collective knowledge while involving myself in the highly individualized and hierarchical doctoral dissertation process. Wagamese (2009) has described the trauma of the Sixties Scoop as “The Primal Wound” (p. 12). He also reflects on reconnecting with community, noting:

When I found my people again it got better. Every ceremony, every ritual, every phrase I learned in my language eased that wound and eventually it became easier, more graceful, to walk as an Indian person. I began to reclaim the history, culture, language, philosophy, and way of being that the Sixties Scoop had deprived me of.
(p.13)

It has been said ‘home is where the heart is’ and now when I look in the mirror I am home because I know who I am. My life-experience story involved returning to my home community, living on my homelands for ten years, and being involved in land-based practices. It is time to hear the stories of Indigenous adoptees that have reclaimed their identities. What does ‘Coming Home’ mean for each of them?

In preparation for hearing other adoptees' stories I needed to be emotionally and spiritually ready to do this project and consider self-care throughout the process. Kovach (2010) reminds us that as researchers we can be triggered and self-care is important, including, "taking the time needed between interviews and having one's own support system in place" (p. 47). She also speaks about the time needed to process stories. I also gleaned from narrative inquiry that I had to suspend my own assumptions about what constitutes reclaiming identity. How I interpreted this was being mindful that each adoptee comes from their own territory and nation(s) with diverse teachings, protocols, and practices. Narrative inquiry also helped me understand how to manoeuvre being an insider on the topic of study while not dominating or manipulating the dialogue to reflect my lived experience. In fact, as will be discussed in Chapter four, there are many ways to reclaim identity.

A final aspect of this research project was the experience of being an insider/outsider and how this relates to researcher subjectivity. As previously discussed, self-location is critical to Indigenous research. Further, in Indigenous research projects, it is not a mere question of being an insider or an outsider. Smith (1999) explains we can be partial insiders because it is our own communities yet partial outsiders because of Western education or working "across clan, tribe, linguistic, age and gender boundaries" (p. 5). My project was with adults from seven nations who experienced the Sixties Scoop. I was an insider because I also experienced the Sixties Scoop. I was very aware of my insider status during our relationship building at Indigenous adoptee gatherings and during the first set of data collection, the individual interviews. The conversations were intimate,

organic and part of longer visits and other activities we were doing together as Indigenous adoptees.

During the second set of data collection, the sharing circle, I became more aware of my outsider status. I hired a facilitator for the sharing circle, this allowed me to be present in ceremony while listening to whether each participant had the opportunity to share deeply, monitor the time, and ask myself whether I had enough data to proceed with my study. I was very aware that I was in a healing circle yet I was also an academic that was going to analyze this circle and write a dissertation. From this perspective, it was important for me to self-locate and share my story as part of the research process. I also honoured the ceremony of the research process. In her discussion of navigating Indigenous research in the mainstream academy, Kovach (2009) notes “The incorporation of narrative, story, and self-location found within Indigenous writing is perceived as indulgent rather than being recognized as a methodological necessity flowing from a tribal epistemology” (p. 84). My lived experience, coupled with my commitment to being in ceremony and practicing self-care, was critical to the success of this project. At the end of the research process I understood Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) statement “Indigenous research is a humble and humbling activity” (p. 5).

Participants

By participating in the ongoing national Indigenous adoptee movement, I was able to receive endorsement for my project by the NISCWN. When I attended the first national Indigenous Adoptee Gathering in September 2014 I established relationships with adoptees working on various projects across Canada. Prior to the second annual Indigenous Adoptee Gathering of August 2015, I presented my proposed project to the

NISCWN committee to seek their endorsement and help with recruitment. I had a skype meeting with the committee to describe the purpose of my project and the intended outcomes as listed in the materials I provided. I provided them with a copy of my recruitment flyer (Appendix A) and participant consent letter (Appendix B). I prepared an Introduction and Recruitment Script (Appendix C). I answered questions that the committee had. We brainstormed on approaches to recruitment and I emphasized the criteria for participants. I prepared a Recruitment Script Participants (Appendix D) for potential participants that contacted me. I also prepared a Verbal Consent for Participants (Appendix E) that I used at four stages of the research to check-in with each participant. We agreed the committee would forward my materials to persons they knew who fit the criteria. In addition, by contacting and establishing a relationship with Raven Sinclair, who is a member of the network, she further shared my recruitment flyer and participant consent letter with a national Indigenous Social Work network of which she is a member.

My research question requires participants to identify themselves as reconnecting with their Indigenous identity and repatriating with their Indigenous community. This is a specific space of decolonization as described in my theoretical perspectives section of Chapter 2. The participant criteria approved by the University of Victoria HREB included the following: Indigenous transracial adoptees who identify themselves as having reclaimed their Indigenous identities after experiencing closed adoption during the Sixties Scoop; had membership in an Aboriginal community (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) at birth and then have been removed from this community and raised without connection to their Indigenous nation (reserve, settlement, or community) (Appendix F).

In the recruitment materials I invited participants to join me in a process of co-

constructing and co-participating in stories on reclaiming Indigenous identities. I received an overwhelming response. My target was six participant stories. I considered attrition rates in research studies and chose eight people. Of the eight people, seven participants stayed with the project. They include activists, artists, educators, and academics that are leading or are involved in initiatives pertaining to healing from the Sixties Scoop.

Participant nations include: Dene, Kwakwaka'wakw, Metis, Oneida, Nēhiyaw, and Saulteaux. Each participant was offered anonymity, however 5 participants asked to have their first names used in the dissertation, 1 participant agreed to using her full name, and 1 participant asked that her Indigenous name be used. Each participant was given the option of having the digital recording of their stories disseminated in community and were made aware that their voices may be recognizable. Every participant expressed interest in the digital stories and agreed to their first names or Indigenous name being on the audio recordings.

In the literature review of the Sixties Scoop, Chapter 2, I identified three phases of the Sixties Scoop literature that provide insight into the social assumptions on Indigenous child removal of that time period. To recap: Phase One (1950s to 1970s) focused on child well-being and the assumption that Indigenous children would have a better quality of life being raised by non-Indigenous families. Phase Two (mid 1970s-1990s) was a period informed by self-governing Indigenous welfare agencies. Indigenous nations took on the responsibility of child welfare and the system of child removal. Phase Three (2000-present) focused on issues of adoptee identity and adoptee voices now being included in the literature. The Sixties Scoop era includes children apprehended in the late 1950s through the early 1980s. Below I provide some participant data. In this table I identify a

noted event during each participant’s initial pathways to reclaiming their Indigenous identity.

Table 3.1. Brief Participant Information

Name	Nation	Time period entered child welfare	Age and notable event* during initial pathways to reclaiming identity	Contribution today
Raven	Nēhiyaw	1960s, age 5	20s, Job at Treaty 9, working with Indigenous people in Indigenous political organization	Indigenous academic, expertise: Indigenous child welfare
Colleen	Nēhiyaw	1970s, age 3	20s, Native Addictions Counsellor program at college	Activist, co-founder of NISCWN
Duane	Metis	1970s, infant	20s, Aboriginal health services HIV/AIDS network	Activist, co-founder of NISCWN
Kanika Tsi Tsa	Oneida	1950s, infant	20s, when first child was born	Indigenous midwife
Lisa	Dene	1970s, infant	30s, Indigenous studies course at university	Artist & bioethicist, expertise: bioethics of working with Indigenous patients
Shawn	Saulteaux	1970s, infant	20s, cultural events at Friendship Centre	Artist, drummer, & landscaper
Elizabeth	Kwakwaka’wakw	1970s, infant	19, saw a First Nations couple in regalia when invited to dance for the Pope	Artist, dancer, & First Nations family advocate

*this is one event shared in participant interviews, a more fulsome description of experiences is provided in Chapter 4.

Data Collection Procedures

I used the Indigenous storied method life-experience interviews and principles of narrative inquiry to document the stories of seven adults who reclaimed their Indigenous identities after experiencing the Sixties Scoop. There were two parts to the data collection: individual visits with each participant and a sharing circle open to all participants.

In the summer of 2015 I visited with participants in Vancouver, Saskatoon,

Winnipeg, Toronto, and Ottawa. This process took three months, July through September 2015. First I travelled across country from Victoria to Winnipeg with my two children, ages 8 and 10, in our Jeep pulling a homemade trailer, a gypsy wagon, behind us. This afforded us the opportunity to camp near participants, reduce hotel costs, and be available according to participants' schedules. We named our gypsy wagon *nakiska8*. *nakiska* means 'meeting place' in Cree and I chose the spirit number 8 to represent myself and each participant coming together in ceremony to gather these stories. During this time, I attended the Manitoba Indigenous Adoptee gathering in Winnipeg. For personal reasons, after five weeks on the road I returned to BC, then flew to Ontario without my children in August to conduct more interviews and attend the second annual national Indigenous Adoptee Gathering in Ottawa.

It was critical for me to spend time with each participant in their community adhering to approaches to respectful research relationships that I discussed in the beginning of this chapter (Absolon, 2009; Archibald, 2008; Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). I would not have been able to gather these stories with the depth of transformational experiences described, if I had conducted phone interviews or scheduled face-to-face interviews without the time spent visiting and relationship building. Visits lasted two to three days and with four of the seven participants I returned for a second visit. Visiting included having meals together, going for walks, spending time together with our children, driving together, doing errands, and having kitchen table conversations. Visiting is very powerful because we get to know one another at a core level. It offers us the opportunity to see the relational accountability, the responsibilities that each other has to our families, communities, and insights into our respective

Indigenous knowledge systems. (Absolon, 2009; Archibald, 2008; Hart 2010; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). I paid for meals and offered to pay for transportation throughout the visits.

What I learned in this process is that I needed to be flexible and the travel schedule I prepared was only a guide. As an example, I participated in the Manitoba Indigenous Adoptee Gathering in July 2015, hoping to do some interviews there. This was a very emotional gathering and it was evident that it would be inappropriate to ask participants to be interviewed at that time. For this reason, I went back to Vancouver in September to spend time with two participants, Elizabeth and Shawn, and tape-record their stories then. Duane, one of the participants from Ottawa found it best to do the interview at the Manitoba gathering because he had some time to be interviewed and wanted to contribute to my project before returning home to other commitments. In August 2015 I flew to Toronto to visit two participants and then to Ottawa to visit with two participants and attend the second annual Indigenous Adoptee Gathering. I changed my return flight so that I could go back to Toronto by train to visit some more with one of the participants and record their story. I had interviewed the two Ottawa participants already, in Saskatoon and Winnipeg. However, we continued to visit and build relationships until I completed my dissertation.

The reciprocity that happens from our common experience is very powerful. I know for this initial study and the methods I chose, it was important that I could situate myself as an Indigenous adoptee in this work. On the first road trip I spent three days in Saskatoon with two participants, Raven and Colleen. Raven is an academic and she invited us to join her as guest speakers on the Sixties Scoop in a 500 level Anti-Racism

course. Colleen is an activist and filmmaker. We drove to Winnipeg together with my kids, hauling nakiska8, and she interviewed me for her documentary on the Sixties Scoop while we drove. This is another aspect of reciprocity; some of the participants have sought my assistance with their projects on the Sixties Scoop. I participate willingly and am grateful that we share this sacred responsibility to heal from this experience and support others in their healing.

I ensured that each participant read the participant consent letter prior to the interview and we went over it together at the time of the interview. In the participant letter I indicated that I would check in four times throughout the data collection and data analysis process to ensure each participant was continuing with the study and that they knew they could voluntarily withdraw at any time. Of the eight participants I interviewed, seven stayed with the project. One participant withdrew for personal reasons. I audio recorded the interviews that lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. To enter into a respectful relationship, I gifted each participant. (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Absolon, 2011) This is an act of acknowledgement and thanks for sharing their knowledge with me and “a commitment by the researcher that the research will be used purposefully” (Kovach, 2009 in Kovach, 2010, p. 44). The gifts were blankets and scarfs that I bought from Indigenous artists. I considered each participant’s nation, those with clans, and colours, when choosing their gifts. I also provided \$50 cash honoraria.

I provided the questions to the participants at the time of the interview. (Appendix G) Some participants said they would have preferred to receive the questions ahead of time. I observed that some of the language I used, such as ‘reclamation’ was not familiar to all participants. One thing I would consider doing differently is sending the questions

to participants ahead of time. I had my research notebook with me, prepared to take notes during the interviews; however, I found in my effort to honour orality that note taking was somewhat disruptive and awkward. For this reason, I took few notes and relied primarily on the tape-recording. Because of the relationship-building, I found it very easy to be in conversation during the tape-recorded interview and included a few clarifying questions and discussions that resulted from the life stories shared, such as age of apprehension and other details that I realized would assist me with documenting the participants' contexts though they were not part of the interview questions. I also viewed the data collection and analysis as a recursive process in which we would have several opportunities to engage with the materials and follow-up with any questions I had.

After the life-story interviews, I sent each participant their interview transcript ensuring they had time to read and edit before the sharing circle. Co-constructing stories is a recursive process that involves being in the field, composing field texts, drafting and sharing interim research texts, and composing research texts (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Feedback varied from no changes to the interview transcript to rewriting the entire transcript. By the time of the sharing circle, participants had four or five months of engagement with me on this project, reflecting on their processes of decolonization and articulating their experiences through a lens of healing from the Sixties Scoop. At the time of ethics, I had three questions prepared for the sharing circle. (Appendix H)

Through the process of reviewing transcripts from the life-story interviews, my notes, and dialogue with participants, I reduced this to two key questions about identity and healing.

Question 1: Since our last visit, what thoughts do you want to share with the group about your process of reclaiming your Indigenous identity? Question 2: What does being

Indigenous mean to you today, how is this different from before you started reclaiming your Indigenous identity?

The sharing circle was an incredibly moving experience. Initially, I approached the NISCWN, requesting to hold the Sharing Circle after the August 2015 gathering. The organizers felt it would be too much after the intensity of organizing and participating in the gathering. As it turned out, the time required to visit with each participant and do the life-story interviews took until the end of September 2015. I transcribed the interviews in September and October 2015 and sent the transcripts to each participant for review and editing before the sharing circle. Based on participants' availability, we chose to meet in Vancouver in November 2015. Six of seven participants were able to join us. One of the participant's adoptive parents generously gave us their house for the weekend. Their large home accommodated most of the participants. One participant chose to stay at a hotel. I received a small research grant from the Faculty of Education Research Committee that covered the cost of food, ferry & gas. This allowed me to provide groceries for the weekend, bring my vehicle to Vancouver, and shuttle people from the airport. I also paid for some of the flights. I received another small student award from the university which, coupled with my airmiles, afforded me four domestic airline tickets. Everyone was doing this on their own time to support my project and the least I could do was assist with their transportation and food.

Spending the weekend together, eating and visiting, deepened the relationship amongst us. The first evening some participants did a planning session for a future BC Indigenous Adoptee Gathering. The second day, my partner made hamburger soup for our lunch while I shuttled people to the house. The six participants, co-facilitator and I

enjoyed a meal and a visit. An Indigenous co-facilitator with social work and academic experience volunteered to lead the protocol and ceremonial aspects of the circle. Prior to the weekend, the co-facilitator and I discussed the project, and the approach to being in circle. We also discussed my desired outcomes for the circle which included: 1) affirmation of or changes to what was shared in the individual interviews on reclaiming identity, and 2) any further insights on healing from the Sixties Scoop. The co-facilitator also supervises graduate students and understood the academic aspects of interviewing and the academic purpose of the sharing circle, in addition to the ceremonial aspects that would contribute to creating a sacred space for sharing.

We lit the fireplace and gathered in the living room. I had checked in with everyone prior to the sharing circle to ensure I had permission to record their voices for my dissertation. I did not have my notebook with me as I could not reconcile being in ceremony and taking notes. I relied on the tape-recorded transcript and the recursive process of ongoing engagement with participants to confirm the details I used in my dissertation. We started the circle in ceremony with prayer and smudging, our co-facilitator led this and went over sharing circle protocols. Then I asked the first question: *Since our last visit, what thoughts do you want to share with the group about your process of reclaiming your Indigenous identity?* The person who picked up the talking stick from me shared their response, then the next person who picked up the talking stick shared, until everyone had an opportunity to pick up the talking stick and share. After a short nutrition break, we came back to answer the second question: *What does being Indigenous mean to you today? How is this different from before you started reclaiming your Indigenous identity?* Again, the participant who picked up the talking stick from me

went first, then each participant picked up the talking stick until everyone had an opportunity to share. The circle lasted four hours, the fire burned the whole time as part of ceremony, and it was a very powerful experience sharing stories of healing from the Sixties Scoop.

The data collection process offered a reconstruction of life stories. Indigenous adoptees and former youth in care are overrepresented in homelessness and incarceration rates (Brown V. Canada, 2017). Suicide rates are high. The common experiences and understandings of Indigenous people who have been through the child welfare system were evident during the sharing circle. For each of the participants, this project was the first time they had been asked about their stories of healing. The lens that I provided was a lens of healing from the trauma of removal from their families and communities.

The power of the circle is the space it creates for acknowledgement, tears, anger, laughter, letting go, and being heard. Our voices are stronger together. The slogan on the t-shirts of the National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network is 'I am not alone' and I heard this repeatedly in the circle 'I am not alone'. The importance of realizing others went through the same form of colonial oppression via removal from family and community contributes to collective healing. Together we were reconstructing a chapter of history. This process engaged elements of co-constructing stories to be discussed further in the data analysis section of chapter four.

After the closing ceremonial protocol, the two participants that hosted us, Elizabeth and Shawn, gifted each person a small painting. The arts have been a key element of their healing and the work they do as a couple and a family. Each painting they made had a story for the person being gifted. The paintings infused both of their

nations' teachings. I paid the two hosts to make the paintings in lieu of participant honoraria for the circle. Another participant, Lisa, who is also a talented artist, gifted each person prints of her paintings. I paid her airfare. Everyone was invited to choose the print they wanted, then Lisa shared the story of each painting, including the teachings from her nation.

The co-facilitator concluded our time together with a reminder that emotions may come up and each participant was welcomed to contact her as needed. It was very important for me to have a co-facilitator with the knowledge and skills to assist participants in a ceremonial way and her willingness to continue in relationship for as long as needed speaks to her understanding of respectful research relationships. At least one participant continued their conversations with the facilitator for several months. Our facilitator was gifted two paintings and I paid her a modest honorarium that was enough to cover the taxi fares and data usage on her phone but little more. She emphasized that assisting with this project was heart work for her.

Data Analysis

Theoretical frames – critical race theory and education. This study is also informed by critical race theory (Monaghan, 1993; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). My topic and research questions suggest experiences with racism and internalized racism, however, I did not include race theory in my initial theoretical framing. I realized through the process of data collection and reviewing my framework that racism underpins the Sixties Scoop phenomenon, decolonization, and Indigenous resurgence; thus, a more fulsome discussion of theories that influence racialized identity formation was needed. The Indian Act, a racist piece of Canadian legislation, is the foundational document that has

permitted the disruption of Indigenous identity and Indigenous family networks. The early literature on the Sixties Scoop suggests a racist social fabric in which Indigenous people were viewed as inferior to ‘white’ people and incapable of parenting (Fanshel, 1972; Ward, 1984).

Decolonization and Indigenous resurgence theories seek to address racist and prejudicial mindsets and reformulate systems where Indigenous peoples are no longer second-class citizens. Further, as touched upon in Chapter 2, decolonization practices and critical research methods that informed my study are a result of scholars of colour addressing institutionalized racism and creating space for theories and practices that reflect marginalized peoples. I am including a discussion on critical race theory to better locate “positionality” (hooks, 1994) and the racism and internalized racism that presents in Chapter 4’s Findings. These elements will also be discussed in Chapter 5.

Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that applies critical theory, a critical examination of society and culture, to the intersection of race, law, and power. CRT was first attributed to critical race legal scholarship in the United States in the 1970s to address the concerns of minority scholars while examining the way law encodes cultural norms (Monaghan, 1993). Critical theorists historically focused on class and gender, whereas critical race theory centers race as the primary factor in critical examinations of society and culture. CRT views racism as both an individual problem and a social problem. CRT scholars address the structural nature of racial exclusion (Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Two major influences on critical race theory are the scholars W. E. B. Du Bois and Franz Fanon. Du Bois (1903) coined the term “double consciousness” felt by African

Americans, who experience being an American and a Negro, “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 5). Dickson (1992) references three issues that Du Bois is addressing with “double consciousness”: “the real power of white stereotypes in black life and thought”; “the double consciousness created by the practical racism that exclude every black American from the mainstream of the society, the double consciousness of being both an American and not an American”; and “an internal conflict in the African American individual between what was *African* and what was *American*” (p. 301). Du Bois’ work is seminal and influential in academic discourses of critical consciousness that center race and racialized peoples’ identity formation in colonial states and is applicable to Indigenous, Latino, and other marginalized peoples.

CRT is also informed by Franz Fanon’s theories of revolution, colonialism, and racism. Fanon (1963) has argued the fundamental dichotomy of a colony is present through the radical difference in race: the white vs black, the Natives vs. the civilized Westerners. In his analysis he determined the colonizers almost always treat the colonized as subordinate and animalistic. Critical race theory is based on the perspective that we live in a racialized society whereby those who are labeled non-white are marginalized (hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; McIntosh, 1989). Omi and Winant (1994) link “racial formation to the evolution of hegemony, the way in which society is organized and ruled” (p. 56). Paraskeva (2011) suggests we “consider the western-Eurocentric patriarchal epistemological hegemony within the field of education and in the curriculum in particular” (p. 181) and therefore “curriculum research needs to deal with multiple, not fixed, frameworks within ample and intricate epistemological waves” (p.176).

Given that school experiences are so influential in a student's identity development, Paraskeva (2011) proposes that we deterritorialize curriculum. Deterritorializing curriculum is the constant process of questioning and revealing hidden colonial influences in past and current beliefs and practices. bell hooks attributes student alienation in schools to discriminatory, racist, sexist, and classist policies and practices in educational settings and the wider society (Florence, 1998). hooks' Engaged Pedagogy supports the CRT notion of counter/storying which questions whose lived experience is privileged (hooks, 1994). In their discussion of Kaupapa Maori and Critical Race Theory methodologies, Santamaria, Webber, and Santamaria (2017) incorporate critical race methodology as counter narratives in the ongoing Maori struggle for decolonization: "these counter-narratives serve to create a record that challenges and interrupts deficit-oriented tales about Maori learners and leadership for Maori" (p.1553).

It became evident during my data analysis of the interviews that participants' identities in childhood were strongly influenced and impacted by the colonial narratives in schooling, adoptive family, and society. As I organized the transcript content into themes, I viewed the stories of healing as counter-narratives to the experiences of being raised in non-Indigenous adoptive homes. I also noted the contrast between negative experiences in elementary and secondary school with the positive experiences of some participants in decolonized and Indigenized adult education programs. These initial insights in data analysis compelled me to look more deeply at Critical Race Theory as it relates to my Theoretical Framework in Chapter 2. CRT critiques socially-constructed status/positioning, sources of knowledge that have become validated as objective truths in

legal, political and educational spaces and therefore, what constitutes legitimate knowledge.

Analysis of interviews. After the sharing circle, I needed to sit with the experience, the stories shared, and let myself feel the pain that I still carry as a survivor of the Sixties Scoop. I needed to be aware of my emotions and my own wellness. I engaged in self-care and ceremony; two months later I was ready to hear the recording and transcribed the 4-hour sharing circle. I mention this because choosing a topic of research that is linked to my own lived experience and a trauma of colonization requires spiritual and self-work if I am to make a contribution to Indigenous issues. There were a few times in this journey that I felt the disconnect between my topic and the PhD process were too great to reconcile and my task to demonstrate the educative importance of this phenomena too large a burden. Each time, I overcame this through mindful experiences and engagement with participants that reminded me, these voices and this study are a meaningful contribution.

I sent transcripts to each participant that wanted a transcript. Two of the six participants of the sharing circle did not want to review the transcript and gave me permission to proceed, knowing that I would share the draft dissertation chapter for them to review and collaborate on. All seven participants wanted to continue with my project. Overall, the sharing circle was an affirmation of what was shared during the life-story interviews. I felt satisfied that I had gathered enough information to start interpreting the data.

First, I printed a copy of each individual interview and selected one interview to code. I did an open coding process. (Creswell, 1998) This involved reading the interview

and underlining in pencil everything that stood out to me as relevant. It was a bit overwhelming when I underlined most of the transcript in pencil. I kept my research statement and questions in front of me, to stay focused on what I was coding. I reread the transcript multiple times, making notes in the margin, and reminded myself that open coding will manifest surface content and not to worry about the amount of data I was underlining. I also reminded myself that the first three questions were warm-up questions and the amount of data that I underlined from childhood may not be relevant to the salient features of my research question on reclaiming Indigenous identity.

Second, I reread the transcript and did an axial coding process using coloured pencils to create themes. I went over the transcript using coloured pencils and made notes in the margin. In the first transcript I identified nine themes, with several subthemes within each theme. Again, not every theme was salient to reclaiming identity. I repeated this process of open and axial coding with each transcript. By the third transcript I was able to see patterns emerging. I started to notice critical periods of time: childhood - before the healing process began, youth/young adult - the beginning of the healing journey, adulthood - actively reclaiming identity. This was an inductive process in which I was seeking patterns. Therefore, I noted the critical periods of time and continued with my thematic coding process.

After completing the coding process for all seven interviews, I laid the axial coding sheets on the floor to see where the patterns emerged, where the participants have commonalities and where they have differences. While each person's story is unique, the experiences of Indigenous adoptees that are engaging in processes of decolonization and healing have many shared features. In chapter four, I will discuss the themes that I

identified in the interview data. As noted in chapter one, each participant chose whether to use their name or an alias in the study.

Chapter Summary

We are no longer bound to language and frameworks that respond to the colonizer. (Alfred, 2005; Chilisa, 2012; Simpson, 2008; Wilson, 2008) Indigenous scholars are encouraged to articulate our own research paradigms, our own approaches to research and our own data collection methods. Salient features of Indigenous research include: spirit-based contextualities, Indigenous knowledge systems, and a contribution to Indigenous issues. No matter what methods are selected, the approach to the research project - in particular, the respectful research relationships - are critical in Indigenous projects. Narrative and story are central to Indigenous knowledge systems and the life-experience story method as introduced by JoAnn Archibald's Storywork informs a process for gathering stories in respectful ways. I coupled these with principles of narrative inquiry, a recursive process of co-constructing stories with participants that allows for deeper sharing on the Indigenous issue being studied.

Engaged Pedagogy (hooks, 1994) is a critical praxis that centers the lived experiences of marginalized peoples and the role of emancipatory education in both schools and society. Engaged pedagogy is informed by critical race theory that addresses the structural nature of racial exclusion. Critical race theory is informed by Du Bois' (1903) "double consciousness" that centers the identity conflict of race and racialized peoples' in colonial states and Fanon's (1963) theories of revolution, colonialism, and racism whereby the fundamental dichotomy of a colony is present through the radical

difference in race. CRT methodologies provide counter-narratives to address these identity conflicts and colonial dichotomies.

Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how seven transracial adoptees that experienced the Sixties Scoop reclaimed their Indigenous identities after being raised without connection to their community or nation. I used the life-experience interview, an Indigenous method for gathering life stories that contribute to addressing Indigenous issues. The data analysis process was also informed by principles of narrative inquiry, a qualitative method used across disciplines to gather peoples' stories, often within a feminist, critical, or queer theoretical framework. My study was also informed by Indigenous approaches to research, including: spirituality; relationship building; community reciprocity; and the "self work" in preparation for the study.

In this chapter, I provide an analysis of the stories shared by seven participants who experienced the Sixties Scoop. I noted three periods of time in the process of reclaiming identity that informed the organization of themes and have concluded this chapter with the contributions each participant is making to decolonization and Indigenous resurgence today. Data analysis occurred in 2016 and participant approval of content was completed in spring 2017.

Analysis

This study was an opportunity to explore educational aspects of the Sixties Scoop phenomenon. In an era of increasing decolonization in the field of education and through Indigenous resurgence scholarship, it is timely to analyze processes for reclaiming Indigenous identity. Further, the TRC Calls to Action (2015) include recommendations to

address Indigenous experiences with child welfare, as well as calls for curriculum and education projects that challenge the hegemonic discourses of the legacy of the Indian Act and address the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities for the purpose of reeducating and reshaping identity.

Demographics: An Overview. The Sixties Scoop is a chapter of Canada's colonial and assimilationist history where Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families or without their families' informed consent and transferred to primarily white, middle-class families through either a closed adoption process in infancy or fostering and adoption in childhood. Birth certificates were changed and connections to the children's respective First Nations, Inuit, or Metis communities severed. First reported by Johnston (1983), the Sixties Scoop covered a period from the late 1950s, through the winding down of Residential Schools, to the mid-1980s when First Nations governments intervened and the approach was discontinued. This study includes six First Nations and one Metis participant from different nations in relationship with Canada. The nations include: Dene, Kwakwaka'wakw, Metis, Nēhiyaw, Oneida, and Saulteaux. Geographically, participants' home territories span across BC, the Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. Two participants reside in urban centres on their home territories. Five participants reside in urban centres that are geographically distant from their home territories. At the time of placement in foster and adoptive families, distance from home communities ranged from 50 kilometers down the highway to over 3,000 kilometers. All the participants in this study were adopted into families in Canada. However, publications note that children of the Sixties Scoop experienced placements in Canada, the United States, and parts of Europe.

Interview Themes

My main focus in the study was on the healing journey of the Indigenous adoptees. Initially I was not going to write about childhood experiences. However, when I asked about childhood as part of my “warm-up” interview questions, it became apparent that it is difficult to discuss healing without discussing what you are healing from. As I organized the data I realized that one of the four themes vitally necessary to this study is the childhood experience of being a transracial adoptee before reclaiming one’s identity.

Theme 1 ‘Imposed Fracture’ – From One Identity to Another provides context for the struggles with identity that participants sought to address. In their interviews, the participants portrayed reclaiming identity as a process that I have organized into three themes: *Theme 2 ‘Little Anchors’ – Beginning the Healing Process* describes initial pathways to healing, the beginning of the re-acculturation process. *Theme 3 ‘Coming Home’ – On Being Whole* outlines the shift in worldviews and embracing Indigeneity. *Theme 4 ‘Our Sacred Bundle’ – Reconciling the Imposed Fracture* illustrates how seven Indigenous adoptees are currently contributing to spirit-based discourses. I wish to acknowledge that I derived the names of *Theme 1 Imposed Fracture*, *Theme 2 Little Anchors*, and *Theme 4 Our Sacred Bundle* from one of the participant’s interviews. As discussed in Chapter 3, Dr. Raven Sinclair is a groundbreaking scholar on Indigenous child welfare and has published widely on related topics. In her interview when we discussed the term ‘reclamation’ she described her process as follows:

It’s less of a reclamation as it is an acknowledgement because I am and always have been a *Nēhiyaw* (Cree). That’s not in doubt but I was fractured, imposed fracture between me and that chain and so in this time and place in my

consciousness I was dislocated and dismembered from who I am and who I am is my family and my community and my culture. I didn't ever plant a flag and say I hereby reclaim who I am as Indigenous; it's been a slow process of recognizing that fracture, that dismemberment and bringing it slowly, spiraling inward, into that place of certainty and going "oh yeah", watching all that other bullshit fall away, that imposed system, that child welfare system, the racism, the oppression, the discrimination, kind of tumble and the only thing left is me and my Indigenous spirit.

She further shared – as will be discussed in the findings – the “little anchors” that she relied on during her process of reclaiming identity, and her insights on the sacred bundle that is an adoptee. I acknowledge with gratitude her eloquence in describing her process of reclaiming identity and the language this afforded me to frame each theme. Below I will discuss the findings that generated each theme.

Table 4.1 List of themes and subthemes in the findings.

Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1: Imposed Fracture – From one identity to another	Disconnection; Marginalization and bullying; and Racism and internalized racism.
Theme 2: Little Anchors – Beginning the healing process (Reacculturating).	Pathways to initial healing; Internal emotional processes; and Being introduced to culture and ceremony.
Theme 3: Coming Home – On being whole	Connection to place; and Internal process of becoming a spiritual being.
Theme 4: Our Sacred Bundle – Reconciling the imposed fracture	Being a bridge between two worlds; Understanding fractured identity within the discourse of colonization, colonial violence, and intergenerational trauma; and Contributing to intergenerational healing and spirit-based discourses,

Theme 1: ‘Imposed Fracture’ – From one identity to another. This theme comes from participants reflecting back on their childhood experience living with their adopted families. It emerges from the interview question: “*When you were being raised by your adopted family how would you describe your identity?*” Three subthemes that emerged from the participant’s stories are: Disconnection; Marginalization and bullying; and Racism and internalized racism. I will discuss each of these topics with quotes from the interviews.

Disconnection. A common experience for participants was a disconnection from Indigeneity. As discussed in Chapter 2, Indigeneity is more than the ethnic status assigned by the state. Aspects of Indigeneity include spirit-based worldviews, cultural and ceremonial practices, language, and community connections. Participants’ relationships with their adoptive families ranged from quite positive to extremely negative and a common thread was the disconnection from Indigeneity that led to associating negativity with being Indigenous. As Kanika Tsi Tsa states, the message she understood in childhood was: “You’re a beautiful Indian princess and yet your people are dirt.” In their early years, much of what participants learned about Indigenous peoples came from TV and movies, schools, museums, and stereotypes in the homes or communities they were adopted into. Six participants were raised knowing they were Indigenous and learned which nation they were from later on (between age 12 and early 20s). One participant didn’t know they were adopted until age seven and until that time they thought they were Ukrainian like their father. Without connection to Indigenous family and community, Indigenous ways were not accessible. Shawn explained:

My identity was very much like my surroundings. Very upper class type of people, a lot of working professionals. Somewhat Christian, more so when I was younger than when I was older. I was very inclusive of other cultures and people, my parents had done a lot of extensive travelling so I had been exposed to a lot of people, mostly Asian and some European but not a lot of, I guess my own here.

Kanika Tsi Tsa recalled:

The way it was framed to me was that Indians were bad and I use words that aren't that mature that aren't complex because it's the way it was communicated to me and I still carry those kind of messages and I say things in the way that I was told so "Indians are dirty and they're bad and they're..." My parents were afraid because they knew there was a reserve outside of (town) and southwest of (town) and I thought, you know if Indians are that horrible and bad why would I come from [there]? Like why would they have me close to my – they must have taken me from far away. So I always thought that if they were that horrible and bad why would I be so close to anyone that was my family. So I thought "well, I got to be from the east coast somewhere or the West Coast" so I would be very far away from those bad people. That was how I interpreted it when I was growing up and when I found my birth family and found out they were just so close it was kind of a shock: "Wow, a 45-minute drive away."

As part of this story, Kanika Tsi Tsa shared a high school experience of making friends with a young woman who was transported in on the busses that came from neighbouring reserves. She attended high school in the 1970s, shortly after integration of Indigenous students who would have previously attended Residential Schools. They had an very

close friendship in grade nine then lost touch when the friend stopped attending school. Kanika Tsi Tsa often wondered what happened to her friend because she felt a deep connection with her. Some years later when Kanika Tsi Tsa went to her home community (the reserve) for a family reunion, she realized that her former friend was a relation from her home community. She also realized that every morning during high school she was watching cousins and relations that she wasn't aware of, get off those buses. She did not learn this was her home territory until she was a grown woman.

On feeling ashamed of being different, Elizabeth noted:

At the time of being a child I felt very ashamed of who I was, who I am. I didn't really want to be First Nations. I didn't know what nation I was until I was a teenager, so I had no idea where I was from growing up and I felt, I didn't like being different, that was the biggest thing. I didn't like being different from my family and being obviously different and being mistaken for everything under the sun: Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Mexican. Yeah and then they were surprised that I was First Nations, well at that time called Indian.

Elizabeth also recalled the disconnection she felt from First Nations people while describing the first time she saw Elders in traditional regalia:

I was just so excited to even see First Nations people because I was never around First Nations people all the way until my teenage years. And any time I associated with First Nations people was when we would come downtown eastside on the streets. So it wasn't a very positive outlook on First Nations people and I felt very disconnected but at this gathering with the Pope there was two representatives from First Nations, don't know where they were from, but it just intrigued me and that

was the year that I found out, we wrote to Indian Affairs, what nation I was from and that was about when I was twelve.

Colleen recalled she didn't know she was Indigenous: "There was nobody to give me insight on who I was and why my sisters and I were brown." She further noted:

We weren't told that we were Indigenous and I didn't learn it until I was a teenager that I was Indian, Native, and that's the terminology that was used at that time. I didn't even know I was Plains Cree, I didn't know I was a Cree, I didn't even know there was all different types of Indigenous people, I just thought all Indians were the same and we all must have wore headdresses and had bows and arrows and things like that. I didn't make the connection, I didn't understand how I was Indian and not doing all these things that I seen on tv. Where did my bows and arrows come from?

Each participant had specific memories of childhood where they were aware they were different from their adopted family, they were Native or brown, and this led to feelings of shame or disinterest in their Indigeneity. There was also ambiguity because the term Native is very broad and not specific to any Indigenous nation or community. Disconnection was also in the form of knowing you are Native yet being told you are white now, which was confusing for a child. Kanika Tsi Tsa shared: "My mom would say to me 'when we adopted you, you became white, you're not Native anymore' and I took that to heart".

Marginalization and bullying. The Merriam Webster dictionary definition of marginalize is "to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group" (Merriam-Webster, 2017). The first known use of this definition of marginalize

was 1968 (Merriam-Webster, 2017) which was during the era of the civil rights movement. Marginalization leads to discrimination. In childhood, bullying tactics are usually overt, with children using words or physical force to exclude someone. For the adoptees in this study, marginalization and bullying typically happened at school and in community. Three participants also identified some marginalization in their adopted homes that they attributed to their status as Native adopted children. All participants shared experiences of differential treatment that was negative and exclusionary. Four participants referenced bullying in school. Raven recalled:

I was bullied, I got beaten up the first day of kindergarten. Lots of exclusion, lots of racism, ostracism, name calling, discrimination and that was really constant so I quickly learned how to adapt to that and my experience was different in different schools. Also, teachers would target me, not for bullying, but for attitudinal treatment, negative attitudes towards me.

Lisa described her experience of marginalization in high school:

I went back to all those painful feelings that I had in high school of being called squaw and like I mentioned earlier, I was sexually assaulted by my friend's brother and everybody knew about it, it was a big joke, and I remember that, like the catcalling down the hallway at school: "squaw," just that notion that I didn't have the right to complain and that I deserved it because I was Native, because I was different.

Two participants noted negative experiences while attending church with their adopted families. Raven recalled that "people didn't necessarily treat me the same way outside of the church as they did inside the church."

Five participants were adopted in infancy and two participants were adopted in early childhood. These two participants adopted as children had recollections of their lives prior to being adopted and the transition of moving in with their adoptive family which compounded the experience of marginalization. In response to my warm-up question “*Can we begin by you telling me a bit about the community you were born into and anything you remember about your family before your adoption?*” Colleen recalled:

My next memories are of feeling homesick and wondering why I was in this house with these people and nobody really explaining anything to me and then playing with my sisters and my first real emotions in that house were fear, being lonely, being scared, feeling unsure of myself all the time, unsure if I was allowed to do certain things, not having any comfort, or any kind of support or love.

Raven, placed at five years old in her adoptive home, recalled:

Even though the differential treatment started fairly soon after my placement, so there was some incongruence there, I still for the most part just kind of fit in and that is what I wanted. I know that when we went out in public people would give me strange looks or give our family strange looks and I didn’t like that, it made me a little bit paranoid, a little too hypervigilant.

Racism and internalized racism. Participants were born between 1959 and 1980 (ages at the time of writing this were 37 to 58 years old). This was a difficult era to be a brown child in predominantly white communities. It was only in 1982 that the Canadian Constitution was amended to acknowledge the rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada: First Nations, Inuit, and Metis. (Government of Canada, 1982) Five participants shared experiences of being the only Native person they knew until their teenage years,

one participant was adopted with her two biological sisters and one participant had an adopted sibling who was First Nations. All participants recalled being the only, or one of few, brown people in their class at school and in other social settings. Kanika Tsi Tsa recalled her childhood in the 1960s and 1970s:

My mom's very British, she came from a very racist home so she had a lot of flack herself for adopting an Indian baby and so she carries, she's always carried that perspective. It's always a question in my mind as to why she, when given or agreeing to have an Indian baby brought to her home, why that was okay with her. And I've never had these conversations with her but I'm thinking that the drive to have a baby was actually stronger, it didn't matter at that time, the race of that baby, ethnic background or however you want to frame that, was a lesser priority for her or something, she needed to have a baby and she's always said she loved me as her own. In talking in things that have come up throughout my life there's many times when she has made some very racist comments and she got hit with that with her community because (the town) which is where I was raised was, it's a white town, it's mostly white people, she got a lot of flack when she would tell people that I was a little Indian baby. It was a lot of neighbours [saying]: "why would you do that?"

All seven participants were raised in middle class or wealthy families who lived in predominantly white neighbourhoods, suburbs, or communities. One participant lived in Asia with their adopted family during early childhood and was mistaken for Asian before returning to their wealthy, white neighbourhood in a Canadian city. One of the things that struck me was how all participants reported keeping their experiences of

racism to themselves and were not able to tell their adoptive parents. For example, participants described experiences of racism at school, from students and teachers, on the playground, and in the textbooks and when they got home they kept it to themselves. Lisa recalled:

My race was never really hidden from me but . . . , my parents didn't have any context of colonialism or what had happened, so there was isolation in the community for my race but no real answers as to why and I actually didn't tell my parents a lot of stuff like a lot of racial slurs and experiences that I had because in some weird way when you're a kid you take it on yourself and you think it's your fault.

For some participants, the racism was overt in the adoptive home. Colleen recalled:

And then I would hear racist terminology in my home about Indians. About them being drunks, I would hear this word "squaw." I distinctly remember visiting my parents' friends for the summer; they took me in for a couple weeks, it was like a little "vacay" for me and I remember telling these people "well, I'm just a stupid squaw" because that is what my dad calls me and this man he was so angry at me he said "who said that word to you?" and I said "my dad says that word to us all the time" and he said "do you know what that word means?" and I said "no." He goes "that's a really bad word and I don't ever want to hear you say that word again." And the way he said it to me was really alarming and concerning and I didn't understand why it was such a bad word and then he explained "that's a bad word that people say to Native girls" and I'm like "oh, well, he says that all the time to us" and I didn't think much of that at the time because I didn't know who

to believe...So I grew up in a home that was racist but I didn't know it was racist until I had more insight as an adult.

Participants described the racism that was directed towards them as well as the internalized racism they experienced growing up much of it was experienced at school. Given that school is the primary social mechanism in childhood and youth, many examples participants shared involved school experiences. Colleen described internalized racism this way:

I thought I was white, I thought I was like everybody else, except darker, tanned. I really wished I had blonde hair. I really wanted to be like the girls at school who were really pretty and had blonde hair and light skin. I didn't see anybody else who looked like me at school and I didn't like myself at all. In fact I felt dirty and unaccepted. I feel the other kids made me feel dirty too. I didn't fit in anywhere, I didn't fit in with anybody at school. I hardly had friends. I thought I was a white person and even when I did find out I was Native, I didn't want to be Native. Why would you want to identify with people who are known as drunks and bums and living in shacks or that stereotype that we hide in the bushes with our bows and arrows. There was no pride in being Native as a teenager and it was reinforced when I reunited with my biological family that, holy geez, all my family drinks, all my family lives on skid row and is on welfare. There was nobody to say "this is why, this is what happened to your family." I internalized all that racism and hatred for my skin colour. There was no pride. I was really angry.

I noted that all participants had this experience of believing at some point in childhood that they should be white and struggling with the fact that they were brown. Further to

this, was the struggle of navigating that they were from the most marginalized group of people in society yet living with the most privileged.

White privilege is an institutional (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions. One of the primary privileges is that of having greater access to power and resources than people of color do: in other words, purely on the basis of our skin color doors are open to us that are not open to other people. (Kendall, 2002, p.1)

White privilege and adoptee identity will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Stories told from participants' experiences as adoptee children before reclaiming identity reinforced negative stereotypes of Indigenous people and Indigenous cultures as something vague, historic, and inaccessible. In reference to his adoptive home, school, and society, Duane explained:

What I generally grew up believing about Indigenous people and my community wasn't specific and what I heard were mainly negative stereotypes. These negative depictions stayed with me throughout my childhood, youth, and early adulthood and sometimes haunt me today.

Shawn described the fear of knowing:

Well, I always wanted to know, scared to know, but when I was 16 my parents showed me a file. The adoption file. As far as I know it did tell me what my birthname was, the community I was from, but all the names and all the important parts were cut out, like literally cut out with a knife but it's kind of weird knowing,

looking back, knowing what community I was from and never really exploring it. I think part of me knew I wasn't ready.

Theme 1 supports the literature on the Sixties Scoop, specifically the literature of the first phase (1950s to 1970s) in which racial biases included: 1) Indian parents being not as capable as white parents of overcoming life challenges; 2) Indian children being viewed as risky to adopt due to their Indian deficiencies, and 3) looking Indian being problematic in mainstream society (Fanshel, 1972). Further, Ward's (1984) study indicates that there was a growing idealism and desire to break down racial barriers (p.6) yet children were being removed from their homes and communities into families who had little to no knowledge of the impacts of one hundred years of colonial policies on Indigenous families. The Indigenous resurgence literature (Alfred, Corntassel, 2005; Alfred, 2009; Simpson, 2008) has suggested that to effectively decolonize both Indigenous and settler minds and hearts requires a fuller understanding of the many forms of oppression through which Indigenous people have been "educated" – this includes the damaging impacts of reformulating an Indigenous child's identity by transracial adoption.

While individual experiences in adoptive homes ranged from quite positive to extremely negative, each participant experienced disconnection from Indigenous identity; marginalization and bullying for being different; and racism and internalized racism because of being Indigenous. The result was fractured identities.

Theme 2: 'Little Anchors' – Beginning the healing process (Reacculturating). Reacculturation speaks to the processes in which adoptees reconnect with their birth culture (Sinclair, 2007). Being reacquainted with birth culture could involve a number of aspects, including but not limited to: language; history; cultural practices; worldview; and

spirituality. By hearing each participant's story, I was able to glean what was involved in the reacculturation process for Sixties Scoop adoptees and observed differences in the beginning of the reacculturation process (Theme 2) and components that took longer and deeper understandings (Theme 3). All participants shared that they had reunited with their birth families by the time of the interviews. Participants reported that birth family reunions were very emotional and some families were struggling with their own grief due to loss of their child. Some participants' parents were deceased, other parents had gone to Residential School and/or were carrying other trauma imposed by colonial policies.

Duane shared:

As soon as I realized I was Indigenous of Metis descent, I immediately started to reclaim my identity. It was like a hunger that I never experienced before. I began learning about my identity by asking my immediate family members – mainly my mom – about my family's genealogy – who were they and where did they come from? This usually led to stories of our proud and collective history. I learned that my family has always been political movers and shakers in Manitoba and believe strongly in public service. I also learned that my family is a very spiritual and healing family. I guess it's because we had to face a number of atrocities like the impact caused by the Residential School system and the Sixties Scoop – both me and my younger brother were stolen as well as my uncle.

Colleen shared the dilemma of trying to reacculturate with a parent, who, himself, was severed from his Indigenous culture.

My birthfather spoke fluent Cree but he had no culture, no ceremonies to share with me and he didn't actually believe in that either, he said we don't do that kind

of stuff, I don't know who told you that but we don't do that kind of stuff.

This suggested to me that birth family reunions were not always sufficient for achieving reacculturation. Some adoptees relied on extended family to assist with reacculturation or their own efforts to seek resource people and supports. Some participants' adoptive parents helped with the initial birth family reunion. I observed a primarily self-initiated process to (re)learn being Indigenous. As one participant stated: "I had to decide if I was gonna live white or reacculturate." While reacculturation was a way to unburden themselves of a false identity, the task was enormous. Further, participants expressed the disconnect between being raised with white privilege and seeing what this affords members of their adopted family and adopted community, while not always being able to access these privileges themselves.

All of the participants described their experiences of beginning to heal from the hurt of their fractured identities. These pathways to healing required participants to reconnect with their Indigenous identity through various activities. The healing journey as described by participants normally started in the teen or young adult years. Three common subthemes that arose from participants' stories were: Pathways to initial healing; Internal emotional processes; and Being introduced to culture and ceremony. I chose to describe these elements of healing using the term "Little Anchors" from Raven's story:

I had these little anchors and the anchors included the visions, the dreams, the voices, the knowing things in advance, and these were little anchors that I had and I was hanging onto these little tethers for dear life, because everything else was so treacherous. The world was such a treacherous place I had these little anchors and

the one place where those anchors became more secured was when I worked for that Indigenous organization for Treaty 9 in Toronto. And those anchors grew stronger and over time I developed more anchors and through ceremony and through learning a little bit of the language, and through teachings, through friendship, more anchors. And then one of the biggest anchors was therapy and counselling and group work.

Below I share the “Little Anchors” that were described by participants.

Pathways to initial healing. Four pathways led participants to healing: meeting Indigenous people; tapping into Aboriginal services and programs; jobs in Indigenous organizations; and Indigenous courses/programs at university. Duane described his pathways as follows:

In the summer of 1999, I decided to relocate to [...] as a result of a temporary and then permanent job opportunity. Upon my arrival, I began immediately tapping into services and programs available to the Indigenous community, which included access to culturally-relevant health and social programs as well as to traditional teachings and ceremonies. It was only when I connected with Indigenous community members that I began to receive vital answers to questions about our collective history and the intergenerational suffering caused by hundreds of years of colonization and government assimilation policies. These answers led me down a path towards my own healing journey and subsequent understanding of the Sixties Scoop period and how it applied to me.

Lisa described her pathway while studying at the university as follows:

I didn't realize that I was connected to my Indigeneity or that Indigeneity would be healing for me until, it is actually kind of a long story...I took a one hundred level Aboriginal Studies course and we started learning about colonialism and I learned about who I was in a textbook. I learned that I was colonized in a textbook, I learned that the feelings of emptiness that I felt, weren't actually emptiness, it was displacement, and that the inferiority that I felt wasn't actually that I was inferior it was that I was colonized and I was programmed to think that I was inferior and that the society that I grew up in just mimicked the sentiment of the Indian Residential School, that Indigenous people are inferior and we needed to be assimilated.

Five participants shared stories of working at Indigenous organizations; four participants shared stories of taking courses with Indigenous content or Indigenous programs at college or university; and six participants shared stories of accessing Aboriginal programs and services, including counselling and grief work which is described further below.

Internal emotional processes. The paths to healing were emotional undertakings for all participants. The internal processes that participants shared included: therapy and grief work on the loss of identity & culture; working through the shock and anger of first learning about the history and genocide of Indigenous peoples; making sense of a white identity in an Indigenous body and working through imposter feelings such as "am I really Indigenous?" Lisa described her emotional process as follows:

Yesterday I talked about Indigenous identity and lawlessness or the perception of Indigenous people as being lawless, so here we are as red people, we're rejected in our white community because we are never white enough even if you look sort of

white or our mannerisms are white or are family has money, or we have a good job or we marry a good man, we are never, ever white enough but then when we look for solace and we start to identify who we are, so we get to identify who we are and we get to have some kind of pride in who we are but then we also get to absorb the lawlessness of the Canadian culture and who we are as people and how as Indigenous women we are the lowest level of the race mosaic, the least valued, the least protected, and this is all the stuff that is linked to our Indigeneity in the public eye.

Lisa has described the conflict between trying to achieve and take part in the mainstream Canadian values she was raised with while experiencing prejudice as an Indigenous woman; and this source of pride in regaining her Indigenous identity also placed her in the most vulnerable group of people in Canada, Indigenous women. The hegemonic discourse that Lisa and other adoptees were raised with came into conflict as adoptees learned the history of Canada, the colonization of Indigenous nations, and the genocide of families and sorted through what this means for them.

Shawn discussed his initial discomfort in Indigenous settings and his pathway to reconnection, noting that his birthmother was not able to help him with this connection:

I grew up thinking I was Cree because that's what it said on the social work paper but I did receive some book about Plains type people and of course there was all the Hollywood movies, kind of embarrassing to watch. I hate horses. It was very hard to feel a connection to something that, I felt like I looked like but I didn't match it because I wanted to explore other parts of the planet instead of focusing here and other peoples cultures and stuff versus my own but how I did it was pretty

much when I met [my partner]. I started to ask questions, go to ceremonies, hang out with other First Nations people. Whenever I saw one, I tended to look away, and at the Friendship Centre I had a fear of going into the gym where they would have their west coast nights or pow wow nights. And part of that was when I did meet my birth mom she had married a German, so my half brothers are half German, and she lived in the city and she didn't do a lot of the cultural stuff either. She felt like she wanted to be a normal person in the city, so even if I came with questions, she hummed and hawed, so her connection wasn't very good either.

Shawn identified attending First Nations cultural gatherings, where he met other Indigenous people, as his pathway to healing. He also shared the fear and internalized racism he overcame in order to participate in cultural activities. He noted that his father had passed away tragically and over the years his mother distanced herself from these connections and thus, wasn't able to provide him teachings from their nation. As defined in Chapter 1, every nation has teachings that explain our roles and practices as a sacred part of creation. Sometimes teachings are referred to as laws; these are natural laws that instruct us how to live in a holistic way. (Hart, 2010; McAdam, 2015; Simpson, 2008)

Due to intergenerational impacts of colonization and the policies of assimilation embedded into the Indian Act many Indigenous people such as Shawn's mom, are living in urban areas, disconnected from their nation's teachings.

Kanika Tsi Tsa is an Indigenous midwife who has assisted with hundreds of births and she has also witnessed child apprehensions due to being a high-risk infant midwife for eight years. She described 'the primal wound' (Wagamese, 2009) that she is healing from:

As an adoptee, you're traumatized right from the get go. I've been to therapy and one of my therapists says "Kanika Tsi Tsa," because she was an adoptee too and she said "when you are taken from your biological roots there's something, some people call it the primal wound." I'm learning that it's just like all of a sudden I don't know what happened to me, I was growing in there for nine months in my mom's uterus, hearing her voice and her smells and whatever and then all of a sudden you are just taken and put somewhere completely disconnected, like a car seat.

Kanika Tsi Tsa connected her adoption experience as an infant to the work she has been a part of:

I've been there, I've been at apprehensions, I know what they are like, that's why I did that work and I didn't even know why I was doing it for a long time but now I know. But then you are put in a car seat or something or you're carried off and suddenly you are in a foster home, in a crib somewhere, lying there or wherever you go and it's not anything that you can connect to ... I do have a level of anxiety that I wish I didn't have, and I carry it with me and I think it has to do with that whole disconnection, all of sudden everything is on high alert, like where am I?

What's going on? As a tiny little baby you are soaking all that in.

It is evident from the participants' stories that healing from the disconnection, the imposed fracture, is a long process. I would also like to add that five participants shared that they have stopped self-medicating with alcohol or drugs and made a commitment to sobriety while they were working through these internal emotional processes. Things that came up included: self-medicating to escape reality (as described in the imposed fracture

theme); suicidal thoughts; and having supports and strength to continue on this journey of wellness. As touched upon in previous chapters, several scholars have pointed out the correlation between the trauma of colonization and health factors such as addictions; depression; and stress. (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009; Cote-Meek, 2014; Frideres, 2008; Smith, 1999)

Each adoptee identified their struggles with identity in their colonial context, amplified by the lack of Indigenous people in their lives to provide counter-narratives to this hegemonic discourse that they were living. As participants shared, their feelings that they could never be white enough, and their lack of cultural and spiritual teachings left painful gaps in their identities. This resulted in a long process of healing over decades, to bridge multiple identities that couldn't co-exist in their fractured childhoods. As Colleen shared:

I feel because of the adoption and me not growing up knowing who I was, not knowing that I came from the Beaver hills people in that territory that made me angry. I never got to know my family, my extended family. All the little nuances that go with being a part of a big extended family and knowing who your cousins are and knowing the inside jokes and the terminology even the little 'ayyyyyy', I missed that. It hurts my heart.

Being introduced to culture and ceremony. When a child is born into a family, they learn the ways of that family. In Indigenous communities, this includes cultural teachings and ceremony. In Chapter 1, Indigenous ceremonies were defined as sacred practices of each nation's teachings (RCAP, 1996). There are many types of ceremonies including celebratory, kinship, purification, and rites of passage for different stages of life.

Protocols are adhered to and based on the nation's teachings and holistic worldviews. The adoptee – having been removed from this experience – was in an adult body upon reacculturation, having experiences that would have been formative in childhood. The dissonance they experienced upon attempting to reacculturate was compounded by being raised in a white society that did not necessarily value spirit-based ways of knowing. Several participants did not understand what they were doing while in ceremony, as reflected by their comments: Kanika Tsi Tsa said “It doesn't feel natural yet.” Lisa said “I don't know if I have the right to be doing this.” Colleen commented: “I'm performing.” There was also an expression of feeling respect but still observing these new cultural and ceremonial experiences. Raven, who was adopted in early childhood, expressed that she already knew these things instinctively through experiences such as dreams and visions but had no one to guide her or explain what was happening. Now in ceremony, everything made sense. It is apparent that part of the emotional process was challenging the worldviews that these adoptees were raised in. Colleen recalled:

I didn't even know, honestly I didn't know what ceremonies were until I went to college when I was 28. The first time that I'd seen ceremony...I remember an Elder sitting, I've never seen anything like this before...I don't understand what they are doing and why they are doing it...I was also really scared to ask because I felt like I should know because I'm brown and I'm Native and I'm Cree I should know this stuff, right. It's a shame that I didn't know anything and then I wanted to know more and it was through going back to school and making ceremony part of our curriculum, doing sharing circles, passing the feather, and learning the protocol of why we have a sharing circle, it started to make sense to me and I'm like “I really

like the way this makes me feel.” It makes me feel whole, like there’s this other part of me that’s been ignited, I feel happy. I feel like a whole person and I like the camaraderie of all of us Indigenous people because it was in a program that were all Indigenous students and I liked sitting around the fire together...but part of me didn’t want to believe it either, part of me was “they are putting on a show, is this for real?” I didn’t get it yet...I felt like an outsider watching all this stuff happen. I wasn’t very involved in it yet because I was so afraid that people would make fun of me or know that I wasn’t really Indian.

By attending an Indigenous program with Indigenous students, Colleen was able to wrestle these incongruencies between the western worldview she was raised with and the Indigenous worldview she sought to understand. Again, I note this was a gradual process as she was living on another territory and learning the language and teachings of that territory. Four participants were adopted into families that lived hundreds or thousands of kilometers away from their homelands. Two participants were raised close to their home community without knowledge of this in childhood. One participant was old enough when she was adopted to understand she was leaving a family and neighbourhood in one part of town and relocating to another family in another neighbourhood that looked and felt extremely different. During the process of reacculturation, two participants lived in urban centres on or near their traditional territories and five participants lived away from their homelands. Living away from one’s homeland adds a layer to the process of reconnecting because the entryways are not specific to the language, teachings, and practices of one’s respective Indigenous nation. Lisa described her experience of

attending sharing/healing circles in the community she lives in and being introduced to teachings:

So here I have this understanding of colonialism and then I get to relate it to the deepest part of my pain and I just couldn't cope. So I ended up going to a circle [organization] here, spent a lot of time listening rather than talking to the old timers, the old ladies, about their experience in Residential School and then learning the teachings, the teachings of this territory, not [my nation's] teachings which was fine because we're here, we honour the territory we are in, we practice the ceremonies we're in. So I'm here and I'm learning about the seven grandfathers' teachings and then went to *Shaking Tent*⁹ and went to see an elder, actually a couple of elders, and that's how I got in touch with it and then as I started learning more superficially, I started to learn more internally about my own history from my own territory.

Two participants lived near their home territory while they were placing little anchors, those first attempts at reconnecting with their Indigenous identity, and therefore when they reached out, the teachings they learned were from their nation. Elizabeth described her first experience with cultural teachings was learning traditional dance from her nation:

My first time was I would say at nineteen years old with culture, was when I was asked to dance in Europe, in Rome and they asked me to do a traditional dance and I had mentioned to them that I had no idea, so we reached out to the community of [...], asked if there was anybody who could teach me how to dance and hereditary

⁹ An Anishinabe ceremony.

Chief [...] taught me how to do a woman's professional dance that I then performed in Rome and that was the first time I felt this was part of me and that was my first time with culture.

Two participants identified their adoptive parents as being very supportive and helpful in their teen years with reviewing their adoption file and contacting Indian Affairs to reinstate their First Nations status and assisting with connecting them to their nation. One of these participants had a high school teacher who also helped with this process. It is important to note that adoption files were highly censored, many details blacked out, and not all participants had access to these files prior to adulthood.

Theme 3: 'Coming Home' – On being whole

Prior to conducting this study I had my own assumptions regarding Indigenous adoptees reclaiming identity. I assumed that "coming home" was literally moving to one's home community and recreating one's life there, although I did not express this bias to participants. What I learned through their stories is that "coming home" is more fulsome than this. The two key subthemes that make up the theme of "coming home" are Connection to place and the Internal process of becoming a spiritual being. I will discuss these two subthemes with excerpts from participants' interviews.

At the time of the interviews, five of seven participants had been to their home communities. At the time of the sharing circle, a sixth participant had been home and this deepened their articulation of "coming home" as a connection to place. Since the time of data collection, all participants have been to their home communities. For two participants, reuniting with birth family and reacculturating did not initially include

visiting their home communities although, since then, both participants have visited their home communities.

Connection to place. It was evident in the transcripts that as participants reacculturated and reconnected with Indigenous communities, their worldviews shifted from anthropocentrism to spirit-based understandings of connection to land. There was pride in the knowledge of place: knowing where their ancestors were from, their families' histories, and their roots. Elizabeth described the drive she had to go to her home community. The first time she went back home she was a teenager, and has been back several times:

It was this strong desire to go home and some people didn't understand this phrase because my home is with my adopted family too but this drive to go home to [my community] was so strong and when I had the opportunities to go up there, even though I'm not very familiar with the location, it felt right. It felt like I finally had that little bit of peace.

She also described how her identity is connected to water:

For some reason water's always been my connection to who I am and people explained to me...this is because we are the people of the water, like other people who are from the prairies their different drive to be where they are from. It was pretty neat to have that understanding because when I am stressed I like to go to the water, mostly the ocean. I have a special spot [where I live], that's my spot.

Each adoptee knows their family's and nation's histories. Many of the participants have received their traditional names. Duane described coming home and connection to place this way:

From there I learned that my Nation experienced systemic racism and was treated like terrorists in a country they helped form¹⁰. This was enough information to begin my personal renaissance – the quest to learn more about my Metis identity. Reclaiming my identity definitely includes connection to a place and for me it is my ancestral home territory and lands where my family lives. Although I lived in Winnipeg for a number of years, it was never home until I finally “came home.” Coming home for me entailed connecting with my family and knowing that my ancestors once walked, lived and breathed in this place and it is where I can come to speak to them whenever I need them. It means everything to me.

For the two participants who were adopted in early childhood, memories were awakened; they remembered the connection to place that they held before being removed in the adoption process. Colleen described this as blood memory:

I took pride in moving all over the place “I don’t have a home” but now I understand it, I understand being rooted, and even though I’m in [city], my home and my territory is always going to be that territory out west, the Beaver hills people, the landscape and I understood this blood memory of being a young child, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, and feeling homesick around four to five o’clock everyday and it was when the sun was at a certain height and I would just feel this almost heartsick because I felt like I wasn’t where I was supposed to be and I didn’t understand that until I actually came [to my home territory] and I remembered the landscape and driving out to [my community]. I know this landscape. I get this

¹⁰ Duane is referring to the Metis leader Louis Riel and the Red River Rebellion (also referred to as the Red River Resistance) of 1869-1870. Riel was a respected leader of his people. Canadian textbooks presented Riel as a criminal who was hanged for high treason. This example shows the marginalizing of Indigenous people in the grand narratives of Canada.

feeling when I am here. It makes me really happy to be here; it's like I recognize the sky and it makes me excited. An Elder told me about blood memory, about how your blood through your relations remembers that. It also remembers pain too. I didn't understand blood memory until then.

I also learned that returning to home community as a mature adult is distinct from reuniting with birth family as a teenager/young adult. Shawn described his connection to home community as follows:

Just during the summer made it to my home community where my birth parents were from. Neither of them are still around but lots of family members there and I did go there briefly when I was 18 for half a day. I don't really remember that one a lot, very whirlwind of a trip, but this one I do remember. A lot of the stuff that was happening in the 70s in [my reserve] is still happening today like violence and murders and house burnings, things like that. It's in the news every year but part of me puts that all aside and says this is home: it's the people, the family, the place, the river. I'd like to go back more frequently. I definitely feel a strong connection to the home community and a lot of it has to do with both my parents from the family lines and ties have been there forever. There's no "I'm from here but I'm also from here" it's just one place, it's kind of nice like that.

Shawn also said it's harder to reconnect to birth culture being so far away from it. He attributed social media as a source for further connecting with family members and the community itself. Shawn was adopted into a family that lived across the country from his home territory and has made his home in his adopted community as an adult. The primary

shift is that he now walks as an Indigenous man in this community. Shawn described this shift in the following story:

I don't necessarily feel ashamed or shy anymore. The worst feeling was, I can't remember how many years ago it was, but there was some kind of weird referendum that the government had put together under [the Premier] and had to do with some Native issues and I just remember the way it was voted was very tricky writing so of course if you vote one way it sounds very good but it goes very against the Aboriginal community at the time and I was walking from my parents house to [main street] and I got the weirdest looks from people and I think that was the first time I ever felt so different in [my neighbourhood]. It was very unnerving but I think now being more in tune to who I am and where I am from, it doesn't feel like I have to dress up for the part. It's just who I am now.

Most participants are not living on their homelands yet they walk in the world as Indigenous people with relationships to their nations, such as teachings and connection to land. This connection was disrupted by forced removal. Kanika Tsi Tsa described her connection to place as follows:

As an Aboriginal woman, an Indigenous woman, I feel connected to the land for sure. But when I go back to [my reserve] it doesn't necessarily mean that it's there. There's something, when I go there, I can start to feel very emotional that I am there but for me it's more a connection to Indigeneity really, which is a different sense of time, it's a different sense of place, it's a different sense of connecting to the land and we are the environment. The environment isn't something out there and here, we are

the environment and for me it's more the interaction right at the cellular level of trauma, and because I've seen a lot of that in my midwifery work, where women whose babies are being apprehended, there's things that show physically and biologically in people, that happen during birth when they know their baby is going to be taken away. So for me it's more my

Indigeneity is a connection at the cellular level and the spaces in between.

Deloria (1991) and Simpson (2008) explain the intimate connections we have to the environment, an inseparable existence, and that humans are the “youngest member of the web of life” (Deloria, 1991). Further, Deloria (1990) argues that Indigenous Education needs to be grounded in the relationships between Indigenous people and the natural world.

There is also this sense of coming home to oneself, after years of disassociation, this sense of acceptance of oneself and belonging was shared. Shawn shared:

I'd describe my identity as number one being very Aboriginal. I do a lot of events in the First Nations community so I feel I am accepted into that. At work I am the only Aboriginal and I wouldn't say it's hard to be in those spaces but it's definitely different than my home life.

Kanika Tsi Tsa also discussed disassociation and described her identity as evolving:

[My identity] is a work in progress, but sometimes when I see pictures of myself people have taken at gatherings, I say “yeah, you are representing the Indigenous, Aboriginal, midwives.” And then I start to really connect with it, like “yeah, you are more than just your status card.”

This links to the discussion in Chapter 2 on Indigenous identity formation and the difference between a state imposed identity and a cultural identity that is formed by connection to community and further, a spirit-based identity that emanates from each nations teachings.

Internal processes of becoming a spiritual being. Four participants, Raven, Kanika Tsi Tsa, Colleen and Lisa described embracing Indigeneity as “knowledge at a cellular level” and all participants expressed that acknowledging their Indigeneity saved their lives. Participants described themselves as catching up with and receiving teachings they missed in childhood and youth and immersing themselves and being mindful not to permit this loss of identity, specifically culture and spirituality, to happen to their children and grandchildren.

Raven learned her moshum (grandfather) Danny Musqua’s teachings, the seven fires¹¹, the seven stages of development from an Anishnabe and Saulteaux perspective while studying in the Indian Social Work undergraduate program:

When I looked at this model I was able to see from an Indigenous perspective what I missed out on and what I had to attend to, even in terms of infancy, like security, nurturing, and especially in the toddler stage and developing independence and there’s times some of those areas are a little shaky and I have to remember it’s okay, I missed those things...But those developmental stages from an Indigenous perspective are so significant, the transitions are so significant and that’s why we had ceremonies for those stages of life.

¹¹ The Seven Fires: Conception and Life in the Womb – The First Fire; Birth to Walking – The Second Fire; Walking to Seven Years – The Third Fire; Little Men and Little Women – The Fourth Fire; Young Adults (14 to 20 Years) – The Fifth Fire; Adult Development (20-60 years) – The Sixth Fire; Old Age and Death – The Seventh Fire. (Diane Knight, 1999)

Raven has been able to take what she has learned over the past thirty years in academia, as well as teachings from a number of different medicine people and traditional healers. She now understands teachings at a deeper level and describes this as an inward spiral of learning and knowing. Raven explained:

So I've been really strongly guided by the ancestors my whole life and at certain times, at key times of my life, I was given a gift of something, a journey, a vision, a dream and I didn't necessarily understand what it was in the moment but now I understand it was like throwing me one of those little anchors from the spirit realm and saying this is your direction and here's a little helping gift. That's what I mean when I say "being Indigenous saved my life" because those are the things that anchored me to my Indigeneity, to who I am and it's incredibly profound. So everything I've learned and all of my experiences I understand now from a framework of my Indigeneity but also my Indigenous *kisheyihtamowin*, knowledge, understanding of the world, and now it all makes sense. It doesn't mean it's easy but it all makes sense.

Elizabeth shared that she is proud of her identity and doesn't feel ashamed anymore:

I was born Kwakwaka'wakw and I have a lot of pride with that. Being able to share the dances, share the culture is presently what I am able to do... It's sharing our teachings, how you carry yourself as a proud Kwakwaka'wakw woman and it's still a learning process for me. But I really feel, it's pretty amazing being able to share something that I wasn't able to, I didn't know about this until I was an adult. It would have been beautiful to know all these teachings growing up. It would have been amazing to see the progress of myself.

There was also the acknowledgement by participants that they are being guided by ancestors and in this process of healing realized the ancestors have always been there.

Kanika Tsi Tsa described her connection to spirit and ancestors as:

In terms of spirit, I feel like I walk with my ancestors who are spirit all the time, and I wanted to tell you that my spirit name is Kanika Tsi Tsa, which is Little Flower. My mother was Many Flowers. The name little flower connects me with medicines as well as midwifery. My teachings are that flowers relate directly to female reproduction and that through this connection I can make that connection to midwives who knew about female reproduction throughout the lifecycle. I was taught that when we went out under the full moon, that the light from the moon connects women to our pineal gland, which is behind our eyes, some call it the third eye, which regulates reproductive hormones, as well as, is affected by light. When our eyes soak in the light we support our pineal gland to become activated and therefore supports us becoming less depressed, etc., as it is a monthly bathing of light. Those midwives knew what they were doing long before modern science.

The participants' stories illustrate a shift from viewing reality as external to themselves to viewing reality as an internal spirit-driven experience. Some participants also expressed their ability to reframe their experiences from victimhood to survival of the Sixties Scoop. While these themes represent a process of self-actualization in which adoptees moved from a fractured identity to one which is whole and "fixed", some participants emphasized that coming to live as an Indigenous person is an ongoing process. It can be a lifelong journey to overcome the imposed fracture. Colleen shared:

It was easier to be assimilated and it's a lot more work to mindfully be Indigenous because that means I have to challenge everything, I have to challenge why I don't know these things and then that brings out, I know why, so what am I going to do about it and how do I make sure it doesn't happen to my children and grandchildren so I have to constantly work at it and that means getting more teachings and immersing myself in those things that will make me feel like a whole spiritual Indigenous person.

A more specific subtheme within the *Internal processes of becoming a spiritual being* is the notion of reclaiming language. Four participants discussed language as something they are trying to reclaim and the important role that language plays in Indigeneity, including specific teachings from their nation and the inseparability of language and worldview. Colleen said she will not become whole until she can speak her language. Lisa expressed that the few words she knows in her language drives her work, her contributions to decolonization. Kanika Tsi Tsa spoke at some length about language and hopes that she will someday be able to retain a drum song like she does a rock song. She noted that when the song emerges without hesitation, she knows she will be whole. Raven has some fluency after actively reclaiming her identity for thirty years and describes her spiritual understandings in the language.

Theme 4: 'Our Sacred Bundle' – Reconciling the imposed fracture. I titled this theme based on Raven's beautiful explanation that the fragility of being an adoptee is also a gift:

Life is so paradoxical, it's so mystical, that's why we have *Wîsakicâhk* (the trickster¹²) to constantly remind us we are full of folly and that we are quite ridiculous a lot of the time but we can laugh and be joyful and find humour in all of our folly and all of our limitations and even in the crises that happen. That's one of the things I love about being an adoptee. It's such an interesting thing, so many of us are still traumatized and still working through stuff and yet we come together in groups and we laugh and laugh, it's so awesome. Everyone is so beautiful in their own quirky way and the package they have become. The way they have developed their coping skills and we all know each other's fragility and I like to think that we recognize that as a sacred bundle we carry.

This "sacred bundle" as shared by the seven participants includes: Being a bridge between two worlds; Understanding fractured identity within the discourse of colonization, colonial violence, and intergenerational trauma; and Contributing to intergenerational healing and spirit-based discourses, including the willingness to participate in this study and the projected community outcomes (audio podcasts, curriculum and collaborative journal articles) we plan to create as a result of this study.

It is evident in the participants' stories that reclaiming identity, specifically, cultural practices and spiritual teachings, has been a source of healing and well-being for these adoptees. Each of these Indigenous adoptees has their own gifts that they carry in their sacred bundle and that they bring into their work and community. Further, these gifts have been presented in their stories of healing and this PhD study is meant to honour

¹² "One of the most popular figures in the oral traditions of Aboriginal people is a character often referred to as the Trickster...Trickster is half spirit and half human. He is a creator and spoiler, hero and clown, capable of noble deeds and gross self-indulgence." (RCAP, 1996, p. 596)

their voices. Participants wanted their stories to be heard, to raise awareness, to help others, and to effect change. They also expressed faith in me that I would share their stories in a good way.

For each of these stories, there are thousands more, since over 20,000 Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities during the Sixties Scoop. It is also important to acknowledge the children who have passed on due to this imposed fracture. The impacts of Canada's grand narratives on Indigenous persons in child welfare resulted in many suicides and tragic losses of life; as a result, many families were never reunited with their scooped children. In the sharing circle, we acknowledged those who have passed on and sent prayers to their families. Participants shared with gratitude and humility that they were still here, while many other Indigenous children who experienced the Sixties Scoop did not make it to adulthood, did not have the opportunity to reconnect and reclaim their identity. As Raven said in her interview:

Did they ask the holocaust survivors, do they attribute their success to being survivors? When you look at people like Victor Frankl that may very well be true. He learned a lot, he became a profound thinker because of the experiences that happened there. It doesn't mean it was a good thing, It doesn't mean ethnic cleansing is a good thing, just because it creates resilience in people.

Participant contributions today. In our sharing circle participants shared the pain of experiencing the Sixties Scoop, as well as, the pathways to healing that they are following in order to contribute to decolonization and Indigenous resurgence. I observed an incredible amount of strength in each participant. Each of the participants carries on with their lifelong journey of healing from the Sixties Scoop. As they do so, they are

reconciling the imposed fracture and contributing to spirit-based discourses in local, national, and international spaces. I briefly summarize those contributions here with an excerpt from either the participant interviews or the sharing circle. Each participant redacted their own commentary to illuminate their ongoing healing journeys and how they carry their sacred bundles today.

Kanika Tsi Tsa, Oneida midwife. Back in the day I decided I wanted to be a midwife because I knew that I didn't like being apprehended, I didn't like never knowing who I was. I started an Aboriginal midwifery practice...I [also] worked at child welfare as a high-risk infant midwife. I worked eight years in the frontline going to Aboriginal women living in shelters and abusive relationships, and mental health issues, and all the reasons why your life may intersect with the child welfare system. There were five or six hundred clients. I stopped many babies from being taken by child welfare, my role was more of an advocate and support and we had a lot of midwifery care for those women. I realized after a while that every woman I served, every birth that I went to and every high-risk mom was my mom. I was taken from her so I needed to figure out who I was and I realize that took me a long time, and I realize that every client, every woman that I saw, and every family, I was reliving who my mother was, *500 times*. I have no question on panels that I am invited to speak on, to say that child welfare is violence against women, especially when they are pregnant. So I'm just starting to work again on [a coalition] in my spare time [to provide systemic supports] and I would love to see changes at the provincial level, to change the child welfare system in terms of how they work with Aboriginal pregnant women.

Lisa, Dene visual artist and bioethicist. I'm Dene, I'm an image-based storyteller, I'm an ethicist, I'm a teacher. I would say I describe myself as connected more than spiritual. I'm connected and then even talking to my dad about spirituality or about medicine or about knowledges, we say "she knows a little". I know a little bit about sacred things and it comes through my painting but I only know a little bit. I'm not an expert. I can translate Indigenous teachings and I can show colonialism in bioscientific medicine. So I can make people understand what colonialism is through painting and then I can enable these safe conversations about cultural safety and racism.

Colleen, Nēhiyaw, activist and co-founder NISCWN

I feel like through the public speaking and the personal work I've had to do to heal to get to the point where I can talk about my story and what's happened to my sisters and I, I think that's part of what it means to be Indigenous. My sister was murdered. Talking about how Indigenous people have been impacted by colonization and ongoing colonialism that is being Indigenous, it's resistance. We are able to use our voice in ways we were silenced before. My parents weren't able to do this kind of work, their voices were taken from them and my grandparents...[it] brings me pride inside that I am able to share my story...I feel like it's my responsibility as an Indigenous person who has this knowledge now to amplify and help amplify other Indigenous peoples stories and voices, so that we can come up together. We can do this work together instead of one person doing it all for everybody... that's real community, building community. When I talk about community I'm not talking about one location, I'm talking about a whole bunch of people across nations. We have a community of adoptees across Canada, that's our community and no matter how far apart we are, we support each other in everything we

do. That's the way we were meant to do that kind of work, to support each other across nations.

Duane, Metis, public servant, activist and co-founder NISCWN

Back to my original family and the Metis Nation, I now have over 20 years of experience working on human rights issues in First Nations, Inuit and Metis populations in Canada. My early work involved being one of the first responders to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Manitoba's Aboriginal community. In my pursuit for equitable treatment of Aboriginal people with HIV/AIDS, I sat on several federal health advisory committees. This led me to an employment opportunity within the federal public service. I focused my energies on creating an Aboriginal Employees' Circle, in concert with a few Aboriginal federal employees. In 2012, I received three awards for my service.

My current focus is on Aboriginal issues related to Native Child Welfare and the 60's Scoop initiative. I became one of the original founders of the Manitoba Indigenous Adoptees Coalition. I also became a founding member of the National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network. Situated in Ottawa, the Network acts as a voice and advocate for Aboriginal citizens affected by Canada's failed Child Welfare systems. I am currently working on a Community-based Capacity Training Response Strategy – a land-based healing project for 60's scoop survivors. I sit on other national research projects and have two publications. I am also the Principal Knowledge user for a research project on Indigenous Peoples Complex Trauma and Land-based Healing.

In the summer of 2017, I will be attending the Indigenous Fellowship Programme (IFP) which is a comprehensive human rights training programme that was established by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the context of the

first International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004). This programme contributes to build the capacity and expertise of indigenous representatives on the UN system and mechanisms dealing with human rights in general and indigenous issues.

Elizabeth, Kwakwaka'wakw, Urban Kwakwaka'wakw dance group and First Nations family advocate

I don't say this enough for myself and it's been 43 years in the making that I can actually say that I love myself. It's been a ginormous process for me to acknowledge me and to like me. I think there's a few moments in my teen years that were very powerful. I was never around anybody of the same nationality and I remember arriving at this mass and it was a big field and...they were elders in their regalia and I met them and I was...in total awe. That was the first moment where I was starting to be open to accept that I am Native. I was 11 or 12 and it took another long process and I felt the anger, I felt the sadness, I felt the hurt. I was also involved with an organization for youth for a united world with all religious denominations and I had the opportunity to be a youth leader to go to Rome, I was 19. Somewhere along the line they had found out I was First Nations and was asked to do a dance. So we searched around and we found hereditary Chief [name] who was from my nation and he taught me how to do the women's professional dance. I'm Kwakwaka'wakw and I remember we were at his amenity room and he was like "girl, either you got it or you don't and I'll know in the first few seconds when you start dancing" so I was really nervous because I'm going to have to perform in front of 10,000 people. What if I don't got it? So I'm dancing behind him and he turns around "you got it". I didn't have regalia at that time and he leant me his button blanket, it was

already 50 years old and I had to bring this to Rome. The first moment I put that button blanket on, I don't even have the words for it. At that time I didn't know a lot about our teachings of the button blanket and he gave me a hundred year old piece of cedar bark for it because when we dance we are supposed to dance with cedar bark around [the apron]. It was amazing and that was when the culture started to arise in me.

Shawn, Saulteaux, Urban Kwakwawak dance group, artist, and landscaper

The process since we last talked on reclaiming Indigenous identity has, in that short period of time, come a long way in that I'm doing more and more with tradition, cultures, groups, songs, singing, and it actually is become part of my daily and weekly life which I never would have imagined before. It's become something I just do, I don't have to go out looking for it, its right in front of me. Being from Manitoba no, its not my particular culture but in a way it is because I do live here on the west coast now, I was raised her and [my wife and children] are from here. During the summer I had the opportunity to go to (my home reserve) where my birth parents are from and I really, really enjoyed it there. Just looking at the land and the places and the people, that's where my family has come from forever and I'm not from anywhere else, just that one place. That really felt special to me and no, I'm not going to go live there but I can always go visit. How has that affected my identity? I think it's made it stronger as in I don't have to choose one way or another. Now I don't have to fear people, I don't have to fear places, I don't have to fear getting to know my culture, I don't have to fear the traditions and protocols, yes, I'm learning them but it's just become part of who I am, it's not a question now, "oh I'm going to turn around and switch and be First Nations today". It's just a way of being. I think this whole process has really helped me see changes as they come

because like I said since the first interview things have even changed since then and you never know how much more will. Thank you.

Raven, Nēhiyaw, scholar expertise Indigenous child welfare

So for adoptees I think many of us start at this place where we know we're Indigenous but we don't really know what it means or might have those anchors to hang onto. But as we live being Indigenous and accepting we are Indigenous, as we learn more and go to ceremonies and we practice this, we are, we experience, we live being Indigenous then understanding goes to a deeper level and for me it has changed so much because now who I am as an Indigenous person, and I know lots of stuff because of academics, so I know lots of theories and I understand about our history and decolonization, quite a bit about critical race theory and I also have a psychology degree. I also have metaphysical teachings from the Western realm and then I also have my teachings from a number of different medicine people and healers in the last thirty years. So I've been able to take all of this and recognize that at their essence, there's this essence of all these things, they have all distilled into this understanding of what it is to be Indigenous that is really beautiful and really powerful and strong. And I have teachers all the time so I constantly learn and I understand that I am exactly where I am supposed to be now and in some ways I have caught up.

Conclusion

The road to reclaiming Indigenous identity after being adopted out of community and without connection to nation is long and a lot of work. Each participant shared processes that took over twenty years and in which they are still engaged today. Based on the processes shared and the age of participants, four themes that broadly correlate with

age were identified: Childhood, before reclaiming identity; Youth and young adulthood, beginning to reclaim identity; Adulthood, reclaiming identity at a deeper level; and Mature adulthood, ongoing contributions to healing from colonial trauma that each participant is making today. The process of reacculturation involves tremendous personal work to unravel the hegemonic discourses that participants were raised within and to allow them to heal from fractured identities. This is propelled by positive experiences with Indigenous people in work situations, Aboriginal healing programs and services, as well as college and university courses with Indigenous content and Indigenized programs. During the reacculturation processes, participants made a choice to continue with reclaiming identity and understanding their Indigeneity. These processes continued at a deeper level whereby participants articulated their connection to place, including their understandings of their nations' teachings and the spirit-based discourses they now live. From this we learn how each participant is reconciling the imposed fracture of forced removal from their families and how they are making contributions today.

In this chapter, we learned how seven adults engaged in processes of (re)learning the teachings of their Indigenous nations. This chapter also revealed the dual, educative role of the Sixties Scoop phenomenon. That is, the participants experiences clearly illustrated how societal norms and ideas helped to shape their “adopted” identities as white, superior and non-Indigenous. Indeed, the racist rhetoric and practices to which they were subjected led them to feel shame for their Indigenous identities. The rhetoric of white privilege was perpetuated in both formal and informal learning spaces: in community – such as school, church, playground, and museum; and at home. Yet, their stories also revealed that Indigenous/Indigenized educational programs, services, and

learning spaces – which have emerged since the 1980s – have played and will continue to play important educational roles in the participants’ journeys to reclaim their Indigenous identities. Although Indigenous understandings of education as a lifelong spirit driven process were disrupted for participants who were not raised with their respective nations’ teachings, their processes of reclaiming their Indigenous identities have reoriented them to this view of learning. The educational implications of the participants’ stories will be discussed further in Chapter 5 – Discussion and Recommendations.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of the data and organized these findings into four themes: Theme 1: ‘Imposed Fracture’ – Before reclaiming identity; Theme 2: ‘Little Anchors’ – Beginning the healing process (Reacculturating); Theme 3: ‘Coming Home’ – On being whole; and Theme 4: ‘Our Sacred Bundle’ – Reconciling the imposed fracture. Each theme provides insight into the processes of seven adoptees who are healing from the trauma of removal from family and community and their shifts from hegemonic discourse to spirit-based understandings of the world informed by their respective nations’ teachings.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to gather the stories of seven adult Indigenous transracial adoptees who have reclaimed their Indigenous identities after experiencing closed adoption during the late 1950s through to the early 1980s. The overall question that guided my research was: *how have adults who have experienced the Sixties Scoop claimed, connected and reframed who they are within their community/Nation of birth?*

In order to participate in this study, each participant must have had membership in an Aboriginal community (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) at birth and then have been removed from this community and raised without connection to their Indigenous nation (including the reserve, settlement, or community). In addition, each participant needed to identify as being in their own process of decolonization and willing to share their journey of healing. I approached this study with an Indigenous research paradigm. For gathering data, I used Indigenous storied methods, specifically life-experience stories. I gathered stories in two phases. First, I visited each participant for a few days and we had one-on-one interviews during that time. Second, I held a sharing circle open to all participants during a weekend retreat together. Throughout the research process I included four approaches to doing research in a good way: spirituality; relationship building; community reciprocity; and “self work”. In Chapter 4, four stages of reclaiming identity were shared by participants that aligned with four periods of life: Childhood, before reclaiming identity; Youth and young adulthood, beginning to reclaim identity; Adulthood, reclaiming identity at a deeper level; and Mature adulthood, ongoing contributions to healing from colonial trauma that each participant is making today.

This dissertation is a contribution to the debate on the impacts of loss of Indigenous identity in Canadian society, as well as, approaches to reclaiming identity. These stories provide insight into the processes of shifting from hegemonic discourses that place Indigenous experiences as “other” to spirit-based discourses that center Indigenous knowledge systems as valid, life affirming, and life changing. Ultimately, stories of reclaiming identity disrupt colonial narratives. This study contributes to decolonization and Indigenous resurgence scholarship and informs approaches to education, as well as concepts of Indigenous identity and colonial violence within social science discourses, and methods for community-based research. The three questions that guided this study were:

1. How have adults who were fostered or adopted from their communities during the Sixties Scoop reclaimed their Indigenous identity?
2. Does this reclamation include connection to place? If yes, what does connection to place mean to the former adoptees?
3. Through the process of reclaiming identity, have participants’ understandings of being Indigenous changed? If so, how?

Below I will discuss the findings to the three research questions, followed by recommendations for research, theory, and practice.

Discussion

How have adults who were fostered or adopted from their communities during the Sixties Scoop reclaimed their Indigenous identity? First, to clarify, my participants were all adoptees. While two participants were foster children prior to adoption, five participants were adopted in infancy. My findings indicate a gradual

process of reclaiming Indigenous identity from childhood through mature adulthood for the seven participants who experienced the Sixties Scoop. I identified the first phase beginning in childhood **before** reclaiming identity: *Theme 1 'Imposed Fracture' – From One Identity to Another* which provided a context for the struggles with identity that participants sought to address. If you're a transracial adoptee, your identity is in flux as you recoup your Indigeneity. The Indigenous identity development was a gradual process that included three stages which I organized as themes in the findings: *Theme 2 'Little Anchors' – Beginning the Healing Process* described initial pathways to healing, the beginning of the re-acculturation process; *Theme 3 'Coming Home' – On Being Whole* outlined the shift in worldviews and embracing Indigeneity; and *Theme 4 'Our Sacred Bundle' – Reconciling the Imposed Fracture* illustrated how seven Indigenous adoptees are currently contributing to Indigenist paradigms. I will discuss several salient features of Themes 1 and 2 below to describe how participants initially reclaimed their Indigenous identities.

Related to Theme 2, four initial pathways to reconnection included: meeting Indigenous people; tapping into Aboriginal services and programs; jobs in Indigenous organizations; and Indigenous courses/programs at university. Through these experiences, participants were introduced to the colonial history of Canada, the diversity of Indigenous nations in relationship with the Canadian state, and the socio-political issues that Indigenous peoples experience. I noted these initial pathways to healing were self-initiated processes. Participants reached out after being raised without connection to Indigenous community (Theme 1). While experiencing these initial pathways, participants had internal emotional processes to contend with as a result of their fractured

identities, including: therapy and grief work on the loss of identity & culture; working through the shock and anger of first learning about the history and genocide of Indigenous peoples; making sense of a white identity in an Indigenous body and working through imposter feelings such as “am I really Indigenous?”.

The socio-political context of Indigenous transracial adoptees living in middle-class and upper middle-class white families played prominently in the participant narratives. As discussed in Theme 1, participants shared their journeys of being raised in mainstream Canadian society without connection to their Indigenous families, communities, or nations. In the process of healing from the Sixties Scoop, participants faced enormous emotional turmoil, including depression, suicidal thoughts, self-medicating with alcohol or drugs, and other behaviours that people suffering from trauma engage in. Moreover, some experienced additional trauma as adoptees. Over the course of this study I have observed the growing number of class action lawsuits by Sixties Scoop adoptees towards the Canadian government. On February 14, 2017 a landmark court decision was made in regards to the Sixties Scoop. Justice Belobaba ruled in favour of the 16,000 Ontario Sixties Scoop plaintiffs. In his twenty-page summary judgement, Justice Belobaba noted:

The Sixties Scoop happened and great harm was done...The impact on the removed aboriginal children has been described as “horrendous, destructive, devastating and tragic.” The uncontroverted evidence of the plaintiff’s experts is that the loss of their aboriginal identity left the children fundamentally disoriented, with a reduced ability to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. The loss of aboriginal identity resulted in psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, unemployment, violence and numerous

suicides. Some researchers argue the Sixties Scoop was even “more harmful than the residential schools.” (Brown V. Canada, 2017, p. 2-3)

The Sixties Scoop was a failed assimilation experiment.

Indigenous children were adopted into white families during the 1960s through 1980s and “lived white” yet were never white enough to have white privilege. Further, each participant instinctively knew not to speak to their adoptive families about the racist experiences they had at school or in community. In addition, they dealt with the marginalization and bullying they experienced on their own. As well as grieving the loss of identity and family, they needed to come to terms with the privilege they were adopted into and what this allowed them to access, yet also what was denied to them for being brown and Indigenous. This study provides a unique view into a particular aspect of white privilege; how Indigenous adoptees internalized the settler beliefs they were raised with and the processes of reframing their Indigenous identities during youth and adulthood.

In my findings I noted the impacts of white privilege and hegemony on identity development. As defined in Chapter 4, white privilege is an institutional set of benefits granted to those of who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the power positions in our institutions and the doors that are opened based on this (Kendall, 2002). White privilege is often not acknowledged by those who have it or what this privilege affords them. Further, “being white” is not only a cultural concept; it is a set of privileges which also speak to matters of class, gender and other contested sites of power. Yet “whiteness” is often portrayed as being “mainstream” in Canadian society. This mislabeling

exacerbates problematic issues of over-generalizing race and culture, which result in acculturation efforts such as pan-Indianism.

Participants expressed confusion and ignorance about Indigeneity while growing up in their adoptive homes. Just as white isn't a culture, neither is native. At the time of reacculturating, participants' legal Indigenous identities had been confirmed. Participants knew which nations they belonged to and many had experienced reunification with birth family during this phase. Participants were in the process of regaining their cultural identities. And so participants embarked on a process of re-education to counter what little they learned about Indigenous people in their childhoods, much of which was stereotypes and pan-Indian generalizations in the media, on TV, in museums, and in school. This was the beginning of a long journey to wholeness. Four participants shared catalyst experiences in post-secondary courses and programs that offered Indigenous content and described how these programs assisted with their initial pathways to healing. Three of these participants discussed Indigenized programs that involved Elders, cultural teachings, and ceremony. One participant shared her experience of learning she was colonized in a 100 level Indigenous Studies course in an auditorium full of non-Indigenous peers. The powerful possibilities of formal education programs to assist with decolonization cannot be understated. While many scholars have argued the importance of culture-based programming for Indigenous students and culturally responsive schooling (Anuik, Battiste, & George, 2010; Cajete, 1994; Castagno, McKinley, 2008; Deloria, 1990; Grande, 2004), a major contribution of this study is the importance of educational programming in the reclamation of culture for Indigenous

adoptees. It is by no means the end of the journey, yet formal education can be an initial pathway that supports reclaiming identity.

In this section I have discussed how Indigenous adoptees started to reclaim identity, specifically, confronting white privilege and hegemony and initial pathways to healing, including post-secondary education programs. In the next section I will delve further into how Indigenous adoptees reclaim their identities, specifically as this correlates to connection to place.

Does this reclamation include connection to place? If yes, what does connection to place mean to the former adoptees? In response to Canada's argument that "things were different back then" and "it was unforeseeable, given social science knowledge at the time, that trans-racial adoptions or placements in non-aboriginal foster homes would have caused great harm" (Belobaba, 2017, [50], p.13). Belobaba replied:

Canada's submission missed the point...The issue is not what was known in the 1960's about the harm of trans-racial adoption or the risk of abuse in the foster home. The issue is what was known in the 1960's about the existential importance to the First Nations peoples of protecting and preserving their distinctive cultures and traditions, including their concept of the extended family. There can be no doubt that this was well understood by Canada at the time. For example, focusing on adoption alone, Canada knew or should have known that the adoption of aboriginal children by non-aboriginal parents constituted "a serious intrusion into the Indian family relationship" that could "obliterate the [Indian] family and...destroy [Indian] status." (Brown V. Canada, 2017, pp. 12-13)

This ruling is in regards to the Canadian government's "common law duty of care" to take reasonable steps to prevent on-reserve children from losing their Indigenous identity after they were removed and placed in non-Indigenous care between 1965 and 1984. (Belobaba, 2017) This case took eight years to come to resolution because the Canadian government denied the allegations at every step of the process, yet the plaintiffs persevered and Belobaba (2017) stated:

There is also no dispute about the fact that great harm was done. The 'scooped' children lost contact with their families. They lost their aboriginal language, culture and identity. Neither the children nor their foster or adoptive parents were given information about the children's aboriginal heritage or about the various educational and other benefits that they were entitled to receive. The removed children vanished "with scarcely a trace." As a former Chief of the Chippewas Nawash put it: "[i]t was a tragedy. They just disappeared." (Brown V. Canada, 2017, p. 2)

One of the travesties of the Sixties Scoop is that not only were identities changed but in many cases children were registered as deceased when adopted (Brown V. Canada, 2017). Reclaiming identity is messy and painful. Sometimes, family or community are not aware of the adoptee's existence, thus, initial birth family reunification and repatriation to nation are the tip of the iceberg in becoming whole. Reacculturation requires the support of extended family; connecting to place helped participants heal their fractured identities. Connection to place is more than membership to their nation. Participants expressed the importance of spending time on their home territory; learning their lineage and family history; as well as, learning their nations teachings. Three key

points in my findings on connection to place include: the role of extended family; knowing the place of my ancestors and the land; and belonging to an Indigenous community.

Role of extended family. Extended families have been critical to the repatriation process. Most participants were adopted far from their home territory and they were living where they have made a life for themselves as adults. None of the participants I interviewed lived in their home community. Two participants lived on their home territory. Most participants' immediate families could not help with the repatriation process. Two participants' primary contact has been their Indigenous parent, from whom they have learned their history, shaped cultural identity, and gained some of their spiritual teachings. Neither of these participants lived on their home territory. Four participants had at least one deceased parent at the time of birth family reunification. Further, reconnecting with immediate family was riddled with emotions from the trauma of separation. While each story is unique, common elements of removal for Indigenous children and their families included shame, anger, and loss of childhood memories together. For most participants, it was extended family who helped with reconnection to place.

At the time of repatriation to nation, two participants had uncles who were leaders in their nations; when they learned of their nieces they reached out to bring them home. One of these participants became a traditional dancer, taught by her extended family, including the hereditary Chief of her nation. The second participant has been guided over the years to receive the teachings of her families and nations, including the teachings of her late grandfather, a respected Elder. A third participant has an aunty who holds

teachings as well as memories of the participant's parents. To this day, the aunty will phone the participant to check-in, share a memory, and speak in the language to her. A fourth participant is a member of the longhouse, the system of governance and spiritual teachings of her nation, and describes this as her connection to place. While her mother is deceased, and relationships with siblings that she met in adulthood vary, it is the connection to extended family in the longhouse that brings her a sense of belonging. A fifth participant spoke about the comfort he gets knowing that both sides of his family come from one nation. Each of these participants expressed a connection to place that involved extended family.

Knowing the place of my ancestors and the land. Further to the experiences with extended family, participants spoke about their connection to place through their ancestors and the land. The knowledge of kinship ties to a specific place since time immemorial aided in healing from forced removal and provided an important aspect of Indigenous identity: we are the relationships we hold and, for adoptees, it can be difficult to have these relationships with immediate family after not being raised together. However, the connection to extended family, ancestors and the land is healing. Some participants shared the power of walking where their ancestors walked and the realization that spiritual guides have always been with them.

As they continued the reacculturation process, participants' connection to land deepened. They shared connections to the land, the water, the trees, the animals, the plant medicines, the air they breathed, and the sky. Being connected to the land, to all of the cosmos, provided comfort, strength, and a deeper understanding of Indigenous ways of viewing the world and the purpose of the life journey. Some participants described

embracing Indigeneity as “knowledge at a cellular level” (Black, 2011, p. 54), the deep knowing that Indigenous scholars advocate. All participants expressed that acknowledging their Indigeneity saved their lives. They described themselves as catching up with and receiving teachings they missed in childhood and youth, immersing themselves. and being mindful not to permit this loss of identity, specifically culture and spirituality to happen to their children and grandchildren.

Belonging to an Indigenous community. Findings indicate the trauma of being removed from Indigenous community can be healed by becoming part of an Indigenous community. This connection to place is sometimes an urban community or a community other than one’s own where adoptees have been welcomed. While each participant had regained membership in their nation, ties to communities varied. All of the participants had connections with some family and visited their home community sometimes. Three participants lived on or near their home territories; their Indigenous community includes their home cultures and ceremonies. One participant travelled home regularly and is connected to an urban Indigenous community that includes some of his cultural practices. Three participants lived geographically distant from their home territories. They identified as members of their nations with their cultural identities and spiritual teachings. They also practiced some of the teachings and ceremonies of the territory they lived on where most of the Elders, knowledge holders, and regular gatherings they participate in take place. Each participant was part of an urban Indigenous community where they lived. They participated in social, cultural, and spiritual gatherings with other Indigenous people, including though not exclusively, others who were impacted by child welfare and Indian Residential School. These communities are a way of creating family and

community ties that were fractured in the removal process. The Indigenous communities participants belonged to included Friendship Centres, college & university campuses, urban Aboriginal service providers, and collectives that adoptees have helped create.

With the support of extended family and connection to place, including the land, cultural teachings and ceremony, as well as, belonging to an Indigenous community, participants embraced their Indigeneity and Indigenous ways of walking in the world.

Through the process of reclaiming identity, have participants' understandings of being Indigenous changed? If so, how? It is evident in the participants' stories that reclaiming identity, specifically, cultural and spiritual teachings, has been a source of healing and well-being for these adoptees. Prior to reacculturating, participants contended with the prejudicial views and negative information on Indigenous peoples they received. Participants shared their experiences being raised in white privilege, yet exposed to negative – colonial – framing of the nature of Indigeneity. Knowing that they were born Indigenous, they felt that could never be white enough and lack of Indigenous cultural and spiritual teachings left painful gaps in their identities. Each adoptee identified their struggles with identity in their colonial context, amplified by the lack of Indigenous people in their lives to provide counter-narratives or lived curricula. This resulted in a long process of healing over decades, to bridge multiple identities that couldn't co-exist in their fractured childhoods. As participants shifted from the hegemonic discourse in which they were raised in to spirit-based discourses, their understandings of being Indigenous changed.

Hegemonic discourse. Hegemonic discourse is not always apparent to those with privilege because the national public discourse aligns with their notions and

understandings of the world. Socio-political contexts including policy and legislation, and social norms are framed in this discourse. Many social workers and adoptive parents honestly thought scooping children was in their best interest:

One longtime employee of the Ministry of Human Resources in B.C. referred to this process as the “Sixties Scoop”. She admitted that provincial social workers would, quite literally, scoop children from reserves on the slightest pretext. She also made it clear, however, that she and her colleagues sincerely believed that what they were doing was in the best interests of the children. They felt that the apprehension of Indian children from reserves would save them from the effects of crushing poverty, unsanitary health conditions, poor housing and malnutrition, which were facts of life on many reserves. Unfortunately, the long-term effect of apprehension on the individual child was not considered. More likely, it could not have been imagined. Nor were the effects of apprehension on Indian families and communities taken in account and some reserves lost almost a generation of their children as a result. (Johnston, 1983, p.23)

Hegemony is perpetrated when Indigenous nations are reduced to ‘groups’ and ‘communities’ that need oversight, otherwise they are to be feared. In this hegemonic discourse, the social structures of Indigenous nations are reduced to inferior and little known knowledge systems. In this discourse, Indigenous children are viewed as needing to be saved from the poverty and social ills of their communities without a critical examination of the systemic reasons why Indigenous nations experience high rates of poverty and social issues. The powerlessness of Indigenous nations under the Canadian law and in Canadian society was poignantly revealed in the Sixties Scoop phenomenon.

As evidenced in the Sixties Scoop literature review of Chapter 2, the whole child welfare system is problematic as it is based on removing children from the home instead of considering Indigenous community approaches to child well-being or the needs of Indigenous nations in order to provide for their children (Fournier & Crey, 1997; Helcason, 2009; Sinclair, 2007).

My findings indicate receiving knowledge of colonization and its impacts on Indigenous families, communities, and nations, contributed to changing adoptees' perspectives on being Indigenous. This knowledge helped them realize the transracial adoption they experienced was not unique to them, nor their own or their family's shortcomings, but was part of a larger socio-political experience of Indigenous nations. From this perspective, participants' understandings of issues their own families and communities faced such as poverty, homelessness, health issues, and social exclusion, changed. Coupled with cultural and ceremonial teachings and practices, participants' views on being Indigenous became strength-based rather than deficit-oriented.

Spirit-based discourses. Over the course of many years, participants replaced internalized racism with spiritual teachings. They described an "inward spiral" whereby they gradually shifted from anthropocentric worldviews to spirit-based worldviews grounded in their respective Indigenous nations' teachings. Being introduced to ceremony was a key experience. Often, due to the dislocation of adoptees, the initial ceremonies learned were not on their respective nations' territories. As participants continued on their journey of reacculturation, they reconnected with ceremonies from their own nations. *Theme 3 'Coming Home' – On Being Whole* outlined participants shifting worldviews and embracing Indigeneity; as each participant gained teachings,

they shifted from hegemonic to spirit-based understandings of the world -- I've come to realize this is the healing component of education.

Each Indigenous nation has its own teachings and spiritual laws that guide us on our life journey. As discussed in Chapter 2, this inner journey that is spirit-driven is the essence of education from Indigenous perspectives. Absolon (2011) states: "We live in a society that has been blind to the fact that Indigenous people have knowledge, memory and motive emanating from philosophical thought, which governs the spiritual, political, social and economical relationships with nations" (p.80). In spite of living in a society that devalued Indigenous knowledge systems, participants found reconnecting to these systems and belonging to a community of practice helped them heal. In Garroutte's (2005) proposal that we focus on spiritual identities as a way forward, she names an identity that is "founded in kinship and responds to at least two themes that one encounters across a range of tribal philosophies. One of these reflects a condition of being, which I call relationship to ancestry. The second involves a condition of doing, which I call a responsibility to reciprocity" (p.175). These conditions of being and doing are shared in the final theme of the participant stories. *Theme 4 'Our Sacred Bundle' – Reconciling the Imposed Fracture* illustrates how seven Indigenous adoptees were currently countering hegemonic discourses with their spirit-based practices and contributing to Indigenist paradigms. At the time of writing the thesis, the contributions each participant was making was a reflection of their strength based understandings of Indigeneity and includes: being a bridge between two worlds; understanding fractured identity within the discourse of colonization, colonial violence, and intergenerational

trauma; and contributing to intergenerational healing and spirit-based discourses in their careers and/or community work.

Unexpected findings. There were two aspects of my findings that were not expected: 1) participants' definitions of connection to place; and 2) my own definition of reclaiming identity as an Indigenous reclamation project. First, prior to data collection I thought connection to place was literally living in one's home community. However, I learned through participant stories that connection to place was more than the physical act of returning to home community. Connection to place involved a feeling of being at home in oneself, being of the nation and practicing one's teachings wherever one lives, as well as, being respectful of the teachings of the particular territory one lives on. Being of the nation included membership and connection to extended family. I believe my decision to not include myself in the interview data served this study well. By remaining outside of the participant group I was able hear the diverse ways participants reclaimed Indigeneity.

Second, I initially wrote my proposal, ethics application, and participant questions framing this study as a reclamation project. I referenced Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, specifically the reclamation projects that she described. Through the participant stories and reflecting on the literature, I have come to realize that reclaiming identity is distinct from Indigenous reclamation projects. Reclamation is specific to projects of reclaiming land: returning land to Indigenous nations; occupation and use of lands that are led by Indigenous nations; territorial acknowledgements; and other projects. I draw from *Brown V. Canada* (2017), Justice

Belobaba's summary judgement on the Ontario Sixties Scoop class action lawsuit in which he states:

A duty may arise as a result of the Crown's assumption of discretionary control over a specific aboriginal interest. The interest must be a communal aboriginal interest in land that is integral to the nature of the aboriginal community and their relationship to the land and must be predicated on historic use and occupation. (p. 18)

Justice Belobaba is discussing whether Canada has a fiduciary duty of care or common-law duty of care. He determined this case is not about "a communal aboriginal interest in land". This helped me understand that the experience of Sixties Scoop survivors is viewed, from a justice perspective, as individual acts of negligence as per common-law duty of care. At the same time, a critical loss for those who experienced the Sixties Scoop is "a distinct communal and/or national identity (that) may be regarded as the fundamental dimension of cultural wellbeing for Indigenous peoples (Lawrence, 2004)" (cited in Deer, Falkenberg, 2016, p.1). Therefore, while survivors seek to be reclaimed by their nations, to be a part of the community, and be in relationship with the land, this is not a reclamation project. As Raven shared:

It's less of a reclamation as it is an acknowledgement because I am and always have been a Nēhiyaw (Cree). That's not in doubt but I was fractured, imposed fracture between me and that chain and so in this time and place in my consciousness I was dislocated and dismembered from who I am and who I am is my family and my community and my culture. I didn't ever plant a flag and say I hereby reclaim who I am as Indigenous, it's been a slow process of recognizing that

fracture, that dismemberment and bringing it slowly, spiraling inward, into that place of certainty and going “oh yeah” watching all that other bullshit fall away, that imposed system, that child welfare system, the racism, the oppression, the discrimination, kind of tumble and the only thing left is me and my Indigenous spirit.

Belobaba (2017) suggests the debate on the intentions of the Sixties Scoop is best left to historians and perhaps truth and reconciliation commissions:

All of this, however, is background and is not determinative of the legal issue that is before the court. The court is not being asked to point fingers or lay blame. The court is not being asked to decide whether the Sixties Scoop was the result of a well-intentioned governmental initiative implemented in good faith and informed by the norms and values of the day, or was, as some maintain, state-sanctioned “culture/identity genocide” that was driven by racial prejudice to “take the savage out of the Indian children”. This is a debate that is best left to historians and, perhaps to truth and reconciliation commissions. (Brown V. Canada, p. 4)

This dissertation is a contribution to the debate on state sanctioned removal of children and names the very real impacts of loss of identity and concrete processes of reclaiming identity. My findings indicate cultural and spiritual teachings and practices, as well as, the knowledge of colonization and its impacts on Indigenous families, communities, and nations, contribute to adoptees healing and ability to move forward.

Limitations

A limitation of my study is that it did not include Inuit participants. This was not intentional. My participant recruitment process involved engaging with the National

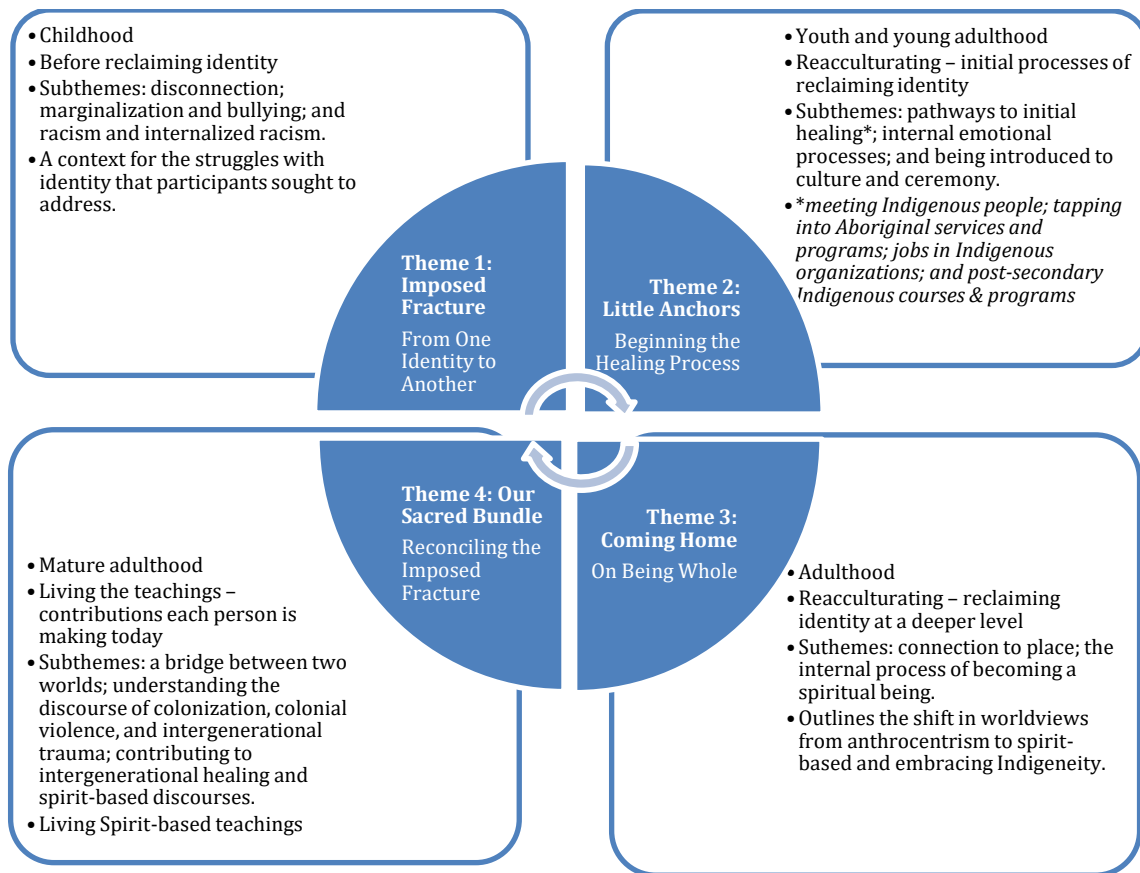
Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network that I am a member of. I was fortunate to have seven participants from diverse Indigenous nations share their stories. An outcome of this study will be a curriculum project on the topic of healing from the Sixties Scoop. One of my recommendations is to gather Inuit stories of the Sixties Scoop experience to be included in such resources and future projects. Second, a qualitative study such as this with self-selected participants willing to share their stories is a limitation. While very helpful and likely resonating in many spots with other adoptees' experiences, others' experiences could be different. More research is needed with more and diverse participants.

Implications and Recommendations

Implications for theory: Living spirit-based teachings. The Sixties Scoop is one chapter in a larger story of the disruption and dislocation of Indigenous families imposed by the Canadian state. This dissertation focused on “how/what people learn to shape their Indigenous identity” after experiencing removal from their family, community, and nation, and the educative implications. It builds on Sinclair’s (2007) study and a gap that she identified. Sinclair (2007) stated that more research is needed, specifically in the areas of resiliency amongst adoptees and “the influence of repatriation to birth culture” (p. 75). She speculated that reconnecting with birth culture provides “vital cultural mirrors necessary for self-validation; a cultural reframing from which to review and re-perceive their experiences” (p. 75). Connecting with cultural identity was a critical source of healing and renewal for many participants in Sinclair’s study with some being able “to perceive their experiences as a socio-political act rather than as a consequence of personal deficiency (for the first time)” (p. 76). My findings support

Sinclair’s study and I offer a description of the process of reclaiming Indigenous identity iterated by the participants in my study that answers the research question: *How have adults who have experienced the Sixties Scoop claimed, connected and reframed who they are within their community/Nation of birth?* The figure below illustrates the process of reclaiming Indigenous identity that involves: providing a context for the struggles with identity; initial processes of reclaiming identity, including post-secondary Indigenous courses & programs, and being introduced to cultural teachings and ceremony; reclaiming identity at a deeper level, including the internal process of becoming a spiritual being; and healing the imposed fracture through living spirit-based teachings.

Figure 5.1: Indigenous adoptees processes of reclaiming identity and living spirit-based teachings



Because of colonization, developing Indigenous identity has been disrupted yet people can reclaim their identity. The strength of participants to persevere on this journey is key and includes both internal and external processes over several years. To reconcile the imposed fracture of the Sixties Scoop, each participant in mature adulthood identified living the teachings of their respective nations, as well as teachings from the territory they live on and from knowledge holders they are in relationship with. Current identity theories discussed in Chapter 2 are enhanced by my findings because it is possible to have your identity taken from you and reclaim it through processes such as what I identified in figure 5.1.

Future scholarly inquiry: Healing from colonial violence. The Sixties Scoop is an example of how settler social values became practice that was both dismissive and disruptive of Indigenous identity to the extent that Indigenous identity was erased. I have come to the conclusion that it is more than cultural colonialism or cultural genocide when peoples' identities are erased. Child welfare documents, birth certificates, and hospital records were altered, lost, or destroyed; many families believed their children were dead not adopted out. We still do not know how many Indigenous children experienced the Sixties Scoop, yet current numbers filing in class action lawsuits exceed early estimates¹³ and many Indigenous adoptees and foster children did not make it to adulthood. We do know the majority of Indigenous persons living on the streets or in jail experienced the child welfare system.

Key to my findings was the importance of spirit-based practices in order to heal from colonial trauma. In *Smudge this: assimilation, state-favoured communities and the*

¹³ In Ontario, the class action lawsuit was filed with 16,000 plaintiffs. At the time of writing, there were class action lawsuits in 4 other jurisdictions.

denial of indigenous spiritual lives, Watts (2016) probes the effects of colonization on Indigenous peoples and our abilities to inherit elements of our cosmologies. Her focus is meaningful ceremony versus “boardroom smudging” as it relates to the assimilationist agenda of the state. Cultural practices without spiritual teachings can be harmful or void of meaning. This is a critical insight to be explored further and supports my findings that indigenous spiritual lives are deep, meaningful connections cultivated over time. Further, the experience of reclaiming identity, including spiritual teachings, is not isolated to Indigenous transracial adoptees of the Sixties Scoop or the broader group of Indigenous survivors of the child welfare system. However, the framework for reclaiming identity for other reasons of disconnection may look different and requires further investigation.

Challenging hegemonic discourse with counter-narratives. Many of the messages about their identity that participants received as children were communicated through educational settings. It is not possible to examine education without also examining social contexts and legal frameworks. Policies and laws reflect conscious choices made by powerful individuals who act on behalf of the people they represent (Howlett et al., 2009). Furthermore, education embodies social norms and community ethics (cf. LaFrance, 2000). Critical perspectives invite us to question which community is being served by education and other social policies. Ample research has been done to justify the assertion that the Indian Act reflects the social norms of early settlers in Canada, specifically the need to assimilate the original inhabitants of these territories in order to occupy the land. (Alfred, 2009; Lawrence, 2012; Morito, 2012; Simpson, 2008) This set the tone for little known policies and processes that have rolled out during the past 150 years that have not become public knowledge until the stories of those who experienced

the colonial violence are voiced. We need to challenge hegemonic discourse with counter-narratives. The power of weaving together Indigenous adoptee experiences with justice, reconciliation, and Indigenous frameworks, embodies the notion of challenging the hegemonic discourse with counter-narratives. These stories contribute to truth-telling and have the potential to reframe history, inform future public policy, and re-educate society.

A final thought on approaches to future inquiry, is that the most powerful outcomes arise from the sharing of stories (Archibald, 2008; Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013; Kovach, 2009; Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Chilisa, 2012). In order to gather stories, we need to be respectful of the storyholders and create space in an honourable way for stories to be shared. I have provided some approaches to gathering stories in Chapter 3. This is not a step by step guide but a sharing of how I cultivated an environment for gathering stories. This study would not have been possible and I would not have outcomes to write about if I didn't go about this study in a good way.

Based on the findings in this study, my research-based recommendations to scholars include:

- Probe the term “cultural genocide” and Indigenous peoples’ experiences with cultural genocide in relation to settler-colonial violence in Canada towards Indigenous families, communities, and nations - including the intersection of counter-narratives, resistance discourse, and colonial violence;
- A larger study on reclaiming identity and reconnection to place that includes a cross-section of Indigenous adults impacted by child welfare,

their families, and persons involved in child welfare; and

- Life-experience stories research on other Canadian policies and projects that have erased Indigenous identities and how identity was reclaimed, such as Dunning's (2012) article *Reflections of a disk-less Inuk on Canada's Eskimo identification system*.

Education practice: Decolonization and reconciliation. Many of my participants indicated that education programs with a decolonizing aim can be catalyst experiences for Indigenous students who are seeking to reclaim their identities. Critical to successful programming of this kind is acknowledging white privilege that pervades society and the historical trauma of Indigenous students. The majority of Indigenous families across Canada have been impacted by the child welfare system and the Indian Residential Schools, in addition to other policies and projects that undermine Indigenous lives. To have a mindful practice, educators need to be aware of their own positionality, the devastating experiences of Indigenous students and their families, and the understanding that experiences of Indigenous families have been diluted to past wrongs, when in fact, Indigenous people face ongoing colonial violence in a state that does not want to take responsibility for actions such as the Sixties Scoop.

Reframing education discourses. Educative implications of this study include the discourses that are learned and practiced in society as the dominant or hegemonic discourse such that Indigenous worldviews, spirit-based discourses and worldviews, are excluded and Indigenous knowledge systems devalued. Participants' experiences suggest a need to reframe the way in which we approach education and its curriculum. Politics, law, health, education and many disciplines in the Western academic tradition intersect in

Indigenous ways of knowing. Wildcat and Pierotti (2000) view:

Humanities, social sciences, arts, and law all have a place as components of indigenous studies, but none of these areas should be separate from the relationships between humans and the natural world. Indigenous knowledge and philosophy is inherently multi-disciplinary because it links the human and the non-human and is not only the basis for indigenous concepts of nature but also for concepts of politics and ethics. (p.63)

Thus we need to consider the role of Indigenous or Indigenizing education beyond Teacher Education in K-12 and the cross-disciplinary attributes of decolonized and Indigenized curricula. To nurture Indigenous knowledge systems, we need to include non-linear paths of education and challenge ourselves to dig deep, beyond colonial discourses.

Returning to university as a doctoral student in the social foundations of education, I quickly became engaged in the dialogue on Indigenous approaches to decolonizing education, including land-based programs, connection to spirit, Elders and knowledge holders as facilitators, and Indigenous language immersion. Thanks to Indigenous activists and scholars who have come before us (e.g. Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2013; Castellano, 2006; Dickason, 1997; Ermine, 1995; Kirkness, 2013; Urion, 1999), as well as critical theorists and educational practitioners, educators have the responsibility to engage in research projects that address Indigenous issues. Through these projects, we have the opportunity to reframe the colonial history of Canada, support Indigenous nations and communities' well-

being, and improve the dominant society's understandings of spirit-based discourses. (Wright Cardinal, 2016, p. 86)

We also need to draw from the growing body of cross-disciplinary Indigenist research to inform education practices. Wilson (2008) expressed the progressive changes in approaches to Indigenous research over the past forty years; drawing from Patsy Steinhauer's work (2001), he described the current phase as an Indigenist research phase. Over these years, the research discourse has shifted from the polarities of dialectics: Western (white) vs. Native; to culture-based discourses; and most recently spirit-based discourses. This is not to say that Indigenous scholars did not write about Indigenous knowledge systems and the importance of spirit-based understandings, but rather, the academy and society's readiness for Indigenous discourses is more prevalent in this era of Truth and Reconciliation. Thus, there is a growing awareness of the diversity of Indigenous nations, as well as, the shared values of Indigenous knowledge systems, and thoughtful research to be included in education practices.

An example of mindful practice in post-secondary. Everyone has been impacted by the colonial discourses that shape Canada and all educators have the opportunity to engage in decolonizing practices. Cote-Meek (2014) was disheartened to find Aboriginal educators and students face the same struggles as thirty years ago with ongoing colonial experiences. Her work reaffirms "the pervasiveness of violence in our society despite the fact that many would rather ignore or downplay the level of violence that exists" (Cote-Meek, 2014, p.166). Cote-Meek puts forward seven concrete actions in the classroom and institution to support a decolonizing practice, which I summarize below:

In the classroom

1. Professors must begin to understand and acknowledge through their pedagogy that Aboriginal students come to the classrooms burdened by racialized constructions and likely live in a state of ongoing colonial violence.
2. Professors who are teaching difficult material must engage in holistic pedagogical approaches that give attention to the emotive aspects of a student's being.
3. Professors must be prepared to engage and confront racism in demonstrable ways in the classroom environment by taking a firm stand against any acts of racism and violence, whether covert or overt.
4. Professors must engage in creating spaces where Aboriginal students can connect with other Aboriginal students or at the very least students who may also be experiencing oppression based on race.

Institutionally

1. Policy changes in hiring practices are required that encourage the hiring of Aboriginal professors across a number of disciplines. Followed by institutional supports for Aboriginal professors.
2. Anti-racism must become a part of the institutional culture.
3. Education policy changes are required at all levels and not only post-secondary systems. Students arrive in post-secondary systems carrying racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples. Racism and ongoing colonialism exist and are perpetuated in society, including secondary and elementary school systems. (p.165)

Reconciliation: The Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In 2015, the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Report *Calls to Action* was released. After six years of data collection that included "more than 6,750 survivor and witness statements from across the country after over a century of abuse at Indian Residential Schools" (TRC, 2015, press release) the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released 94 calls to action that address the legacy of IRS and areas needing reconciliation. The Legacy section of the report includes actions in the areas of child welfare, education, language and culture, health, and justice. The Reconciliation section includes actions that span legislation, government, church, education, youth, museums, missing children and burial information, records, commemoration, media, sports, business, and immigration. One of the education recommendations is to develop curriculum. McCracken (2017) reminds us that the legacy of residential schools is directly connected to the Sixties Scoop:

In 1960 the Government of Canada estimated that 50% of the students in the residential school system were there for 'child welfare' reasons. As the government began phasing out the residential school system the practice of removing Indigenous children from their homes and placing them in government care was drastically accelerated. Provincial and territorial governments, which often had no understanding of Indigenous systems of care or ways of life, imposed Euro-Canadian standards of care on communities, often resulting in Indigenous homes being deemed 'unfit' for children. (para. 4)

In response to the TRC Calls to Action (2015), curricula are in the process of being updated in provincial and territorial Ministries of Education, to varying degrees at various grade levels. Colleges and universities across Canada have initiated TRC advisory

boards, mandatory or elective decolonization and Indigenous studies courses, and Indigenized programs. A recommendation from my findings for Teacher Education is to include a curriculum on the Sixties Scoop for K-12 learners. In her discussion on the role of historians and educators to address the TRC Calls to Action, and the importance of raising awareness regarding the legacy of child welfare, McCracken (2017) suggests:

1. Teach about the sixties scoop alongside residential schools. Understand that residential schools are just one part of a larger colonial system that was designed to assimilate Indigenous people.
2. Incorporate discussions of the sixties scoop into child and youth history classes.
3. Foster relationships with sixties scoop survivors and invite them into your classroom to talk about their lived experience. Alternatively use, video, audio, or written testimony to centre Indigenous voices in your classroom discussion.
4. Acknowledge that the legacy of the sixties scoop and colonialism is still being felt in Indigenous communities today.
5. Address the millennium scoop and ongoing child welfare and education inequality in the classroom. (para. 10)

Both Cote-Meek (2014) and McCracken (2017) propose responsible ways of developing and delivering course content and programs to address decolonization and reconciliation.

Based on this dissertation, I will produce a curriculum of healing from the Sixties Scoop that includes the participant stories and findings from this study. This curriculum will be gifted to the National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network. The

counter-narratives in stories of healing from colonial disruption are a critical contribution to reconciliation efforts.

My recommendations for education practice include:

- Acknowledging white privilege and one's own positionality;
- Draw from the growing body of Indigenist research to inform one's practice, including resources and materials for instruction;
- Consider the cross-curricular nature of Indigenous and Indigenized curriculum and do not limit the possibilities of Indigenous Education to K-12 Teacher Education;
- Acknowledge the impacts of colonial violence on Indigenous students and be prepared to teach Indigenous students. (Cote-Meek, 2014)
- Acknowledge that the TRC has mandated eight education Calls to Action, including curriculum development.

Conclusion

In this dissertation we learned how Sixties Scoop adoptees shifted from the context in which they were raised to regaining Indigenous ways of understanding the world. We learned that being removed from family and community while being raised in white privilege and hegemonic discourse was traumatic for participants and that being exposed to Indigenous ways of knowing and doing were sources of healing from this trauma. The participant stories have provided insight into the social norms or truths into which Indigenous transracial adoptees have been "educated"; how adoptees reconciled their identities while being raised in non-Indigenous homes; and how adoptees re-learned the ways of knowing of their nations.

The broader dialogue this dissertation engages in is the impact of Canadian values and Canadian legislation on Indigenous identities and the educative implications. The Sixties Scoop is one example of identity removal of which very little was known until survivor stories provide insight. Life-experience stories are a powerful tool for education. Education can be a source of healing from colonization. Educators can position the curriculum in a way that decenters it from its hegemonic forms and content. In the era of reconciliation, stories of healing are a gift to be shared widely. We also need to understand that education is much more than what happens at school; it is social values, public policy, and legal frameworks; it is also potentially a lifelong spirit-based journey that transcends the walls of schools and weaves into the social worlds of communities and families (LaFrance, 2000, p. 101).

In the summary judgement of the Ontario Sixties Scoop class action lawsuit, the Canadian government has been court ordered to address the removal of Indigenous children from their communities in the form of compensation for cultural loss. However, colonial violence is more than loss of culture, it is the erasure of identity including access to knowledge systems - the spirit-based teachings which are at the heart of Indigenous identity. Reclaiming identity and reconnection to place can lead to wellness. I propose it is time to shift from hegemonic discourse to spirit-based discourses so that we can heal from fractured identities.

I saw a sticker recently that read: *Canada 150 years of (1867-2017) broken treaties, genocide, assimilation, colonization, stolen land*. What will the next 150 years hold? As Senator Murray Sinclair, former chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, stated: “It is precisely because education was the primary tool of

oppression of Aboriginal people, and mis-education of all Canadians that we have concluded that education holds the key to reconciliation” (in Dodds, 2017, p.22). We all have a responsibility to change the education discourses of Canada. *HWISKE, kinanâskomitin, mahsi, thank you.*

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Appendix

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer



Reclaiming Indigenous Identity: seeking volunteers to share stories of reclamation after experiencing the Sixties Scoop

What is the Sixties Scoop?

The Sixties Scoop, a term coined by Patrick Johnston in 1983, is in reference to the tens of thousands of First Nations, Inuit and Metis children that were forcibly removed from their homes and became Indigenous adoptees, foster children, or Crown wards.

Why does it matter?

In addition to our own healing, our communities and Canadian society benefit from gaining knowledge regarding how adults who were raised away from their Indigenous homelands reclaim their Indigenous identities.

Who am I?

I am an Indigenous PhD student at the University of Victoria that experienced the Sixties Scoop. I spent ten years in my home community as an adult reclaiming my Indigenous identity. During this time, I was engaged in community-based research projects throughout the Northwest Territories.

Gathering stories of reclamation

For the purpose of gathering stories, I am seeking participants like myself who are Indigenous adults that were removed from their homelands at birth or in childhood through foster care or adoption during the late 1950s through the early 1980s have reclaimed or are reclaiming their Indigenous identities.

What is the process and time commitment?

- Life-story Interview: Drawing from Indigenous storied methods and approaches to research, I would like to spend two days visiting in each participant's community. During this visit, we will engage in a 60-90 minute life-story interview. *Meals and honoraria will be provided.*
- Sharing Circle: We will seek a date to gather for a 2-hour group discussion on our experiences and processes of reclamation. *Assistance with travel and accommodation can be arranged.*
- Analysis of stories: Approximately 3 hours of transcript review and editing by each participant and up to 4 hours of Skype conversations between each participant and myself to discuss the format and content of the stories, as well as, how the stories will be shared. *Gifts including a digital format of your story will be provided.*

If you are interested in participating or learning more about this study, please call or email me.

Appendix B: Participant Consent Letter

Beyond the Sixties Scoop: Reclaiming Indigenous identity, reconnecting to place, and reframing understandings of being Indigenous

Tansi, thank you for taking part in this research study about adult Indigenous transracial adoptees who have reclaimed their Indigenous identities. You may remember me from *BiGiwen*, the Indigenous Adoptee Gathering 2014: I am currently a PhD student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Victoria. I am conducting this study as part of my university requirements to receive the PhD and I am seeking your participation. I have been doing ceremonial work to be prepared to gather stories with fellow adoptees who identify as reclaiming Indigenous identity. I am guided by Margaret Thom, a Dene Elder that I have been working with for some years, and my university supervisor, Helen Raptis, who has worked on Indigenous community-based research projects for many years. I have been fortunate to receive funding by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to do this project.

The purpose of this study is to gather the stories of six adult Indigenous transracial adoptees who have reclaimed their Indigenous identities after experiencing closed adoption during the Sixties Scoop. In order to identify with this study, each participant must have had membership in an Aboriginal community (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) at birth and then have been removed from this community and raised without connection to their Indigenous nation (reserve, settlement, or community). Together we will embark in a process of co-constructing and co-participating stories. Together, we will explore how Indigenous adults reclaim Indigenous identities.

There are three parts to this study as listed in the recruitment flyer: Life-story interviews, a sharing circle, and analysis of the stories. The time commitment includes:

1. Life- story Interviews: I will travel to your community and spend two days visiting with you. I will work around your schedule and can come when it's convenient for you in June, July or August 2015. During that visit, I will do a 60-90 minute tape-recorded interview with you about how you reclaimed your Indigenous identity. *Meals and honoraria will be provided.*
2. Sharing circle: I would like to hold a sharing circle with all 6 participants in Ottawa after our IAG gathering, on the evening of August 27th. At the sharing circle we will discuss our experiences and processes of reclamation. This will likely be a 2-hour circle and I will tape-record it. *Accommodation will be provided if you weren't planning to overnight the 27th in Ottawa.*
3. Analysis of stories: Once I type my notes from the interviews and the sharing circle, I will send the transcripts to each participant for review and editing. This will take about 3 hours of your time to review and edit. We will also have up to four hours of conversations by phone or Skype to discuss the format and content of the stories. You will approve all the material that I can

use in my study from your story. You will choose whether you want your name used or an alias in the study. *Gifts including a digital format of your story will be provided.*

Your participation in this study must be completely voluntary. If you withdraw from the study part way through, you will be asked if you want the data you have contributed to be part of the analysis. If you agree, your data will remain in the study; if not your taped interview will be erased and the transcript and all field notes or data associated with your file will be destroyed. Once the group data are put together into the data analysis process it will not be possible to entirely remove individual data due to the nature of the group data. However, individual responses may be removed from the data if you decide to withdraw. You can withdraw from the study at anytime and I will not seek reimbursement for any honoraria, gifts, or travel funds provided.

To make sure that you continue to agree to participate in this research, I will check in four times during the research process. First, after reading this letter and answering any questions you may have I will ask if you want to set-up a two day visit and interview with me. Second, I will ask whether you want to continue before we set-up the sharing circle. Third, I will ask whether you want to continue when I send the transcripts from the interviews and sharing circle to be analyzed. Fourth, I will ask whether you want your story included when I write the study for publication.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, you can choose to use your own name or an alias in the study. When we meet for the sharing circle, participants will know each other and sharing circle protocols will be explained with the expectation that we all respect what is shared in circle. I will keep things confidential however in a sharing circle there are limits to anonymity and confidentiality. To maintain anonymity you can forego the sharing circle and still participate in the one-on-one interview.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing the files in a locked filing cabinet in my home office and on a password protected computer. Only aliases will be used in these files. When the study is completed, participants will have a choice of having their stories destroyed or deposited into an archive of their choice. All other data related to this project will be destroyed within five years and after my convocation. Electronic files will be deleted and transcripts, etc. will be shredded.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: we will decide together how each story will be presented in the thesis and each participant will determine how we will share their stories with the community. With participants' input and permission, I can lead the development of a booklet with the research findings and audio podcasts of the stories. Funding will be made available for digitizing and web formatting stories and delivering community-based or academic workshops. These materials will be for the participants to share. Additionally, we can hold interactive workshops on Indigenous Identity Reclamation where invited. Participants will have all rights to their stories for future use.

Appendix C: Introduction & Recruitment Script IAG

Skype conversation between researcher Sarah Wright Cardinal and the Indigenous Adoptee Gathering (IAG) committee.

Sarah: Hello everyone. Mahsi for having me on your Skype call today. I asked to be on today's agenda to share with you the research study I am doing for my PhD. As some of you know, I received a SSHRC scholarship for my proposed study on the Sixties Scoop. I recently received ethics approval from the University of Victoria and am proposing the following:

- I am interested in learning about how adults who experienced the Sixties Scoop reclaim their Indigenous identities.
- I would like to work with 6 Indigenous adults who experienced the Sixties Scoop and who view themselves as reclaiming their Indigenous identities.
- I am proposing a narrative inquiry study in which I co-collaborate and co-create the stories with the participants.
- There are three parts to this study: Life-story interviews, a sharing circle, and analysis of the stories:

1. Life- story Interviews: I will travel to each participants respective communities and spend two days with each of them visiting and relationship building. During that visit, I will do a 60-90 minute tape-recorded interview on the topic for my research notes. I am aiming to do these visits between June and August 2015.

2. Sharing circle: I would like to hold a sharing circle in Ottawa with the 6 participants during or after the IAG 2015 (August 25-27, 2015) and I am seeking your permission for this. At the sharing circle we will discuss our experiences and processes of reclamation.

3. Analysis of stories: Once I type my notes from the interviews and the sharing circle, I will send the transcripts to each participant for review and editing. All material that I use in the study will be approved by each participant. Also participants will choose whether they want their names in the study or not.

Sarah: Because participants need to be in a specific space of decolonization, whereby they have done identity reclamation work for themselves, it would be ideal to have IAG organizers and IAG workshop facilitators as participants. If any of you are interested or want more information, let's set up a time to chat. Do you have any thoughts or feedback?

Sarah: I am asking for your help with recruitment. **The recruitment flyer** I emailed to you can be shared with anyone that you think may be interested in participating. My phone number and email address are on the bottom of the flyer. I would also like to ask for permission to hold a sharing circle with the 6 participants concurrent to the upcoming IAG in August.

Given the expansive knowledge of the IAG committee on this topic, questions such as the following may be asked in our skype conversation:

IAG: Why am I using the term Sixties Scoop?

Sarah: I acknowledge that not everyone is comfortable with this term. I will seek to explain the colonial context and the complexities of the terminology in the written section of my thesis that will provide background and context to the study.

IAG: Is this study specifically for First Nations?

Sarah: I am seeking First Nations, Inuit, and Metis adult participants of all genders and social classes from any community in the Canadian jurisdiction at the time of the Sixties Scoop phenomenon (late 1950s through early 1980s).

IAG: Is there community reciprocity?

Sarah: Yes. We will decide together how each story will be presented in the thesis and each participant will determine how we will gift each story to the community. Participants will have all rights to their stories for future use. *Funding will be made available for digitizing and web formatting stories and community workshop deliveries.*

IAG: How are you approaching this study?

Sarah: I will be drawing from the Narrative Inquiry method, as instructed to me in an Education research methods course that focused on decolonizing, feminist, and participatory methodologies. In this qualitative research method, the researcher and participants embark in a process of co-constructing and co-participating stories. Together, we will explore how Indigenous adults reclaim Indigenous identities. I will also be drawing from Indigenous approaches to research and the role of Indigenous academics as discussed in two Indigenous Governance courses that I participated in.

IAG: Who is guiding you?

Sarah: My Elder Advisor, Margaret Thom, of Deh Gah Gotie Koe in Denendeh (Northwest Territories) guides me with ceremonial practices and wellness in preparation for this work. My supervisor Helen Raptis and committee member Anne Marshall are academics who have been engaged in Indigenous community research for many years; my committee member Heidi Kiiwetinepinesik Stark is an Indigenous scholar with focus on Indigenous identity & law and background in Indigenous transracial adoption research. Each of these people will be guides and mentors in my research process.

Sarah: If you would like to hear more about this study or if this study sounds like something you would be interested in, I can forward the consent letter to you that provides more details.

Each IAG member responds yes or no.

For members who respond yes.

Sarah: I will send you the participant consent letter to read over. Afterwhich, we can set up a time to discuss further. Mahsi.

Appendix D: Recruitment Script Participants

Beyond the Sixties Scoop: Reclaiming Indigenous identity, reconnecting to place, and reframing understandings of being Indigenous

Sarah: Hello _____. Mahsi for contacting me. As the IAG committee probably shared with you, I recently received ethics approval from the University of Victoria and am seeking 6 participants for my study about how adults who experienced the Sixties Scoop reclaim their Indigenous identities. Do you view yourself as reclaiming your Indigenous identity?

For people who say yes, continue with the script.

Sarah: There are three parts to this study. As listed in **the recruitment flyer**: Life-story interviews, a sharing circle, and analysis of the stories. The time commitment includes:

1. Life-story Interviews: I will travel to your community and spend two days visiting with you. I will work around your schedule and can come when it's convenient for you in June, July or August. During that visit, I will do a 60-90 minute tape-recorded interview with you about how you reclaimed your Indigenous identity. Meals and honoraria will be provided.
2. Sharing circle: I would like to hold a sharing circle with all 6 participants in Ottawa after our IAG gathering, on the evening of August 27th. At the sharing circle we will discuss our experiences and processes of reclamation. This will likely be a 2-hour circle and I will tape-record it. Accommodation will be provided if you weren't planning to overnight the 27th in Ottawa.
3. Analysis of stories: Once I type my notes from the interviews and the sharing circle, I will send the transcripts to each participant for review and editing. This will take about 3 hours of your time to review and edit. We will also have up to four hours of conversations by phone or Skype to discuss the format and content of the stories. You will approve all the material that I can use in my study from your story. You will choose whether you want your name used or an alias in the study. Gifting including a digital format of your story will be provided.

Sarah: Do you have any questions about the study?

Given the expansive knowledge of potential participants such as IAG workshop facilitators on this topic, questions such as the following may be asked by potential participants:

Participant: Why are you using the term Sixties Scoop?

Sarah: I acknowledge that not everyone is comfortable with this term. I will seek to explain the colonial context and the complexities of the terminology in the written section of my thesis that will provide background and context to the study.

Participant: Is this study specifically for First Nations?

Sarah: I am seeking First Nations, Inuit, and Metis adult participants of all genders and social classes from any community in the Canadian jurisdiction at the time of the Sixties Scoop phenomenon (late 1950s through early 1980s).

Participant: Is there community reciprocity?

Sarah: Yes. We will decide together how each story will be presented in the thesis and each participant will determine how we will gift each story to the community.

Participants will have all rights to their stories for future use. *Funding will be made available for digitizing and web formatting stories and community workshop deliveries.*

Potential Participant: How are you approaching this study?

Sarah: I will be drawing from the Narrative Inquiry method, as instructed to me in an Education research methods course that focused on decolonizing, feminist, and participatory methodologies. In this qualitative research method, the researcher and participants embark in a process of co-constructing and co-participating stories. Together, we will explore how Indigenous adults reclaim Indigenous identities. I will also be drawing from Indigenous approaches to research and the role of Indigenous academics as discussed in two Indigenous Governance courses that I participated in.

Potential participant: Who are you working with from the university?

Sarah: My Elder Advisor, Margaret Thom, of Deh Gah Gotie Koe in Denendeh (Northwest Territories) guides me with ceremonial practices and wellness in preparation for this work. My supervisor Helen Raptis and committee member Anne Marshall are academics who have been engaged in Indigenous community research for many years; my committee member Heidi Kiiwetinepinesik Stark is an Indigenous scholar with focus on Indigenous identity & law and background in Indigenous transracial adoption research. Each of these people will be guides and mentors in my research process.

Sarah: If you would like to hear more about this study or if this study sounds like something you would be interested in, I can forward the consent letter to you that provides more details.

Potential participant responds yes or no.

For people who respond yes.

Sarah: I will send you the participant consent letter to read over. After which, we can set up a time to discuss further. Mahsi.

Appendix E: Participant Verbal Consent

Beyond the Sixties Scoop: Reclaiming Indigenous identity, reconnecting to place, and reframing understandings of being Indigenous

Verbal Consent at Recruitment Stage (see Recruitment scripts)

Sarah: Would you like to take part in this study?

LAG member responds yes or no.

For members who respond yes.

Sarah: I will send you the participant consent letter to read over. We can set-up a time to discuss the details of the project and go over the letter together. Mahsi.

Verbal Consent described in the Participant consent letter (see Participant consent letter)

“To make sure that you continue to agree to participate in this research, I will check in four times during the research process. First, in our initial phone call I will ask if you want to participate and send on the letter you are reading. Second, I will ask whether you want to continue before we set-up the sharing circle. Third, I will ask whether you want to continue when I send the transcripts from the interviews and sharing circle to be analyzed. Fourth, I will ask whether you want your story included when I write the study for publication.”

Appendix F: Ethics certificate of approval

		Office of Research Services Human Research Ethics Board Administrative Services Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada T 250-472-4545 F 250-721-8960 uvic.ca/research ethics@uvic.ca											
<h3>Certificate of Approval</h3>													
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sarah Wright Cardinal UVic STATUS: Ph.D. Student UVic DEPARTMENT: EDCI SUPERVISOR: Dr. Helen Raptis	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER</td> <td>15-162</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Minimal Risk Review - Board members</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:</td> <td>11-Jun-15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>APPROVED ON:</td> <td>11-Jun-15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE:</td> <td>10-Jun-16</td> </tr> </table>			ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER	15-162	Minimal Risk Review - Board members		ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:	11-Jun-15	APPROVED ON:	11-Jun-15	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE:	10-Jun-16
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PROJECT TITLE Beyond the Sixties Scoop: Reclaiming Indigenous identity, reconnecting to place, and reframing understandings of being Indigenous RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER None DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: SSHRC Joseph Armand Bombardies Scholarship (2014)													
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL													
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Modifications To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol. Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date. Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.													
<h3>Certification</h3>													
This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.													
													
Dr. Rachael Scarth Associate Vice-President Research Operations													
Certificate Issued On: 11-Jun-15													

15-162 Wright Cardinal, Sarah

Appendix G: Participant Interview Questions

1. Thank you for taking this time with me. It's been great to spend two days with you here in _____. How long have you lived here?
2. What makes this community home to you?
3. Maybe we can begin by you telling me a bit about the community you were born into and anything you recall about your family before the adoption/ fostering.
4. Can you tell me a bit about the family that adopted/ fostered you? In particular, where were you raised [i.e. in which town]; how many siblings; which religion.
5. When you were being raised by your foster/ adopting family, how would you describe your identity?
6. Did your identity then include a spiritual component? If so, can you describe that?
7. Tell me a bit about how you decided to find out more about your Indigenous roots.
8. In exploring your ancestry, would you say that you have reclaimed your Indigenous identity? In what way(s)?
9. Does this reclamation include connection to place? If yes, define what this means to you.

Appendix H: Participant Sharing Circle Questions

Beyond the Sixties Scoop: Reclaiming Indigenous identity, reconnecting to place, and reframing understandings of being Indigenous

Sharing Circle (group discussion) questions:

1. Thank you for meeting with me again. It's great to be together after such a meaningful gathering this week. Since our last visit, what thoughts do you want to share with the group about your process of reclaiming your Indigenous identity?
2. Are there similarities or differences between your identity today and your identity as you were growing up? In what ways/ explain.
3. What does being Indigenous mean to you today? How is this different from before you started reclaiming your Indigenous identity?