Kindiziyin: Knowing Our Minds and Our Bodies – An Anishinaabe Youth-Led Project on Sexual Wellness and Healthy Relationships

by

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B.Sc.N., Laurentian University, 2014

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

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

Indigenous youth have demonstrated leadership in promoting sexual health in their communities and have asserted the right to sexual wellness, self-determination, and leadership. Yet, achieving this is limited by a lack of youth-focused sexual health programming and insufficient mentorship from their communities. This project engaged 16 Anishinaabe youth aged 15-25 years old, two Elders, and two community service providers in youth-led research in the context of sexual health within their home community of Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, an Anishinaabe community situated on Mnidoo Mnising (Manitoulin Island), Ontario. Using a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach, participants attended two youth-led sharing circles and two participatory data analysis meetings and co-created a report to present back to community. The report will be shared with community stakeholders through youth-designed community sharing methods. This project identified needs for support in building healthy relationships for Anishinaabe youth and how it impacts their overall sexual wellness. Findings suggest that youth can be engaged as decision-makers in their own sexual wellness and their participation in research may lead to positive health outcomes. Findings will be used by the Wiikwemkoong youth and community to help create wholistic youth-led, strengths-based, and Indigenous-focused sexual health resources and/or programming.

Keywords: Indigenous youth, Anishinaabe youth, youth self-determination, YPAR, youth-led research, sexual health and wellness, sharing circles, strengths-based

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G'Chi-Miigwech to the Creator, spirit world, and my ancestors who protect me, remind me of who I am, where I come from, and show me the path forward.

好多謝你。

Dedication

This project is dedicated to Shantle Wemigwans, a.k.a. Snowflake, the star that lights up this universe, a youth who passed onto the spirit world during the time of this project and will always be remembered by her bright open spirit.

And to all the youth who fight so hard every day. You are leaders and you carry all the knowledge within yourselves to produce change, create policies, be badass researchers, and lead us all back to the land and our bodies. Let us clear away the space for you to shine.

You are fierce love and you are your ancestors' wildest dreams.

Chapter 1: Beginning This Journey

Hello/Aanii/Bozhoo, 你好, to all my ancestors, chosen family, and relations. Olvie n'dizhnikaas. I was named Olvie Li in English, but I am also called 李可慧 in Cantonese, which means "the will for wisdom". I am a queer Womxn of Colour[1] with Hong Kong-Chinese migrant roots, a nurse, birth and postpartum doula, community care-worker and organizer, and non-Indigenous researcher.

This document is a journey I will be leading you on about my co-created work with Anishinaabe youth and our *re-search* process (Absolon, 2011). I acknowledge that as an uninvited migrant to Turtle Island, I benefit from historical and modern acts of colonization and displacement of Indigenous Peoples on these lands. This compels me to action to ensure that this research will benefit the community and be done by and with Indigenous communities to make way for the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges (Johnston, McGregor & Restoule, 2018; Smith, 2013). It is with utmost responsibility, respect, and reverence that I carry this work forward. As we begin, I also want to acknowledge my origin story here as it is important to be truthful, accountable, and responsible to the places we come from and the lands we now occupy. I was also taught by my community to begin all my relationships by naming my ancestry and where I come from.

I was born into a family of Hong Kong migrants on the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of the Credit, Huron-Wendat, and Mohawk Anishinaabeg Territories, now known as Tkaronto (Toronto, Ontario). *Tkaronto* means "the place in the water

[1] I use the term *Womxn of Colour* to identify with People of Colour and resist against hegemonic powers that continue to silence and erase Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities. "The spelling of 'Womxn' is to acknowledge the diverse and fluid intersections of ancestry, gender, sexualities, non-binary and queer experiences of every person who identifies with the feminine spirit. This includes all self-identifying 'women', girls, two-spirit, trans, queer, non-binary and queer community members." (Gilpin, 2020, p. 6).

where the trees are standing" and now it is a place where the skyscrapers are standing. My Cantonese-speaking ancestors are from the southern regions of what is now known as Guangdong[2], China; my matrilineage hailing from Sabei Village[3], and my patrilineage hailing from Zhongshan[4]. They are both located in a mountainous region, along the westside of the Pearl River, north-west of Hong Kong, where my grandparents and relatives resided in village dwellings known as 村屋 (village houses). In the 1940s, my maternal and paternal grandparents migrated to British Hong Kong to seek job opportunities in hopes of escaping poverty. Hong Kong is where my parents, their siblings, and my two older siblings were born and it is also where I hold dual citizenship. Hong Kong was a British colony from 1841 to 1997, and its transformation from a collection of poor fishing villages to a troubled city of 7.4 million continues to play out both domestically and globally today. In 1988, my family was part of a mass exodus from Hong Kong to other foreign countries (the colonial state of Canada being one of them) to avoid the encroaching dictatorship of the Chinese government.

My older sisters and I were raised to speak Cantonese along with our traditional foods, medicines, and cultural teachings. We were taught to identify as Hong Kong people (as opposed to 'Chinese' people) as part of our resistance to Chinese imperialism. My maternal and paternal grandparents loosely followed traditional Chinese folk religions which have Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian roots; however, due to the British rule over Hong Kong, both my parents were raised in Christian schools where they converted to Protestant Christianity. After my family

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[2] 廣東; also known as Canton

[3] 沙貝 (an ancestral village)

[4] 中山 (an ancestral village)

migrated, my parents raised us in a tight-knit Chinese-Christian[5] diaspora community in Tkaronto where faith, language and culture were intermingled into our socialization.

For as far back as I can remember, even as a young child, I had a relationship with the Creator, Spirit, and prayer and have considered myself a spiritual person. My Christian faith was foundational in shaping my spirituality, values system, and sense of community and belonging. However, as I learned about the historical harms of the church and missionaries in Wiikwemkoong and other Indigenous communities (e.g. displacement of Indigenous peoples, residential schools, 60's scoop), I began to see the neo-colonial harms of Christian doctrine today and how it has harmed me and those I walk closely with (e.g. Wiikwemkoong youth attending Christian summer day camp). With the guidance of Anishinaabe community members, my eyes started to unveil themselves to the truth of the land and its teachings, and I started to loosen my tightly held Christian beliefs and ideals. The deconstruction of my Christian faith and reconstruction of my spirituality is an important part of my journey in this world as I continue to discover the interconnectedness of the land, spirit world, my ancestors, and those who walk in between.

I moved from Tkaronto to Atikameksheng Anishnawbek (Sudbury, ON) in Northern Ontario, when I was 18 years-old to pursue my Nursing degree at Laurentian University. In 2013, as a young undergraduate student, I moved to Mnidoo Mnising (Manitoulin Island) for a practicum placement in Community Health. In my spare time, I volunteered as a youth programming leader in Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory and built relationships with the youth and community members. Before I even finished my education, I was hired by the

[5] I use the words "Chinese" and "Christian", fully recognizing the inadequacies of these terms to define and capture a people group and religion and/or faith that has complex historical, spiritual, and political constructions. As Christianity was imposed upon Hong Kong by European settlers, Chinese-Christians have become an extension and reflection of a colonial Christian movement.

Wiikwemkoong Band to work as a Community Health Nurse on a temporary nursing license at Naandwechige-gamig (place of healing) Health Centre. In my role, I was assigned with a task to teach sexual health and school-based health education at the local schools from kindergarten to Gr.12. I eventually moved in with an Anishinaabe family (the Manitowabi-Brisards) in the community who taught me the traditional Anishinaabemowin language and the traditional way of life.

Outside of my professional role, I was invited to participate in community life, which included community feasts, ceremonies, programs, family gatherings, and land-based traditions such as harvesting maple syrup, moose hunting, beaver trapping, rabbit snaring, and ice-fishing. I volunteered in community youth programs in drama and dance, summer day camps, and game nights every Friday. I also participated in the annual Wiikwemkoong Water Walk started by community member, Josephine Mandamin, and supported by her niece, youth water ambassador, Autumn Peltier, where different community members took turns walking along the entire shoreline of Wiikwemkoong to pray for the water over a two-week period. The Water Walk made a significant impact on how I view youth leadership and their connection to land and waters, as well as my own connection to Spirit, land, and land stewardship. These were some of the most formative years of my nursing career and of my young adult development. Living in Wiikwemkoong as a young person introduced me to Indigenous ways of knowing, which are distinctly countercultural to imperial “Canadian” ways of knowing, and it reminded me to also return to my own cultural traditions, medicines, and language.

The relationships I built with the youth and community members eventually became an interconnected part of my daily life and I became accountable to those relationships and the knowledges shared with me. I lived in the community for six years until I relocated to Lək̓ʷəŋən

and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples territory to pursue my current graduate work at the University of Victoria. I continue to maintain my relationships in Wiikwemkoong, returning frequently to visit, and still consider the community to be one of my homes and chosen families.

I am honoured and grateful to the traditional teachers, Elders, youth, and community members from the Anishinaabek communities of Mnidoo Mnising who have shared their teachings with me, mentored me, and encouraged me as a migrant to their lands. I know their teachings are sacred and I have a responsibility to protect them, as I am a witness to the truths they tell us about the world. G'Chi-Miigwech.

Purpose of This Journey

This project began with the strengths and leadership of Anishinaabe youth in Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory and their relationships with each other and their community. It was led by youth who had knowledge and wisdom about their own bodies and sexuality and wanted their community's leadership to listen and honour this knowledge. Although conversations around this project began in the spring of 2018, we as the Youth Steering Committee, myself, and community members recognize that the questions we ask and the relationships we build with the land, mind, heart, spirit, and body have existed since time immemorial.

It is shown in literature that Indigenous youth have demonstrated leadership in promoting sexual health in their communities and have asserted the right to sexual wellness (Hardy et al., 2020; Lesperance, 2016; Lys et al., 2018; Native Youth Sexual Health Network et al., 2023). They have shown that their desire for change, self-determination, and leadership amongst their peers has led to positive health outcomes (Eskicioglu et al., 2014; Monchalin et al., 2016). However, there remains a lack of youth-centred sexual health programming from the

Wikwemikong Health Centre, funded by the First Nations Inuit Health Branch, focused on youth strengths, healthy sexualities, and individual capacities within the community of Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory.

Indigenous youth in Canada experience sexually transmitted infections (STIs) at a rate 2.5 times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Monchalin et al., 2016; Restoule et al., 2010). These numbers are significant given Indigenous youth aged 15 to 24 represent 18.2% of the total Indigenous population, and 5.9% of all youth in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). Coupled with these high rates, is limited research about Indigenous youth leadership strengths and capacities in the context of their sexual health (Monchalin et al., 2016). It is important to recognize that with community support, reconnection to traditional teachings, and mentorship from their communities, Indigenous youth can produce knowledge and play active roles as change agents in their communities (Hardy et al., 2020; Monchalin et al., 2016).

The goal of this project was to engage Anishinaabe youth in youth-led research in the context of sexual health within their home community in Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Manitoulin Island, Ontario. An objective of this project was to co-develop a report from knowledge gathered by youth to present back to community to influence future youth sexual health programming within Wiikwemkoong. A review of the literature reveals several social and health challenges faced by Indigenous youth (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2018), within the context of European colonization and the attempted genocide of Indigenous cultures, identities, languages, and dispossession of traditional lands (Loppie & Wien, 2009; Reading & Halseth, 2013; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). However, according to Indigenous scholars, a return of relationality to the land, community, and traditions are contributing to political, social and environmental change, self-identity, and

reconciliation between human relationships (Asch et al., 2018; Borrows, 2018; Justice, 2010; Simpson, 2017). It is critical to recognize that these changes can also lead to a healthy concept of sexuality among Indigenous youth – in a way that resurges their rites of passage (Blair & Claster, 2018; Fox, 2018; Lys et al., 2018; Native Youth Sexual Health Network et al., 2023).

Before we discuss this project and the work led by Wiikwemkoong youth, the following chapter will review the knowledge I gathered from various Indigenous scholars as well as other scholars who have collaborated with Indigenous scholars and communities. This literature review aims to answer the research questions that Wiikwemkoong youth have identified for themselves and their peers in the community. The following research questions were co-developed with seven Anishinaabe youth in Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory in the summer of 2020, addressing their self-determination and their explorations of sexuality within their community (details about this engagement can be found on p.29):

1. What are the sexual health needs of youth in Wiikwemkoong?
2. What do youth need in order to access sexual health resources and supports within Wiikwemkoong?

To also prepare you for the rest of this journey, I will briefly outline how I have organized the six chapters of this thesis. Each chapter follows the flow of the watercolour methodology described in full in Chapter 3, and the title of each chapter also reflects this framework. I chose to organize my writing in this way to demonstrate that Indigenous youth-led research and work based in community relationships are creative, relational, interconnected, and not bound to colonial academic structures, constructs, and language. For the purpose of clarity, I will list the chapters here and its connections to academic language. This current chapter, ‘Chapter 1: Beginning This Journey’ included my self-location/positionality reflection and an

introduction to the goals of this project. The next chapter, ‘Chapter 2: Wet-on-Wet Preparation – Entering the Landscape’ includes my literature review, followed by ‘Chapter 3: Ways We Come to Know and Understand’ which is my methodology and methods section. The results/findings section is included in ‘Chapter 4: Primary Colours – Gathering Knowledge and Findings’, while the data analysis and discussion are included in ‘Chapter 5: Secondary Colours – Meaning Making and Implications’. Finally, my conclusion is wrapped up in ‘Chapter 6: Tertiary Colours – Closing and Continuing the Journey in a Good Way’.

Chapter 2: Wet-on-Wet Preparation - Entering the Landscape

Introduction

In this chapter, I will take you through how I prepared myself for this project, so that you may also prepare yourself to enter this research landscape in a good way. When preparing a watercolour painting, a common technique is the 'wet-on-wet' preparation where the paper or canvas is washed with water prior to applying colours (Roebuck, 2023). This allows for the colours to easily blend and mix together, as water is the main driving force in watercolour paints.

This is my knowledge landscape from which I situate this work within. In the same way as preparing a canvas, I want to prepare you for this journey by sharing the works of other researchers whose knowledges have been woven throughout my discussion (Absolon, 2011; Native Youth Sexual Health Network, n.d.; Simpson, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2014). I drew from their knowledge because I began this work as a young person in a small Anishinaabe community without much experience and exposure to different ways of knowing, even different Indigenous ways of knowing.

When I was teaching sexual health education in Wiikwemkoong, I was initially directed by the First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB), who is governed by Health Canada (an extension of the Canadian Government), to follow the Ontario sexual health curriculum, which at the time, had not been updated in over 15 years (since 1998) and was later updated in 2015 and again in 2019 (Flicker, 2020). In 2014, after my first year of teaching sexual health, I was led by questions of students and guided by Anishinaabe teachings to change my approach to sexual health education and I started to include teachings from Elders and sexual health resources like the Sexy Health Carnival and the 'Burdz n da Beez' video series created by the Union of Ontario Indians in the HIV/AIDS Program at Anishinabek Nation (Anishinabek Nation, 2011;

Lesperance, 2016). It became clear that the experiences of Anishinaabe youth were different than those whom the curriculum was written and developed for. The curriculum was not written for Indigenous students, neither was it written for racialized, disabled, Two-Spirit, queer and trans, and students who did not fit in the colonial standards of norm (Flicker, 2020). There was a disparity in sexual health wellness between Indigenous youth and their white "Canadian" counterparts. This led to my desire to search for more sexual health related research led by Indigenous scholars and research that collaborates with Indigenous communities.

Prior to beginning this project, I searched for literature that aimed to centre the work of Indigenous scholars and Indigenous communities. I used the University of Victoria library database as well as Google Scholar search engine for relevant peer-reviewed journals from credible publishers. I began my search broadly using keywords "Indigenous youth self-determination" and "Indigenous youth leadership" then "Indigenous youth and sexual health". I also narrowed my search to within the community with "Indigenous youth leadership in Wiikwemkoong" to explore what has already been done in the community on this topic, and only used articles situated within "Canada".

I worked closely with my supervisory committee at the time (Dr. Charlotte Loppie, Dr. Jeff Corntassel, and Dr. Renée Monchalin) who facilitated directed studies courses with me and/or met regularly with me to provide book, author, and article recommendations related to my search for literature addressing Indigenous sexual wellness, Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence, and Indigenous youth leadership. The main books and resources recommended to me that further guided my search were publications and resources by the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN); *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know* (Absolon, 2011); *Research as resistance, second edition: Revisiting critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches*

(Strega & Brown, 2015); and *Youth resistance research and theories of change* (Tuck & Yang, 2014). This narrowed my keywords to "Youth Resistance Research" then "Indigenous Youth Participatory Action Research" and helped me to arrive at my methodology and methods for this project. I chose literature published after January 1, 2013, when it was specific to Indigenous youth leadership in sexual wellness, as I began this search in 2018 and used sources within five years. I also included literature that predates 2013, when it was relevant to Indigenous histories and Indigenous knowledge systems not bound to time.

I have organized the literature by themes that came from questions youth have asked me over the years in relation to their sexuality in the following: 1) What is sexuality? 2) What is sexual health? 3) What are healthy relationships? 4) Rites of passage; and 5) The land and our bodies. The framing of these themes have also been informed by my analysis of key themes in literature as well as from community strengths and knowledges that have been shared with me. These themes helped to form the co-created thesis questions during my academic work and formed the backbone of this project.

What is Sexuality?

Sexuality is described by Indigenous scholars as a connection to the land and body (Gilpin, 2020). Indigenous teachings of sexual wellness counter the Western biomedical model by focusing on developing a healthy relationship with the land, ancestral knowledges, traditions, and language (Belcourt, 2019). Since the land and body are interconnected, building consent with the land is building consent with one's body (Simpson, 2014). Therefore, it is critical to recognize that when talking about Indigenous sexuality, it is inseparable from conversations about the land and ancestral teachings.

Indigenous scholars contend that sexuality is grounded in Indigenous paradigms, traditions, ceremonies, stories, and languages (Belcourt, 2019; UBC School of Journalism, 2016). Sexuality for Indigenous youth and their communities is influenced by proximal determinants of Indigenous health, which encompass social determinants of dispossession, displacement, colonization, and barriers to self-determination that influence overall wellbeing and health outcomes (Loppie & Wien, 2009)).

Sexuality for Indigenous folks is also about unlearning colonial and imperialist ways and relearning Indigenous traditional and modern ways of gender identity and expression (FNHA, 2018; Belcourt, 2019). The health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities is connected to and dependent upon the relationships between traditional land, language, and Nationhood (Simpson, 2017). In learning about these connections and healing from the violent disconnections from Indigenous sexual identity, youth can develop a healthier sexuality (Belcourt, 2019). Genuis et al. (2015) and Hunt (2011) advocate for Indigenous youth by contending that youth who have an adequate understanding of self-identity and their peers can change the outcomes of intergenerational trauma.

What is Sexual Health?

Researchers agree that community support and nurturing of sexual health and wellbeing for Indigenous youth requires participation from community members across the life course (Baldy, 2018; Flicker et al., 2015; FNHA, 2018; Logie & Lys, 2015). The FNHA (2018) uses a ‘Sexual Wellbeing Learning Model’ to emphasize traditional knowledges around sexual health and healthy sexuality in Indigenous communities. The model outlines four Indigenous core values: protecting communities, healthy relationships, identity, and adulthood and rites of

passage (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 : 'Sexual Wellbeing Learning Model' by FNHA (2018)

Protecting communities refers to protecting one's community for future generations by learning about communicable diseases like sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and sexually transmitted blood borne infections (STBBIs), how to protect oneself and others from STIs/STBBIs, and where to access testing and treatments (FNHA, 2018). Sexual health also means building balanced healthy relationships with self and others; knowing oneself and learning about gender identity; and honouring adulthood and rites of passages (FNHA, 2018).

In 2015, Logie and Lys (2015) involved LGBTQ-2S Indigenous youth and service providers in conversations about youth sexual health in the Northwest Territories. They found

that youth desire improvement in youth programs, service delivery, and community members who understand their needs for sexual wellness. They also suggest that these conversations and teachings, as well as the development of learning modules, should involve youth and those who have an impact on youth (Lys et al., 2018). Therefore, sexual health is intersectional and requires an integration of community members of all ages to participate and engage with building a healthy concept of sexuality.

What are Healthy Relationships?

Healthy relationships refer to living in a good way with those that one is in a relationship with, which includes developing healthy boundaries, consent, self-care, and conflict resolution (FNHA, 2018). In a study by Flicker et al. (2015), Elders were credible sources of information as they were knowledge keepers, protectors, ethics consultants, mediators, and leaders in ceremony. In the context of youth sexual wellness, Elders were important supporters of positive relationships and helped to guide the research in a culturally safe way (Flicker et al., 2015).

In the context of their communities, Indigenous youth experience relationships differently from non-Indigenous settler youth due to the disrupting forces of colonization on traditional Indigenous family structures (Hunt, 2011). The forceful displacement of Indigenous families has contributed to community-wide intergenerational trauma and post-traumatic stress, affecting one's capacity to build healthy relationships (Reading & Halseth, 2013; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). In an article by Charleyboy (2014), the complexities of Indigenous relationships are discussed when it comes to blood quantum, status/non-status, cultural preservation, and who to marry in order to continue one's Indigenous bloodlines. Although these dynamics are complex, some agreed that the most important factor is how the next generation is raised and passing on their relationships to culture (Charleyboy, 2014). Hence, healthy

relationships for Indigenous people are connected to healing the relationships between traditional land, language, and nationhood (Simpson, 2017).

Rites of Passage

Rites of passage and adulthood refer to unlearning shame about sexuality and reclaiming Indigenous celebrations and ceremonies that honour changes and transitions from adolescence to adulthood (Fox, 2017; FNHA, 2018; Risling, 2018). In 2018, Cutcha Risling Baldy returned to her community to revitalize and decolonize Indigenous feminisms and coming-of-age ceremonies. She found that bringing back her tribe's Flower Dance ceremony helped challenge, "(re)write… (re)rite… and (re)right" the inaccurate narratives of menstruation, gender, and coming-of-age (p. 30).

In Katsitsionni Fox's (2017) short documentary, *Ohero:kon – Under the Husk,* two Mohawk youth participate in a four-year rite of passage to become Mohawk women. It is seen that they are supported by Elders, aunties, and community members holding ceremony and offering teachings for their journey. Years later, they return to community and pass on these teachings and their experiences to other youth preparing for their own rites of passage. At the end of the film, the two Mohawk women are seen returning to their language and understanding the importance of language revitalization as part of this journey (Fox, 2017). In looking at revitalizing rites of passage, it is important to note that youth play an important role in building community capacity, promoting healthy ways of being, and changing historical narratives to build a legacy of healthy relationships to the land and the body for future generations (Genuis et al., 2015; Lys et al., 2018; Native Youth Sexual Health Network, 2023).

The Land and Our Bodies

In 2016, Women's Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network developed a report and toolkit to mobilize and bring awareness to environmental violence and injustice of Indigenous lands and its harms on Indigenous women and youth. It contends that the health of Indigenous people is connected to the health of the environment, their spirituality, and their rights to self-determination in their communities. The report draws an important link between consent of the land and consent of the body where systems of power that violate consent of Indigenous lands also disrespect bodily autonomy and consent of women and youth; as quoted in the report, "the land is our Mother, so when we lose value for the land… people lose value for the women" (WEA & NYSHN, 2016, p. 4).

Simpson (2014) also discusses the intimacy of relationships Indigenous people build with the land, family, and community and how they produce knowledge, love, and compassion. The knowledge and intelligence gained from these relationships require a committed and consensual agreement. In understanding the agreement Indigenous youth have with the land, they can develop a greater understanding of consent, reciprocity, and sexuality between their human-to-human relationships (Simpson, 2014; 2017; WEA & NYSHN, 2016).

Conclusion

In summary of this chapter, Indigenous identity, sexual health, and healthy relationships are interwoven into the land, spirituality, and traditional teachings. For Indigenous youth, sexual health means self-determination and returning to ceremony supported by their Elders and community. Sexual health and identity are interdependent and embedded into both traditional and contemporary Indigenous ways of being. As a non-Anishinaabe community member who taught sexual health within the community and who is now co-researching sexual health and

wellness with Anishinaabe youth, it is vital that I approach this work centering Indigenous identity as a complex interconnected whole.

This knowledge landscape has helped me to form the backbone of this project and taught me to work within the ethics of the youth and community by following the leadership of Indigenous knowledges. I will be sharing how I approached this in the following chapter centering specifically Anishinaabe knowledges. I want to acknowledge that the lens I used to look at the above literature and the work of those before me is primarily coloured by my relationships in the community and the knowledges shared with me. Absolon states “each person carries a genealogy of knowledge, and location involves acknowledgement and recognition of those who came before you and who share their knowledge to help you build your knowledge bundle” (2011, p.8).

Chapter 3: Ways We Come to Know and Understand

In this chapter, I will lead you through the methodological process the youth and I took to complete this work and the knowledge of relatives we rooted ourselves in. First, I will discuss the methodological framework for this project drawing on the work by Kathy Absolon (2011) and how we centered Anishinaabe worldviews. Second, I will describe the project and its context in community. Lastly, through a YPAR framework developed by Eve Tuck (2014), I will explain the step-by-step process of how Wiikwemkoong youth gathered information about themselves and each other to answer the guiding questions, as well as how they analyzed the information and made meaning from the answers.

This work has been influenced and led by Wiikwemkoong youth since the beginning of our relationships when I moved to Wiikwemkoong as a youth myself. Hence, the methodology used in this project was selected to reflect youth leadership and self-determination especially in the context of Anishinaabe teachings. It is important to note that I am placing myself in the research as a former non-Anishinaabe youth working with the youth who holds significant power and privilege in relation to the youth. Firstly, I am a migrant and settler of colour in the community and did not grow up in Wiikwemkoong and therefore do not share the same lived experiences as the youth, specifically around inherited Indigenous intergenerational trauma; secondly, I was employed by the band to work as a nurse and to serve the youth in this capacity as a health educator and therefore held significant institutional and financial mobility and power; thirdly, although I was a youth when I began this work, I am between five to ten years older than the youth and hence have always been seen as an older “sister” and mentor to them. By naming my position, power, financial wealth, and privilege in relation to the youth in this work and in this community, I want to demonstrate transparency and humility and that I am compelled to do

this work with utmost responsibility, relational accountability, love, and care (Loppie & Barker, 2016).

During my early years teaching sexual health at Junior School and Pontiac School (primary and middle schools in Wiikwemkoong), I collected anonymous questions in a "Burning Questions" box at the end of every class (these were questions related to the lesson or any questions youth had regarding their sexuality). I would take the questions back to the office and prepare answers to present at the beginning of the next class. I quickly learned that young ones in the community had many questions, and they were not afraid to ask them. These questions soon entered my personal life in the community when youth would see me at ceremonies, social gatherings, the grocery store, and even in my Facebook inbox.

The youth viewed me as an educator in the community, and at the same time, they also saw me as their peer, someone who was accessible and relatable when it came to their experiences of puberty, growing up, and building relationships. Over my years in Wiikwemkoong, youth were beginning to take more precedence in their leadership and they were included in community leadership roles more and more. This was seen in the Youth Council which was formed to create youth representation on band council and to include their voices in community decisions. There was also an annual summer youth conference which was a summer fair that was organized by a youth committee. In general, youth leadership was increasingly being recognized in the community, and yet their voices were still missing when it came to sexual health programming.

Anishinaabe Methodology

I selected Anishinaabe kwe, Kathy Absolon and her work to guide this project's methodology (Absolon, 2011). It was important for me as a non-Anishinaabe community

member to choose an Anishinaabemowin-speaking scholar's methodology to guide my process and to honour community members and Elders who requested the inclusion of Anishinaabe language and spirituality into the teachings of this project (Absolon, 2011). Before moving forward with these methodologies and models, I presented them to the Youth Steering Committee, Chief and Council, and Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Committee (MARRC), the local ethics board, and obtained feedback, approval, and consent from all members (see Chapter 3, "Engagement Process", for more details).

Absolon (2011) uses the analogy of a flower to illustrate "wholistic worldviews and methodology" for an Indigenous *Re-searcher* (p. 47; Figure 2). *Re-search* is defined as "to look again" and reflects how Indigenous people have been searching, harvesting, and gathering information for generations before Western approaches of 'research' were introduced (Absolon, 2011, p.19). Indigenous research begins with roots within the community (e.g., the land, traditions, languages, ceremonies, etc.), then the situated self (the flower centre) is placed in relation to what is being searched for, leading to a journey of transformation (illustrated by the growth of leaves) that is guided by community supports (the stem) and methods of knowledge searching (petals), which are all nurtured within an environment (e.g., academia, society, policies, etc.). Absolon (2011) asserts that Indigenous knowledges and research methods must belong within the community to prevent dominant non-Indigenous research approaches, which are often neo-colonial and capitalistic, from perpetuating within Indigenous communities.

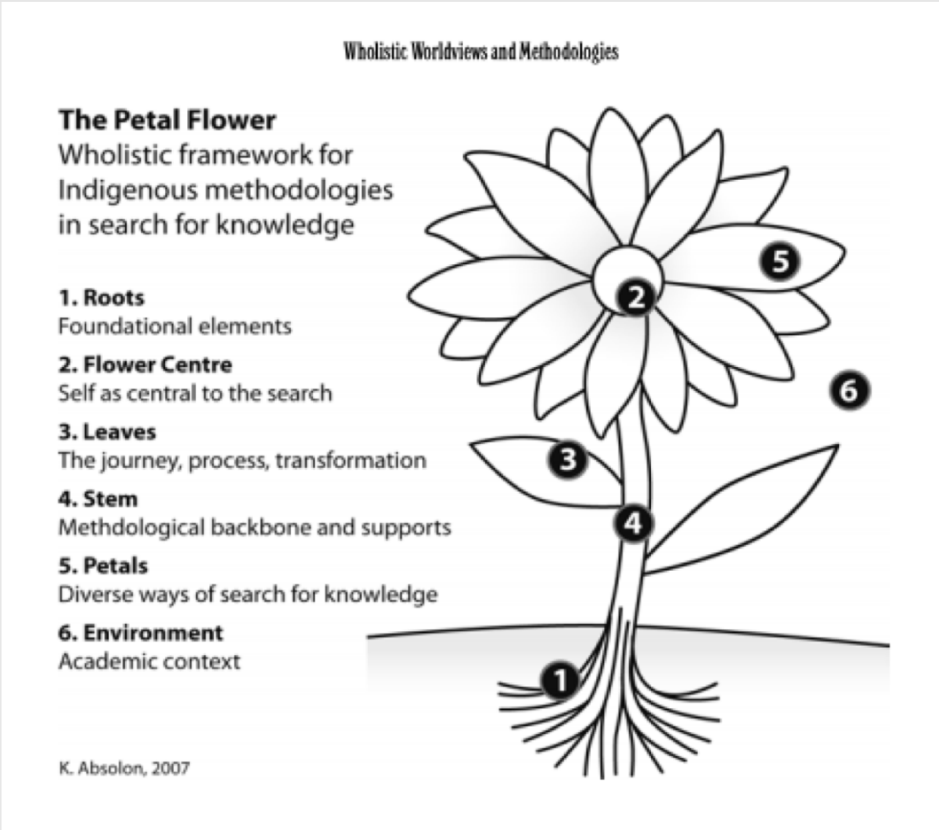

Figure 2: Wholistic Worldviews and Methodologies (Absolon, 2011, p. 47)

Indigenous research finds its authenticity and credibility within the relationships, lived experiences, and ancestral knowledges of Indigenous communities (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2013; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in research uphold the importance of relationality, resurgence, and reciprocity and its interconnectedness to land and language (Asch et al., 2018; Borrows, 2018; Corntassel, 2012; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2013). Indigenous epistemologies are rooted in the ties to the land, reverence for the Spirit and ancestors, and earth-centeredness (Absolon, 2010, 2011).

In the same way, Wiikwemkoong youth facilitators in this project began with their roots grounded in community and ceremony. For example, they began each circle with an opening prayer and smudge to cleanse and open the space in a good way (roots). They then situated themselves by facilitating a check-in with each person who shared how they were feeling that

day (flower centre). The youth facilitators then led an ice-breaker game to further help build relationships and create laughter. The discussions that followed reflected a journey and process of transformation that was supported by the backbone of Elders and community care providers (leaves and stem). Finally, this was all held together by the youth's curiosity and desire to keep searching for knowledge in the context of their community's governance and leadership (petals and environment).

Community Setting

Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory is a "proud, progressive, and prosperous" Anishinaabe First Nation situated in the Great Lakes of Ontario on Mnidoo Mnising (Manitoulin Island) whose land is home to the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi Peoples. The community has a population of over 4000 residents, and a band membership of over 8000 members (Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, 2020). The community provides a diverse array of resources and programming for its members including social housing, health services, tribal police services, employment services, food bank, shelters for victims of intimate partner violence, crisis support team, and schools from Early Years to Adult Education, to name a few (Wikwemikong Health Centre, 2020).

Within Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, there has been a resurgence of language, land-based education, and youth-focused initiatives (Ritchie et al., 2015). In particular, the Wiikwemkoong Youth Council, Wiikwemkong Health Centre, Wasse-Naabin Youth Centre, and local theatre group, Debajehmujig Storytellers, are focused on youth-led projects and health-related programming in the community (Debajehmujig Theatre Group, n.d.; Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, 2020).

Methods – Watercolour Framework

This project used a process guided by Tuck and Yang's (2014) YPAR methods that centre Indigenous youth resistance. I chose youth resistance research methods because it stood out to me as a process that truly centres Indigenous youth leadership and their participation, which is the foundation of this project (Tuck, 2009; Tuck et al., 2008). YPAR is a strengths and community-based approach that shifts power and creates space for reciprocal relationships and capacity-building amongst Indigenous youth and their communities (Holkup et al., 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2014). YPAR engages youth as co-researchers and partners through the entire research process (Liebenberg et al., 2017, 2018). It allows youth to challenge assumptions and knowledges traditionally held by those in power in academia so that decisions about youth are not made without youth voices (Tuck & Yang, 2014). YPAR is an approach in which research designs and questions are co-constructed with youth and one that sees youth as active authors of their own stories (Tuck & Mackenzie, 2016).

In 2008, Tuck, a Unangax̂ youth resistance researcher and her youth co-researchers used a box of watercolour paints to frame a YPAR methodology (Figure 3). In it, the main colours (primary colours) are chosen first to paint the big picture in order to provide clarity and harmony. The secondary colours are then used to blend with the primary colours to create depth and complexity in the work. The third step is in mixing colours to create new shades. These hybrid colours make the painting, or YPAR, come alive. Finally, the water in watercolour painting represents the youth participation. Water moves the pigment from box, to brush, to page; "water is life" (Jewett & Garavan, 2018). Youth participation is therefore the life-force that drives this methodology (Tuck & Yang, 2014; Tuck et al., 2008).

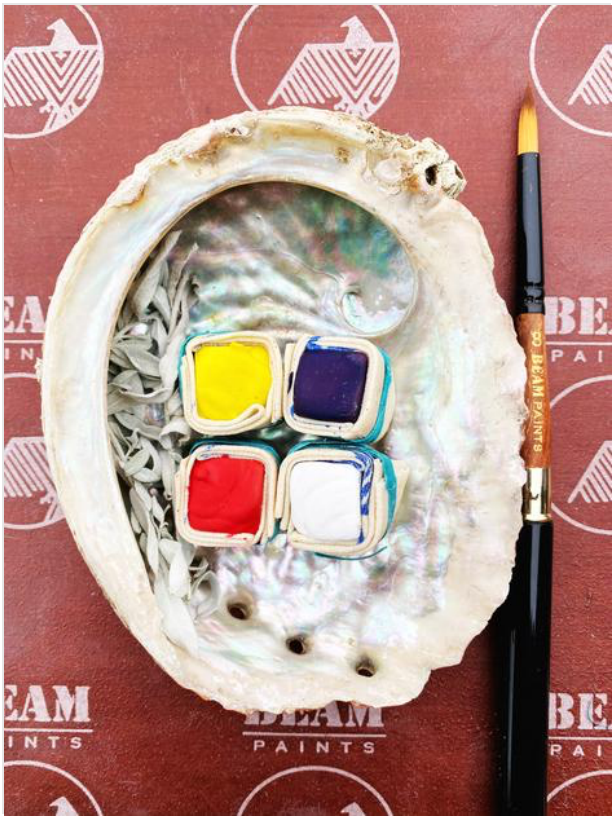

Figure 3: Four Directions Watercolour Paints by Beam Paints (Migwans Beam, 2020)

In this project, Wiikwemkoong youth and I used the 'watercolour' framework to guide our youth-led collaborative project (Tuck & Yang, 2014). To understand how the YPAR methodology was used, I created a watercolour framework through my painting, called *The Three Spirits* (Figure 4). I named this piece in the winter of 2020, during a time of deep grief and strength when I was experiencing a bottomless depression at the start of COVID-19, on the frontlines of public health nursing, and when I joined Indigenous youth in defending Wet'suwet'en law and land rights at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. At the time, this painting represented to me the three elements of water, earth, and fire and embodied their strength and spirit protecting and guiding me, and ultimately, protecting and guiding this work. The framework has been broken down into 5 phases:

Phase 1: Wet-on-Wet Wash - Preparation**:** In my watercolour painting, I began by preparing the paper with a clear water wash, a technique called *wet-on-wet* that allows the wet paint to blend and spread in a free-flowing way on wet paper. This represents the phase of the project where I consulted Wiikwemkoong youth, community members, and stakeholders prior to writing my thesis proposal and subsequent ethics proposals both to the University of Victoria Human Ethics Research Board (HREB) and the Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Committee (MARRC).

Phase 2: Primary Colours - Data Gathering**:** Using Japanese Washi tape, I created three panels and filled each with a primary watercolour: red, blue, and yellow. This represents the phases where youth facilitators led two sharing circles to answer the guiding research questions, and later a youth-developed survey feedback form for participants.

Phase 3: Secondary Colours - Data Analysis and Interpretation**:** Next, I blended each primary colour with another primary colour and created three secondary colours: orange, violet, green. This represents the phase where the data gathered from the sharing circles was analyzed through collaboration with youth participants and stakeholders in a participatory thematic data analysis process.

Phase 4: Tertiary Colours - Returning to Community**:** Then, in the natural flow and exchange of the primary and secondary watercolours, new shades were revealed creating three tertiary colours: orange-yellow, violet-blue, blue-green. This represents the phase where the knowledge and findings of this project were reviewed with the youth research team to ensure it aligned with their experiences.

Phase 5: Fire, Water, Earth - Knowledge Sharing**:** The final result of my painting illustrated three elements: fire, water, and earth. This represents how the final results were shared

with community members through various methods that the youth chose to share their findings. Arts-based methods were presented to youth as an option; however, youth had the autonomy to choose a method that fit best for them.

Figure 4: "The Three Spirits" Watercolour Painting by Olvie Li

Study Design

The 5 phases in the watercolour framework are provided below in detail following a brief timeline:

Watercolour Study Design and Timeline

Table 1

Phase	Activity	Description	Timeline
1	**Preparation** "Wet-on-Wet" water wash	Community engagement and consultation	April 2018 – ongoing
		Youth Advisory Committee formed	May 2020
		MARRC (Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Committee) – Approval received	August 2022
		HREB – Approval received	February 2023
		Community recruitment began	April – May 2023
2	**Data Gathering** "Primary Colours"	Youth-Led Sharing Circles (x2)	May 26 & 29, 2023
3	**Data Analysis and Interpretation** "Secondary Colours"	Collaborative participatory thematic analysis – generating codes and themes	June 12 & 13, 2023
4	**Returning to Community** "Tertiary Colours"	Met with youth and stakeholders to review results	May 2024
5	**Knowledge Sharing** "Fire, Water, Earth"	Youth created projects using arts-based methods to share knowledge with community	August-September, 2024

Phase 1: The 'Wet-on-Wet' Wash – Preparation (Engagement and Consultation)

Just as the *wet-on-wet* technique is an important step in preparing the painting, it is important to note that community engagement with this project began long before the formation

of this proposal and the thesis questions. My relationship with Wiikwemkoong youth and experiences in school-based sexual health education in the community helped inform me of questions that youth had regarding sexual wellness and land-based learning, as well as their desires for change, self-determination, and mentorship. I engaged Wiikwemkoong community members and stakeholders via in-person meetings, phone calls, emails, text messages, and social media direct messages prior to pursuing graduate studies, throughout my master's coursework, during the thesis proposal writing process, and throughout the engagement with youth in the project.

Engagement Process

The following is a summary of my engagement with community members between April 2018 – February 2023 (with dialogues are that ongoing):

1. **April 2018-ongoing**: Wiikwemkoong youth informed me that they desired change, but needed money, employment, tools, resources, and people to believe in them.
2. **May 2018-ongoing**: Elders, aunties, uncles, and community members informed me that youth need more traditional mentorship and appropriate programming (i.e., youth take on leadership positions in the community, however, do not have access to traditional teachings or programs that meet their needs).
3. **December 2019**: Debajehmujig Theatre Group and Youth Mental Health Workers informed me that they would like to see more youth-engaged community projects and programming that allow youth to take leadership roles.
4. **January-February 2020**:
    - Wiikwemkoong Chief and Council and Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Ethics Board members informed me of the processes of facilitating

research and/or projects in the community (e.g., timelines of submitting ethics applications and who to consult prior to beginning the project).

- Youth Council and Wasse-Naabin Youth Centre members informed me that Wiikwemkoong youth have the self-determination to voice what they want in the community, but lack consistency in their participation (e.g., youth centre programming is tailored to what youth say they want; however, youth still do not attend their programs on a regular basis).
- Wasse-Abin High School teachers informed me that youth know what they want but need more autonomy and support from their community (e.g., youth are able to express their desires for change in their grade 9 art class, however, there are not enough community spaces, resources, and opportunities for youth to create change).

5. **May-November 2020**: A youth advisory committee was formed to steer this project, co-create the research questions, and inform the proposal writing process. I contacted seven youth with whom I had pre-existing relationships and who were interested in engaging in a discussion about a youth-led research project in Wiikwemkoong. Between May and November 2020, I facilitated three Zoom sessions, as well as one-on-one phone calls and video chats with the youth. The final session was an arts-based creative writing session where youth advisory committee members reflected on questions about their relationship to community, their bodies, and the land. The guiding research questions (Appendix A) were also developed from this process. Each youth was given a $50.00 honorarium for each session (funded by University of Victoria Internal Research/Creative Project grant through supervisory committee member, Dr. Renée Monchalin). The youth understood

that these conversations would help inform the proposal, which I presented to my thesis supervisory committee, the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (HREB), Chief and Council, and Manitoulin Anishnaabek Research Review Committee (MARRC).

6. **2021**: The community was under strict COVID-19 protocols and restrictions were placed on community-based research for community protection. The community hired me back as a Community Health Nurse to help with COVID-19 community testing and contact tracing. I took one year leave of absence from my thesis work at the University of Victoria during this time to care for myself and community members. I also took this time to reconnect with youth, Elders, and community members.
7. **August 9, 2022**:
    - I received approval from MARRC to move forward with the project.
    - I attended the Health & Social Well-Being Committee meeting (one of the pillars of the Chief and Council. Refer to Figure 5 and 6 for governance structure) and presented the project to members at the meeting. There was a motion to move the project forward to the next Chief and Council meeting.
8. **August 22, 2022:** I attended the Band Council Meeting where the outgoing Chief and Council and incoming Chief and Council met for the first time. I received approval from both Councils to move forward with the project.
9. **September 27, 2022:** Once approval was obtained from Chief and Council, I completed a "Research Agreement Form" which outlines the research relationship between myself, the University of Victoria, and Naandwechige-gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre). It

was signed by myself, the Health Director, and a youth from the Youth Steering Committee (Appendix B).

10. **February 2023:** I received approval from the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) to move forward with community engagement.
11. **February-May 2023:** After ethics approval, I began meeting with different community members, leaders, and stakeholders to spread awareness and gather support and teachings for the project. This included Anishinaabemowin language teachers, Elders, Health Centre service providers and managers, youth workers, youth leaders, sweat lodge keepers, and cultural teachers.

Phase 2: The Primary Colours – Recruitment and Data Gathering

The primary colours are the most vibrant and foundational colours in my painting. In the same way, the youth-led sharing circles were the focus and foundation of this project.

Recruitment (April – May 2023). This project engaged 16 Wiikwemkoong youth participants, aged 15-25 years old, two Elders, and two Wikwemikong Health Centre staff residing in Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory. Recruitment was done with the help of the Wasse-Naabin Youth Centre staff, Wikwemikong Health Centre, and by the Youth Steering Committee. A youth artist from the Youth Steering Committee was hired to create artwork for the poster and promotional materials (Appendix D). We invited Anishinaabe youth in the community from a spectrum of sexual identities, including those who identify as Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and non-binary with fluid sexualities and genders to participate in the research. Posters were circulated on the Youth Centre's Facebook page; posts were shared on the project's Instagram account @wikyyouthvoices; emails were sent within the Health Centre listserv; and a snowball recruitment method was used by steering committee

members who recruited other qualifying youth through word of mouth and social networking within their peer groups (Browne, 2005; Intahchomphoo, 2019). An online SurveyMonkey consent form was sent to interested participants (Appendix C) and the link also posted on the Instagram account. Options for consent included both verbal and written consent. The Instagram account was managed by myself and members of the Youth Steering Committee (Appendix D) and was used for recruitment as well as providing project updates.

After obtaining consent via each participants' preferred consent format (see Appendix C), participants participated in two sharing circles (Phase 2, May 2023), two participatory data analysis meetings (Phase 3, June 2023), one report review meeting (Phase 4, May 2024), and had the option to participate in the dissemination of results (Phase 5, August 2024). The youth were informed that participation in any part of the phases is entirely voluntary. The youth participants were given $50 honorarium for each of the five planned meetings with the opportunity to receive up to $250 in honorarium for attending all 5 meetings. Two youth facilitators in each meeting were given an extra $50 honorarium on top of their $50 participation honorarium for a total of $100 per meeting facilitated. Each meeting included a draw for prizes with a final raffle prize for an iPhone 14.

Two Youth-Led Sharing Circles (May 2023). Members of the youth steering committee volunteered to facilitate each sharing circle. Two different youth facilitators were selected for each sharing circle. Two Anishinaabe Elders from the community were selected by the youth steering committee to be present to listen and support. Two Wikwemikong Health Centre service providers (one community health nurse, one social worker) were also present to provide support. The circles were approximately 2 hours in length and held after school and work hours. Each circle began with an opening prayer and smudge led by the youth facilitator,

followed by a check-in and icebreaker game. For the second sharing circle, two youth participants did not return, and two new youth participants joined; in addition, one new Elder and one new service provider joined for the second sharing circle (see Chapter 4 for more participant details).

A set of group agreements were co-created at the first circle, and at the second circle the agreements were reviewed and revised where necessary (see Figure 7-9). Then two sets of guiding questions were presented:

1) What is a healthy relationship? What does a healthy relationship mean to you?
2) How do you build a healthy relationship? What kinds of tools/resources do you need?

These questions were then reviewed (one set of questions per sharing circle) and each participant had the opportunity to reflect and respond through art and writing on index cards (Appendix A). Participants took turns reading their cards and shared their reflections and then placed the card in the centre of the circle. Each circle ended with a closing check-out and prayer led by the youth facilitator. Oral contributions during each circle were either audio recorded or documented through handwritten notes according to the preferences of each participant. All audio recordings and handwritten notes included Elders and service providers contributions and were later transcribed and de-identified by myself. Youth reviewed transcripts after this process, hence, were not able to edit and amend their statements (see Chapter 4 for more participant details).

Phase 3: The Secondary Colours – Data Analysis and Interpretation

In my watercolour painting, I mixed each primary colour with another primary colour: red with yellow, blue with red, and yellow with blue, creating secondary colours: orange, violet, and green. This represents the participatory data analysis process the youth engaged with to make meaning of their experiences from the sharing circles.

Preliminary Thematic Analysis. Before analyzing the data as a group, I took two weeks to transcribe the audio recordings from the sharing circles. I familiarized myself with the data first by coding the two transcripts using NVivo Software, a computer assisted QDA software (NVivo, 2021). Coding allowed me to generate larger preliminary themes in the data. I approached coding drawing from common patterns and themes I have identified in my literature review. After identifying preliminary themes through a qualitative thematic analysis, I took my findings back to the group to prepare for the participatory data analysis stage below (Liebenberg et al., 2018).

Participatory Data Analysis Meetings (June 2023). The youth participants, Elders, and one service provider from the sharing circles returned two weeks later for two meetings, approximately 2 hours each day to participate in data analysis. The same participants participated in both days, only one participant was new from the sharing circles and two participants from the sharing circles did not participate (see Chapter 5 for more details on participants). During the participatory data analysis, insight and feedback obtained from youth were collectively vetted and agreed upon by youth participants, ensuring consent was obtained before moving forward, honouring their ownership and control over their own data, as well as their stories and self-determination (Liebenberg et al., 2018). Each participant received a $50 honorarium for each day ($100 in total for both days).

On the ***first day of data analysis,*** I facilitated a workshop for the youth participants to learn how to collaboratively analyze data (see Chapter 5 for more details). On the ***second day of data analysis,*** we engaged in a process of categorizing the raw data into common themes and then assigning codes to them. This process was informed by the steps of a thematic analysis according to Liebenberg et al. (2018) and honours YPAR methods and Anishinaabe ways of

knowing by centering the leadership of youth participants, engaging them as changemakers, and prioritizing their process of *re-searching,* "to look again", amongst their knowledge landscape in the context of their community (Absolon, 2011, p.18; Tuck & Yang, 2014). After reviewing the themes, we used a mapping activity to draw relationships between themes to generate codes (Liebenberg et al., 2015; Padgett, 2012).

Phase 4: The Tertiary Colours – Returning to Community

In my watercolour painting, the tertiary colours were created by blending the primary and secondary colours. In the same way, new thoughts and ideas were created by returning to the participants with the results generated from Phase 2 and 3. Following the two-day participatory data analysis session, I generated a report in a graphic that summarized the themes and reflections of the participants. ***I then virtually met with the participants a fifth time.*** This meeting was approximately 1.5 hours in duration and was conducted online via Zoom with the same youth participants who were involved in Phase 2 sharing circles, as well as the community stakeholders who were involved in Phase 2 sharing circles. Each youth participant received a $50 honorarium for this meeting. Through a collaborative approach, we reviewed the report and summary of the major themes that the youth indicated in Phase 3 meetings. This provided youth and community stakeholders the opportunity to determine if the themes still aligned with the sharing circles and survey results, if they had feedback on the overall report design, and provided an opportunity for any final edits and amendments to the themes (Liebenberg et al., 2018; Padgett, 2012).

After group consensus, I invited the youth participants from the Phase 2 sharing circles to brainstorm possible ideas for the community Knowledge Sharing phase. I proposed possible examples of arts-based methods to the participants as ways of knowledge sharing. Participants

will have the opportunity to use a creative method in sharing their findings with the community. More information will be shared on this in the next section.

Phase 5: Fire, Water, Earth – Knowledge Translation and Dissemination

In the final stage of "The Three Spirits" watercolour painting, I applied three techniques (70% isopropyl alcohol, Pacific Sea salt, and plastic cling wrap) to create the textures of three elements: fire, water, earth. The process of bringing together these elements in a visually enhancing way represents the final stage of this project where youth were given the opportunity to bring together their knowledges and share it within their community.

The co-developed report (Appendix I) was disseminated to Wiikwemkoong community members and local service providers and be made available online. The final results were disseminated and shared in the community by the youth participants from the Phase 2 sharing circles, based on what they decided was the most effective method of dissemination. I proposed ideas of theatre arts, dance, storytelling, and/or other forms of art as a method to share their findings (Strega & Brown, 2015; Wilson, 2008). Theatre-based interventions and arts-based methods have been well established as effective techniques to share information, promote healthy behaviours, enhance healthy attitudes, and heal from trauma (Hunt, 2011; Taboada et al., 2016). I proposed that the youth use social media as a platform to share their knowledge as researchers suggest social media as an important platform for social change (Intahchomphoo, 2019; University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board, 2020). It is important to note that youth participants were supported to exercise their sovereignty over which method of knowledge sharing feels safe, accessible, and relevant for them. It is vital to this project's process that the autonomy, consultation, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility of youth are honoured as this

ensures the research is led by youth and benefits youth (Liebenberg et al., 2017, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

This project was based out of the University of Victoria and informed by community stakeholders, Band Council policies within Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, and the Manitoulin Anishinabek Research Review Committee (MARRC). Most importantly, the research attempted to honour the needs of Anishinaabe youth, community protocols, as well as mandates of the Chief and Council (see Figure 5 and 6), specifically the "Health & Social Well-Being" pillar (Wikwemikong Unceded Territory, 2020). In reference to Figure 6, there are seven pillars in the "Wiikwemkoong Pillar System": Leadership; Health & Social Wellbeing; Finance & Administration; Economy & Resources; Arts, Culture & Education; Governance; and Community Services (Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, 2020). Each pillar oversees different programs and organizations that provide services within the community.

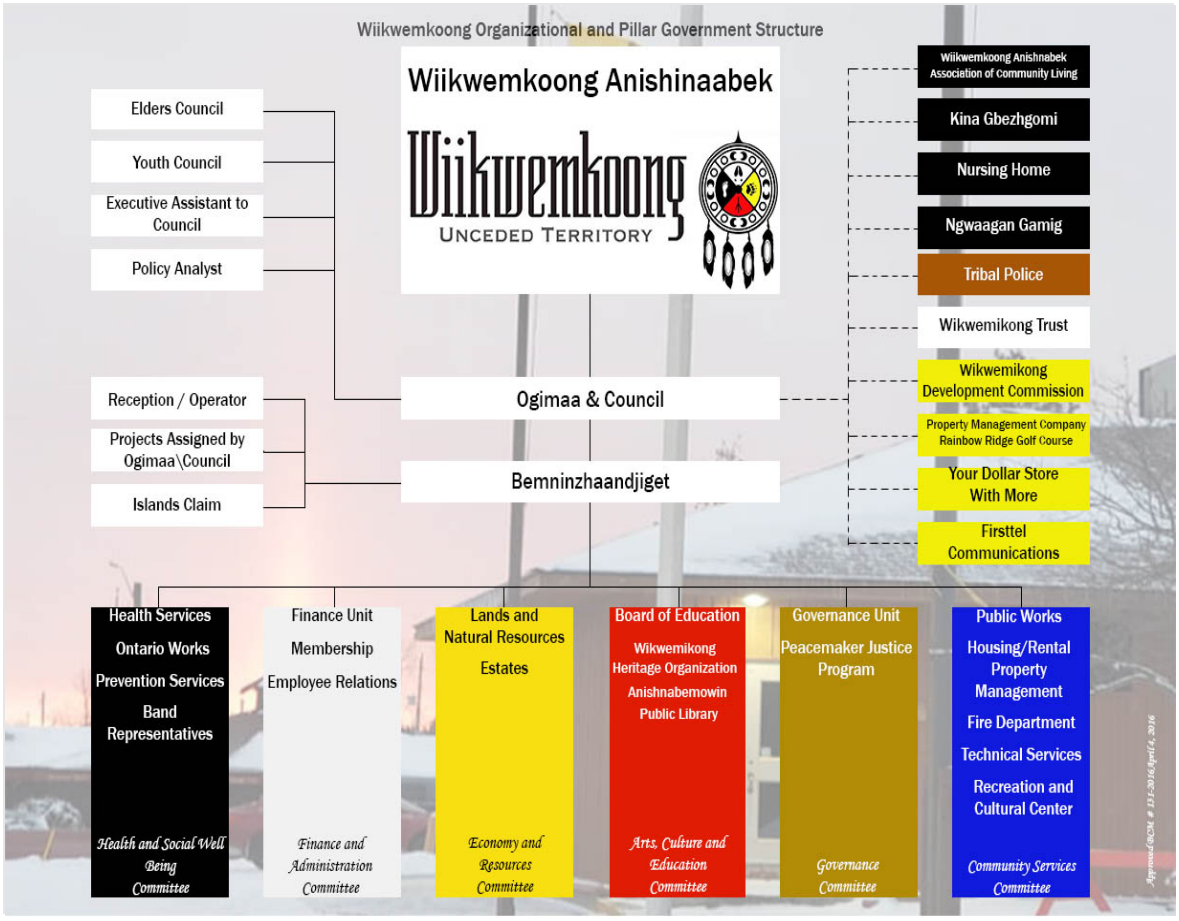

Figure 5: Wiikwemkoong Organizational and Pillar Government Structure (Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, 2020)

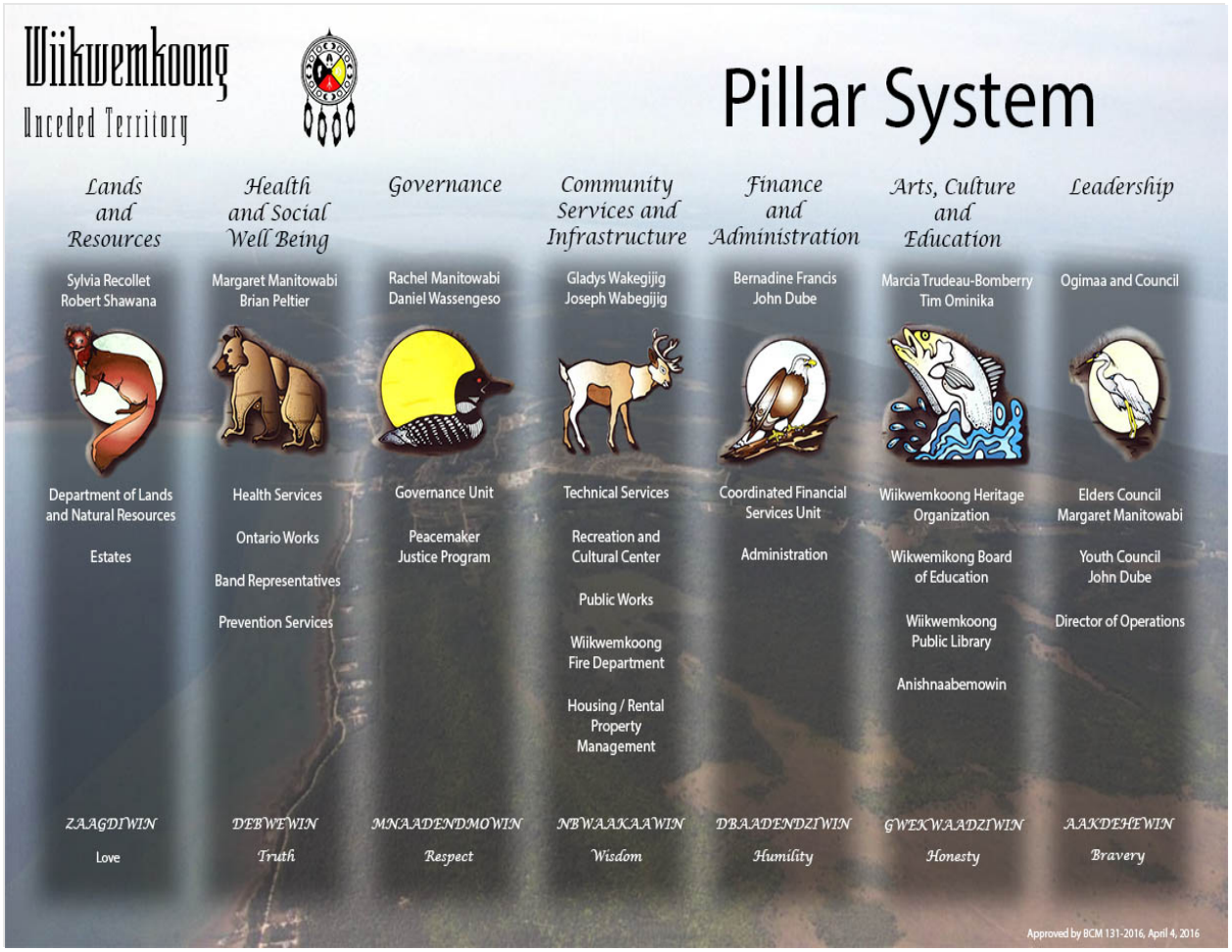

Figure 6: Wiikwemkoong Pillar System (Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, 2020)

This research was undertaken with the mentorship and guidance of my research supervisors, Dr. Renée Monchalin (School of Public Health and Social Policy) and Dr. Billie Allan (School of Social Work) and my past supervisors Dr. Charlotte Loppie (School of Public Health and Social Policy), Dr. Jeff Corntassel (Indigenous Studies), and Dr. Jo-Anne Lee (Women's Studies). I obtained approval from the Manitoulin Anishnaabek Research Review Committee (MARRC), the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB), and Wiikwemkoong Chief and Council before recruitment. Verbal, written, and digital confidentiality agreements and consents were signed by participants prior to sharing circles. Digital consents were designed on SurveyMonkey and disseminated on Instagram, a social

media platform (Intahchomphoo, 2019; Restoule et al., 2010). See Appendix C for consent forms.

Furthermore, as Wiikwemkoong is reclaiming autonomy and ownership of their own information and data through "Ownership, Control, Access and Possession" (OCAP) principles, the data and results of this project is housed by the Wikwemikong Health Centre. The community has access to the results of the project through the youth co-developed report. All data gathered is anonymous without identifiers and securely stored in a password protected laptop (Riddell et al., 2017; TCPS2, 2014). A research agreement was also signed between myself, the Wiikwemkoong Health Director, and a member of the Youth Steering Committee and outlines details of information and ownership and relational accountability for the duration of the project (see Appendix B).

The ethics of this project were guided by community relationships throughout the process as community is the "epistemic centre" of the research process (Kovach, 2009, p. 45). Baskin (2016), Kovach (2009), and Wilson (2008) state that ethical research must be grounded in a methodology of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility to the relationships that are being built in the research process. Hence, this project was led by the youth's needs and desires for change and guided by their collaborative strengths and acts of resurgence and reclamation of land, language, and culture. Corntassel (2012) defines Indigenous resurgence as a disruption of "the colonial physical, social, and political boundaries" that prevent restoration of Indigenous nationhood. Resurgence can also mean a renewal of traditions through language-speaking, ceremonies, honouring ancestors, and prayer (Absolon, 2011; Corntassel, 2012), which the youth have demonstrated throughout this research process. This research was guided by a "desire-based framework" rather than a damage-centred and pathologizing approach (Tuck, 2009) and was led

by Anishinaabe youth to ensure it met their needs for personal and community change (see Appendix B: Research Agreement). ￼

For myself and my relationships with youth and community members, I practiced reciprocity through spending quality time in visiting each person, always bringing along food, treats, and gifts as was taught by my own culture and the culture of the community. I often drove youth around the community visiting their friends, aunties, and cousins, getting food together, and going to our favourite places out in the bush. When visiting Elders and asking for teachings, I always offered tobacco and other gifts as taught by Anishinaabe traditions. Since my move to Victoria, B.C., in 2018, I have made several trips back to the community each year, always reconnecting with members of the Youth Steering Committee and other project stakeholders (many were also friends and community members I had pre-existing relationships with). In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the community also hired me back as a nurse to work at the Health Centre, which allowed me to reconnect with many community relationships. Although some of the conversations in these visits and reunions were related to the project, and a few were specific project planning meetings, many of these visits were based in authentic relationships and a natural way of being in community together.

A point of ethical tension that has felt significant to me was conducting 'research' from within the community, as part of an outside academic institution and as a non-Anishinaabe community member who has also moved away for several years. One example of how this unfolded was when a parent in the community questioned the Youth Centre staff after they posted the project's recruitment poster on the Youth Centre Facebook page as to why "the University of Victoria" was conducting research in "our community." Another example was

when a new member of the incoming Chief and Council, who was unfamiliar with me, questioned why I had pre-existing relationships with the youth prior to ethics approval.

These two incidents challenged my internal thoughts and feelings towards the ethics of research in general and my place as a co-researcher in the community. However, what makes this project ethical to me and project participants is that the youth are the leaders, creators, and principal researchers of this project; the community's leaders understand and accept that the University of Victoria is the funder and place of my studies for this project; the youth and community members have known me and built trust with me over the span of 10 years; and we have met all the requirements and followed all protocols for research laid out by community leadership. Finally, youth participants shared their knowledge and the final report of this project with community members to demonstrate transparency, accountability, relationality, and responsibility to community.

Chapter 4: Primary Colours - Gathering Knowledge and Findings

In this chapter, I will be taking you to the place where the youth and I met together to gather knowledge to answer the research questions, as well as our data analysis process and how we made sense of the sharing circles and arrived at themes. Absolon (2011) reminds us that Indigenous people have been searching, harvesting, and gathering information for generations before Western approaches of *research* were introduced. Tuck and Yang (2014) illustrated this phase of the research with primary watercolours of red, blue, and yellow. This is also illustrated by the first layer of base colour paints I applied to the paper from which I created other colours upon in my *The Three Spirits* painting (Figure 3). It represents the most foundational and active part of knowledge gathering as it is from this stage that the other stages are formed from. In this project, the primary colours phase represents the two youth-led sharing circles as this was where agreements were made, relationships were strengthened, and knowledge was exchanged and gathered (Table 1).

Knowledge Gathering

Before the application of primary colours, the artist can also prepare the canvas by applying the *wet-on-wet* technique. This refers to wetting the paper with water before applying colours so the paint can bleed and run together in a natural flow (Roebuck, 2023). In the same way, we prepared the sessions by preparing medicines and prayers for each participant, remembering to root ourselves in land and ceremony (Absolon, 2011). Two youth facilitators, one of the Elders, and I met together a few days before the sessions to prepare medicine bundles for each participant. We met at the Elder's home and the Elder prepared smudge for us to cleanse our mind, body, spirit, and heart before touching the medicines. We included in each medicine bundle the four sacred medicines: tobacco, sweetgrass, sage, and cedar. The medicines were

gifted to us from different community members and the Wikwemikong Heritage Organization (WHO). We made these bundles in laughter, storytelling, good intentions, and prayers. In this way, like the wet-on-wet technique in watercolour painting, we prepared for the sessions in Anishinaabe tradition and ceremony so that our thoughts can also flow together with love, strength, and protection just as the paint flows with the water (Absolon, 2011; Baskin, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

I situate myself in this phase of the project as a helper, co-facilitator, mentor, co-researcher, participant, and community member in relation to the participants. Since the Elders, service providers, and most of the youth participants held pre-existing relationships with me as a nurse, educator, community member, and friend, it was important for me to navigate this paradoxical space with balance, sovereignty of the youth, and relationship to youth facilitators and participants (Tuck, 2009). I attempted to do this by taking on a more supportive role for participants and youth facilitators.

For youth facilitators, I supported their leadership role by helping with administrative tasks, running errands, cooking meals, and offering guidance and encouragement so that they felt more equipped to facilitate each session. For participants, I supported their role by facilitating safety (e.g., group agreements), consent (e.g., consent forms and verbal check-ins), reciprocity (e.g., gifts, honorarium, medicine bundles), and ensuring the sessions moved towards the project's objectives. This helped me to take up less space in the sharing circles and created a more balanced space for participants to build capacity and demonstrate leadership.

Elders, service providers, and I all have different roles in the space, but a shared responsibility is to recognize the sovereignty of youth participants and support their leadership process (Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Wilson (2008) states that "it is not possible for us to

compartmentalize the relationships that we are building apart from the other relationships that make us who we are" (p. 91). In holding multiple roles within interconnected relationships, I experienced an aspect of what he discusses in an Indigenous Research Paradigm that the research process is "interrelated or interdependent, no distinction between where it ends and begins", and that it is relational and must "maintain relational accountability" (Wilson, 2008, p. 52). We met over two days separated by a weekend on May 26th and 29th to create time and space for participants to reflect, rest, and recharge before the second sharing circle (refer to Chapter 3: Study Design, Phase 2).

Day One

This session was held from approximately 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. after school and work hours on Friday, May 26th, 2023. Before youth participants began the work of gathering knowledge at the sharing circle, ceremony was held. Participants were invited to smudge before joining the circle, guided by teachings from the Elder, and to arrive in the space with good intentions. A meal, snacks, refreshments, and fidget toys were also provided to ensure all participants were cared for in all four directions: mind, body, spirit, and emotions (Baskin, 2016). A youth facilitator opened the circle with a prayer and another youth facilitator followed with a check-in, opening games, and laughter. On the first day of the gathering, 7 youth attended in-person and 5 youth online via Zoom; in addition, an Elder, a mental health worker, and myself were in attendance for a total of 15 participants. After opening the circle in a good way, group agreements were created to guide the data gathering process (Figures 7-9). It is important to recognize that when it comes to Indigenous youth gathering knowledge about their own sexual wellness and healthy relationships that collective consent and agreements are an integral part of the process (Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017; Yee, 2008).

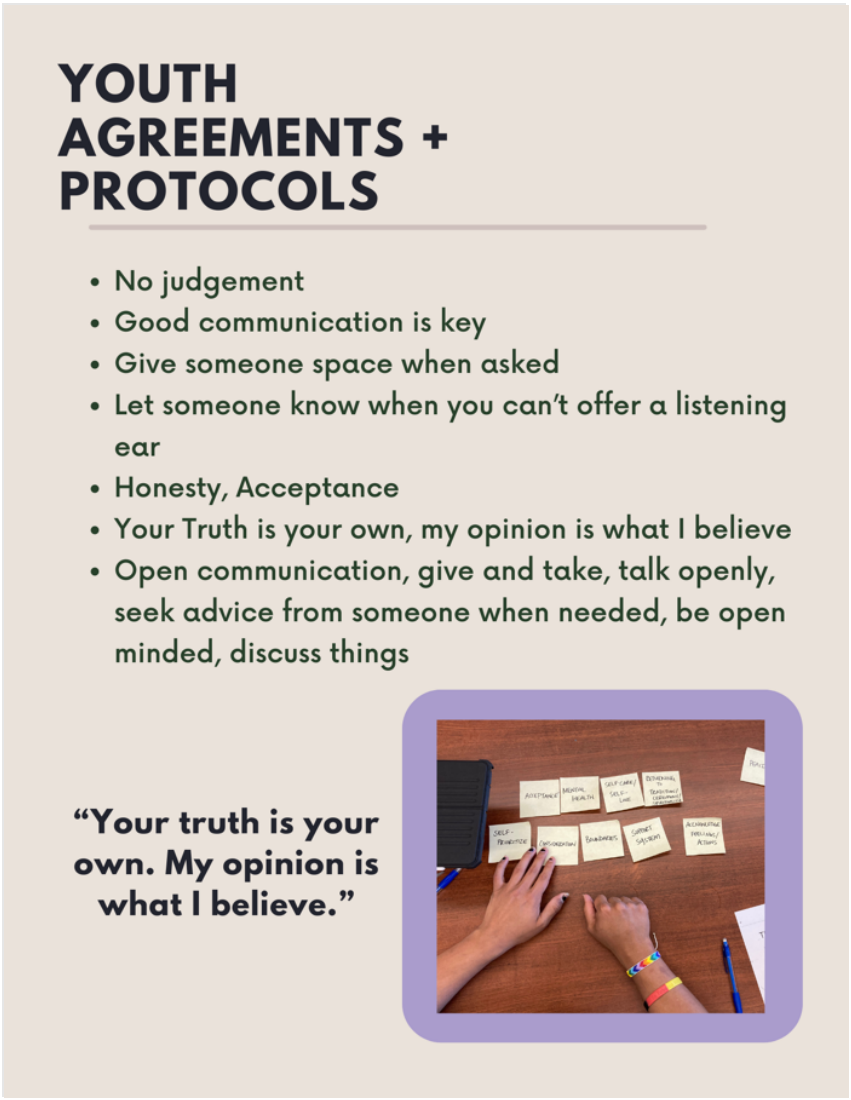

Figure 7: Group Agreements and Protocols Part One

Figure 8: Group Agreements and Protocols Part Two

Figure 9: Group Agreements and Protocols Part Three

Once agreements were collectively established and a consensus reached, the first discussion question was presented to the participants (Appendix A, Figure 10). The first question focused on the definition of healthy relationships and how youth conceptualize this within themselves and their identities. The question posed to the group was **"what is a healthy relationship?"** and was also reiterated as **"what does a healthy relationship mean to you?"**. These questions were adapted from the original research question the week of the sharing circles, which specifically asked about "sexual health needs of Wiikwemkoong youth". It was under the

guidance of the Youth Steering Committee who felt that it was more relevant at the time to focus on healthy relationships before addressing sexual health needs (Appendix A, Figure 10).

Each participant was given time to reflect on the question and share with the group in the circle. Participants wrote their responses on a card (art supplies and card stock were provided) in any creative method they chose (e.g., a drawing, a poem, a word, etc.) and shared their responses in circle before placing their card in the centre. The circle began with youth facilitators and the Elder speaking first, then other participants in circle, and ended with online participants and myself. We went around only once in circle and then opened an opportunity for discussion and other thoughts after everyone had shared before closing. Participants were reminded that they could pass if they did not feel comfortable sharing with the group. None of the participants withdrew their participation in this process and the community mental health worker and Elder remained present to support participants if they needed privacy, debriefing, or care if the discussion was distressing in any way. Online participants were offered support via break-out rooms and online resources. None of the participants online nor in-person requested immediate support from the mental health worker and Elder for this session. After opening games, introductions, ceremony, and serving food, the remaining time left for answering the first question was approximately one-hour in length. See Figure 10 for an outline of this day.

Figure 10: Day One of Gathering Knowledge, the first youth-facilitated sharing circle

The discussion was audio-recorded with consent of all participants except for one participant. The recorder was stopped before this participant spoke and I instead took notes without identifiers on paper, and the recorder was started again after the participant finished speaking. In the consent form, participants could check consent to "written notes" without identifiers if they did not want their voice recorded (Appendix C). Using NVivo, I transcribed and synthesized the audio-recording and notes and did some preliminary data analysis to prepare for the participatory data analysis phase.

The following are summaries of what each participant shared from my synthesized transcripts of the first sharing circle. I intentionally prepared this material in a table format to

help us become more familiar with the data in this discussion. The following are quotes of youth participant highlights of how they answered the first guiding question, "what does a healthy relationship mean to you?" (Appendix A, Figure 10). Please note that participants analyzed the full transcript in the data analysis phase. For the full transcript of Day 1 Sharing Circles, I have included it in Appendix E for transparency with participant consent. Three participants opted for avatars (pseudonyms) while others remained anonymous. For clarity, I labelled each participant by number to protect their identity and have also identified non-youth participants.

Table 2

Participant 1:	"I think a healthy relationship would be good communication. Always being honest is important to sexuality."
Participant 2:	"A relationship can be with yourself, your partner, your family, friends. So just someone who knows each other's boundaries. You care for one another. Intimacy, talk, touch, etc. You talk positive and respect each other's feelings and communication, affection, trust, free space to openly share thoughts and feelings…"
Participant 3:	"Communication that is respected on both ends and also boundaries that are respected on ends."
Participant 4:	"Active listening, acknowledge each other's feelings, knowing one's self worth and embracing one another's faults."
Participant 5:	"Creating healthy boundaries in your relationships and within yourself. And for me personally, I tend to prioritize my partner more than myself sometimes. And so yeah, over time I gave too much… so I created more boundaries, communication, communicating everything, and being honest."

Participant 6:	"I've had trauma so it makes it real challenging to who you would be attracting in your life and how you feel about your own self-worth and yeah, that's my story."
Participant 7:	"A healthy relationship is being honest to each other and treat each other with respect."
Participant 8:	"I identify as a girl. I like dressing really feminine whenever I can, but usually only when it's warm and I do like wearing masculine clothes sometimes."
Participant 9:	"Sexuality is being your true authentic self. Without regards as to how one might judge, perceive, to be honest."
Participant 10:	"A healthy relationship is where both parties respect one another and are able to set healthy boundaries while also communicating effectively."
Participant 11:	"I think also a healthy relationship consists of the person knowing who they are outside of ties to their significant other."
Participant 12:	"I think the other thing is, first of all, and foremost ask you yourself, ask yourself that question: Do I really love myself? Do I make communication and boundaries?"
Participant 13 (non-youth participant):	"Young people… you are our future, the ones that are going to lead the community… it's going to be the youth that are going to bring their people back to the language and the ceremonies and to reconnect with the land and the water and everything that is around.… a lot of the younger people are more spiritual and more with the spiritual ways than older people."

Participant 14 (non-youth participant):	"When we raise our children as young parents, somebody teach those boundaries to their children, not to be ashamed of who they are...like exploring themselves. It's not a shameful thing to discover their body parts because of the way society is. That's bad. Don't do that, that's bad. We have to realize those are not bad things. Those are good things."

Day Two

This session was held from approximately 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. after school and work hours on Monday, May 29th, 2023. This date was intentionally set after the weekend by the Youth Steering Committee to allow time and space for reflection from the first sharing circle.

On the second day of knowledge gathering, a similar process was followed with a youth facilitator beginning with prayer and smudge and a youth facilitator leading a check-in and games (a different youth facilitator from Day One). A general outline of the session is shown in Figure 11, p.55. Food, refreshments, fidget toys, and community resource handouts were provided. To help support cultural safety, group agreements were also reviewed from Day One to provide opportunity for additions or amendments, particularly for new participants joining. No changes or additions were made to the agreements after review and group consensus was obtained to move forward. For the second sharing circle, 8 youth attended in-person and 4 youth online via Zoom (2 youth were absent and 2 new youth joined, hence 2 youth were different from the previous sharing circle) and two Elders (one new Elder, recruited by the other Elder for extra support for themselves, joined on Day 2), a mental health worker (present at all sessions), a community health nurse (only able to join on Day 2 due to scheduling conflicts), and myself, the co-researcher were in attendance for a total of 17 participants. On Day 2, we began the circle

with a debrief from the first sharing circle. We offered space for additional thoughts and reflections that may have come up over the weekend as well as reflections from new participants. After opening games, introductions, ceremony, and serving food, the remaining time left for answering the first question was approximately one-hour in length.

We focused on the second research question which addressed how youth can create healthy relationships. It explored what youth desired when it came to resources and supports that they needed to build healthy relationships. The question posed to the group was **"how do you build a healthy relationship?"** and further clarified as **"what kinds of tools and resources do you need in order to build a healthy relationship?"**. These questions were co-created and adapted from the original research question that asked "what do youth need in order to access sexual health resources and supports within Wiikwemkoong" as the Youth Steering Committee felt it was important to continue the conversation on healthy relationships in order to address sexual health needs (Appendix A, Figure 11). The reason for this adaptation was because the original research questions were co-developed by the Youth Steering Committee in the summer of 2020, hence, by the time the project commenced in spring/summer of 2023, youth facilitators felt a shift to more relevant questions was needed. It is also important to note that a few members of the Youth Steering Committee in 2020 were not present during the sharing circles in 2023 and, therefore, different decision-making is reflected by the present participating committee.

Figure 11: Day Two of Gathering Knowledge, the second youth-facilitated sharing circle

After a time of reflection, participants were again invited to write their responses on a card in a creative method of their choosing. They were invited to share their responses and then place their responses in the centre of the circle or pass if they did not want to share. No participant chose to withdraw from participation. The circle once again began with youth facilitators and Elders speaking first, then other participants in circle, and ended with online participants and myself. We went around the circle only once and ended with a debrief and time for sharing additional thoughts. The community nurse, mental health worker, and Elders were once again introduced to support participants if they needed privacy, debriefing, or care if the

discussion was distressing in any way. Online participants were again offered support via break-out rooms and online resources. None of the participants online nor in-person requested immediate support from support workers and Elders in this session.

The discussion was once again audio-recorded with consent of all participants except for one participant. As with Day 1, the recorder was stopped before the participant spoke, I took notes without identifiers on paper, and the recorder was started again after the participant finished speaking. In the same process as Day 1, I used NVivo to transcribe and synthesize the audio-recordings and notes for the purpose of preliminary data analysis.

I have included summaries of what each participant shared from my synthesized transcripts of the sharing circle. These are quotes I found to be most relevant in answering the second guiding question, **"how do you build a healthy relationship?"** (Appendix A) and not meant to replace the full transcript. The full transcript of Day 2 Sharing Circles is included in Appendix F for transparency. For the purpose of clarity, I have labelled each participant by number to protect their identity and I have also identified non-youth participants.

Table 3

Participant 1:	"The berry fast helped me discipline myself a lot. I didn't eat berries, I didn't go swimming, I didn't eat berries for the whole year. I just ate other fruits that I wanted. I did the fast. I went for two days and yeah, that was really hard. That's really helped me discipline myself and get off the bad stuff."
Participant 2:	"…you would need a support system. Cause you can't rely on one person. And you can't do it alone at the same time. So that's why I put talking to family and friends can be very helpful. Having an outlet, emotional or physical, letting out some aggression or even

	being passionate. I also put don't bottle emotions. Don't bottle emotions totally transparent."
Participant 3 (non-youth participant):	"Having access to proper programming to help with finding yourself to better communicate with your partner. And communicate with yourself." "…it's more like physical. So might be sanitation facilities in washroom space, especially Tim Horton's. I don't know. Just cause every time I wanted the washrooms are small, they should be able to provide accommodation."
Participant 4:	"I think in order to be in a healthy relationship, you need to love and accept yourself first before loving someone else. You can't fully rely on this person that you love more than yourself for happiness."
Participant 5:	"[My partner's] company or quality time, food, transportation. Getting in tune with nature, God, self or culture. Good hygiene and personal space and having a safe space to go to."
Participant 6:	"Connection. Transparency. You really need to be transparent if you have a healthy relationship. Cause if you're not transparent, if you're not communicating, then the person that you're with won't be able to help you. And that's just, that's kinda shitty."
Participant 7:	"In order for me to have a healthy relationship with my parents, I think they need therapy or to see a psychiatrist to get a diagnosis and help with their mental health and illnesses because they both need help, but they also don't have time to go to therapy because of work and the kids."
Participant 8:	"Spend happy moments with those I love. So spending time with your family and whatnot, it really brings you together. Yeah. Connect with my culture definitely brings up my spiritual health. Advance my

	education because I'm still young. I really want to build my life still. So that'll help accept who I am kind of thing. Practice more self-care is a big thing for me. So yeah, whether it be smudging and not."
Participant 9:	"Acceptance of each other's flaws and differences. So when people grow, they constantly change. So when you want a healthy relationship, you've got to be able to grow together because you're always changing together."
Participant 10:	"Honesty about your needs, your wants, desires, your future, and disagreements. So if you don't agree with your partner on things, you got to be honest about that and open also, you can't expect them to know what you're thinking."
Participant 11:	"All seven grandfather teachings."
Participant 12:	"I have to like my body. Feeling good about yourself before you get in relationship or have any sexual feeling… and mental health wise, I feel like I need to be loved or feel like I'm loved personally."
Participant 13:	"Liking myself, having a healthy relationship with myself. Good support system. Need to be heard, transparency and open to receiving and giving love."
Participant 14:	"Maintain a healthy relationship with yourself so you won't have any reason to have some kind of outburst on anyone because you're already dealing with it and you already found a way to let it out in a healthy way."
Participant 15:	"Love self and others… must have for a successful life: Cats. The cats communicating, using my words. Good bush walk. Helps clear mind."

Participant 16 (non-youth participant):	"…when I was a teenager, I don't think we ever talked about sex. Nobody ever said, oh let's have a circle. Let's do this. And again, it's all retracing your steps… I think a lot of it had to do with your parents were at residential school plus how strong the ruling of the church that had it had on the community… But nobody ever sat down or even when they were teaching us things, nobody ever sat there and said, okay, I'm going to give you this seven grandfather teaching. They just told you respect other people. These were like, it was just daily life. They never said, these are the seven grandfather teachings. Those are what you live by and what they taught you. But now that's what you hear. Seven grandfather teachings. But it's a way of life. It's a way of life. That's what it's, yeah, that's history. Very good.

After each of these sharing circles, participants were given an opportunity to respond to one another and add further thoughts and reflections. Most participants did not have anything to add or discuss after the circles except for Elder participants who closed each session with their reflections to the youth participants (see Appendix E and F). Although not much discussion came from youth participants at the end of the circles, responses and agreements were expressed in the form of laughter, non-verbal expressions, and verbal sounds throughout the circles not captured by the recorder and hence not visible in transcripts. It is also important to note that participant reflections were marked by nuances, silences, pauses, and tones that give meaning to their words not captured in the transcripts. After the recorder was stopped at the end of the circles, youth facilitators led a check-out where each participant shared what they learned from the session and how they felt in that moment. Before the day concluded, a draw for prizes and an announcement was made for the next meeting. At the end of the second sharing circle, participants were

reminded about the two-day participatory data analysis meetings to take place two weeks from then. Participants were in agreement and voiced no concerns with this process.

Participatory Data Analysis:

In this phase of the project, I was in the role of facilitator and trainer in relation to the participants. Prior to the sessions, I created a mini presentation on the "Six Phases to Thematic Analysis" (p. 5) model by Liebenberg et al. (2015) which engages youth participants in: 1) familiarizing themselves with the transcripts by taking turns reading de-identified statements; 2) generating codes and labels by identifying similar patterns and ideas from the transcripts; 3) organizing groups of codes into general themes; 4) reviewing the data to ensure accuracy with a mind-mapping activity; 5) maintaining rigour through consensus and agreement throughout the process so that all participants' thoughts are reflected; and 5) co-creating a final report (Figure 12, 13, 14). I then led a workshop on the first day to train youth participants on how to make sense of the data gathered from sharing circles based on these six phases. For this reason, I took on a bigger leadership role than youth facilitators in this phase. However, I was mindful to ensure youth facilitators still had roles in opening/closing the session and facilitating check-ins/outs in an effort to continue to centre youth leadership.

As thematic analysis was a new process for everyone except for one Elder and the mental health support worker, I felt I needed to provide guidance and directions to participants throughout the data analysis process over the two days. I felt that this once again placed me in the "paradoxical space" that Tuck (2009) names as a common element of YPAR. It challenged me to continue to uphold youth sovereignty and self-determination and centre youth voices even when it felt difficult to do so in a relationship of power and leadership role. In the end, for me, this work was about providing training and support to youth so that they may carry their work

forward in their own ways of dreaming and envisioning (Tuck, 2009; Tuck et al., 2008). We met over two days, June 12th to 13th, two weeks after the sharing circles to ensure I had time to prepare the data by transcribing recordings and completing a preliminary data analysis, and to give participants time to reflect and rest from the sessions (refer to Chapter 2: Study Design, Phase 3).

Day One

I had the honour of meeting with participants on our first thematic analysis session on Monday, June 12th, 2023, from approximately 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. after school and work hours. We met in the main activity room of the Wasse-Naabin Youth Centre (see Appendix G for the schedule of the first day of participatory data analysis).

In the same way as the sharing circles, youth entered the space of data analysis in ceremony, held by the teachings of the land and their own wisdom, and supported by their community (Absolon, 2011). Youth facilitators began Day 1 of the participatory data analysis meeting in prayer, smudge, a group check-in, and a home-cooked meal. 13 youth participants attended in-person and two Elders, one mental health support worker and myself were also in attendance on the first day of data analysis for a total of 17 participants. Following the delivery of my workshop for the youth, I evenly distributed paper strips of the de-identified transcript to participants that I had previously prepared from my two weeks of transcribing audio recordings, synthesizing, and conducting a preliminary analysis (Appendix E and F). Each participant took turns reading out loud their strips of transcript. This helped us to become familiar with the data (Liebenberg et al., 2015). We then generated initial codes before closing out for the day. Elders and service providers were present to support and observe the data analysis process but did not participate in generating codes and creating themes.

Liebenberg et al. (2015) describes “thematic analysis” as a way of creating “rich descriptions” by looking at data and creating “codes” that recognize patterns/themes which help us to further make sense of the data (p. 6). Codes are defined as “short descriptive words or phrases that: 1) mark a piece of data as significant in relation to the research question; 2) identify data segments as belonging to a particular group” (p. 5). Codes are essentially the building blocks to the development of categories and themes. The following table lists 23 codes participants identified from transcripts (see also Figure 12):

Table 4

Codes generated from transcripts:	1. Self-Acceptance 2. Transparency 3. Consideration 4. Communication 5. Education 6. Inclusive Sanitary Spaces 7. Respecting Others 8. Healthy Dopamine/Serotonin 9. Acknowledge Feelings/Actions 10. Self-Care/Love 11. Self-Awareness 12. Boundaries 13. Self-Prioritize 14. Support System 15. Honesty/Trust 16. Unconditional Love 17. Contentment 18. Peace 19. Acceptance 20. Reconnection 21. Mental Health (for parents) 22. Healthy Sex Talk 23. Returning to Traditional Roots + Culturally Connected + Spirituality + Ceremony

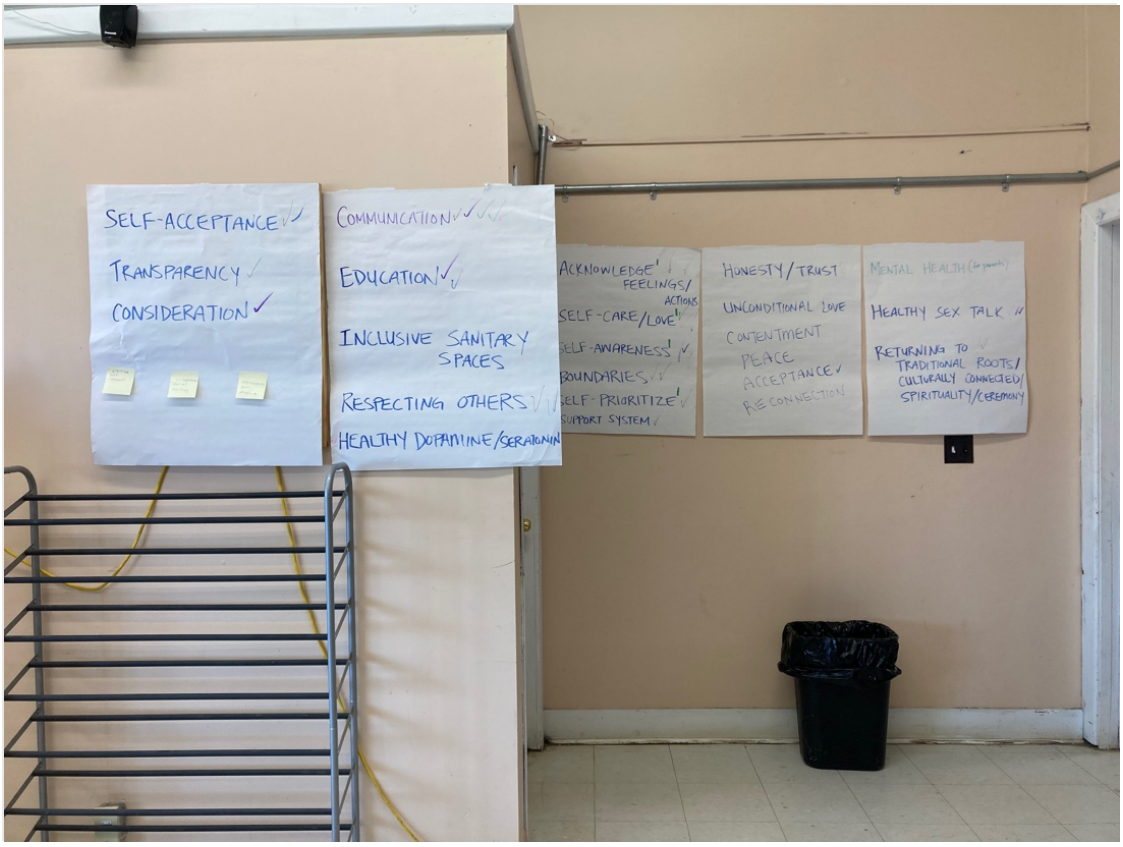

Figure 12: Generating codes from reviewing transcripts and identifying repeated codes.

In Figure 12, initial codes were named by participants from reviewing transcripts. The codes were written on large sheets of flipchart paper posted around the room at the Wasse-Naabin Youth Centre. Participants then went around and placed checkmarks under codes they felt their transcripts matched with. After participants felt satisfied with the codes, we regrouped to debrief and discuss if everyone was in agreement or had anything to add. We then closed the circle with a check-out and draw for prizes, and participants were reminded to rest and return the next day (Appendix G).

Day Two

This session was held the next day from approximately 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. after school and work hours on Tuesday, June 13th, 2023. See Appendix G for the schedule of the second day of participatory data analysis.

Youth facilitators opened the meeting in prayer, smudge, a group check-in, and with food. 10 youth participants attended in-person, 3 joined online over Zoom, two Elders, one mental health support worker, and myself were in attendance for a total of 17 participants. All participants were the same from the previous day. In this session we completed the remaining tasks of thematic analysis of: "organizing groups of codes into general themes" and "reviewing the data to ensure accuracy with a mind-mapping activity" (p. 12). Mind-mapping was used to connect and link related themes. In this activity, strips of the transcript were categorized to link the themes back to the raw data to ensure the themes accurately reflected the knowledge gathered in the sharing circles (Liebenberg et al., 2015). Liebenberg et al. (2015) defines themes as "reoccurring patterns" seen amongst codes that can help answer research questions and "describe a phenomenon" (p. 5). A total of 8 themes were generated from this process:

Table 5

Themes:	1. Health 2. Education 3. Morality 4. Respecting Self 5. Interpersonal Skills 6. Nurture 7. Self-Awareness 8. Spiritual Knowledge + Growth

Using a mind-mapping activity to draw relationships between themes and codes, we first made code cards on sticky notes. The themes were then written on large flipchart paper and participants categorized the code cards under the identified themes (Figure 13). After all the code cards were categorized, we then gathered around the flipchart paper of themes and codes and discussed how the themes related to one another. Using coloured markers, participants drew lines connecting the related themes. Lastly, to ensure the accuracy of the data, participants took their strips of transcript, the raw data, and placed them under the identified themes. This helped to link the themes back to the raw data by working backwards to determine if the themes truly reflected the data (Liebenberg et al., 2015; Padgett, 2012). See Figure 14. Below in Table 6, I have organized the mind-mapping activity into columns of themes with connecting codes and examples of quotes that were linked to the codes.

Table 6

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Health	Inclusive Sanitary Spaces	"…it's more like physical. So might be sanitation facilities in washroom space, especially Tim Horton's. I don't know. Just cause every time I wanted the washrooms are small, they should be able to provide accommodation."
	Healthy Dopamine/Serotonin	"Love self and others… must have for a successful life: Cats. The cats communicating, using my words. Good bush walk. Helps clear mind."
	Respecting Others	"A healthy relationship is where both parties respect one another and are able to set healthy boundaries while also communicating effectively."

Education	Education	"When we raise our children as young parents, somebody teach those boundaries to their children, not to be ashamed of who they are...like exploring themselves. It's not a shameful thing to discover their body parts because of the way society is. That's bad. Don't do that, that's bad. We have to realize those are not bad things. Those are good things." "Advance my education because I'm still young. I really want to build my life still. So that'll help accept who I am kind of thing." "…programs to teach you how to communicate with your partner and yourself better."
	Mental Health (for parents)	"In order for me to have a healthy relationship with my parents, I think they need therapy or to see a psychiatrist to get a diagnosis and help with their mental health and illnesses because they both need help, but they also don't have time to go to therapy because of work and the kids."
Morality	Contentment	"I have to like my body. Feeling good about yourself before you get in relationship or have any sexual feeling… and mental health wise, I feel like I need to be loved or feel like I'm loved personally."
	Reconnection	"Connection. Transparency. You really need to be transparent if you have a healthy relationship. Cause if

		you're not transparent, if you're not communicating, then the person that you're with won't be able to help you. And that's just, that's kinda shitty."
Respecting Self	Self-Prioritize, Overcoming Peer Pressure	"Creating healthy boundaries in your relationships and within yourself. And for me personally, I tend to prioritize my partner more than myself sometimes. And so yeah, over time I gave too much… so I created more boundaries, communication, communicating everything, and being honest."
Interpersonal Skills	Communication	"I think a healthy relationship would be good communication. Always being honest is important to sexuality."
	Boundaries	"A relationship can be with yourself, your partner, your family, friends. So just someone who knows each other's boundaries. You care for one another. Intimacy, talk, touch, etc. You talk positive and respect each other's feelings and communication, affection, trust, free space to openly share thoughts and feelings…"
	Honesty/Trust	"A healthy relationship is being honest to each other and treat each other with respect."
	Transparency, Consideration	"Liking myself, having a healthy relationship with myself. Good support system. Need to be heard, transparency and open to receiving and giving love."

	Healthy Sex Talk	"…when I was a teenager, I don't think we ever talked about sex. Nobody ever said, oh let's have a circle. Let's do this. And again, it's all retracing your steps… I think a lot of it had to do with your parents were at residential school plus how strong the ruling of the church that had it had on the community…But now that's what you hear. Seven grandfather teachings. But it's a way of life. It's a way of life. That's what it's, yeah, that's history. Very good."
Nurture	Support System, Unconditional Love	"…you would need a support system. Cause you can't rely on one person. And you can't do it alone at the same time. So that's why I put talking to family and friends can be very helpful. Having an outlet, emotional or physical, letting out some aggression or even being passionate. I also put don't bottle emotions. Don't bottle emotions totally transparent." "the gift of time to each other is really important. I feel like that's a resource in a relationship, especially if you have children or jobs or school or you move and you're distance from each other. But the gift of time is really important for a healthy relationship." "...and to build my relationship with my partner would be to practice the five love languages like gift giving, physical touch, words of affirmation, acts of service, and quality time."

		"Spend happy moments with those I love. So spending time with your family and whatnot, it really brings you together. Yeah."
Self-Awareness	Self-Acceptance, Self-Awareness	"I've had trauma so it makes it real challenging to who you would be attracting in your life and how you feel about your own self-worth and yeah, that's my story."
	Acknowledge Feelings/Actions	"Active listening, acknowledge each other's feelings, knowing one's self worth and embracing one another's faults."
	Self-Care/Love	"I think in order to be in a healthy relationship, you need to love and accept yourself first before loving someone else. You can't fully rely on this person that you love more than yourself for happiness." "Practice more self-care is a big thing for me. So yeah, whether it be smudging and not."
Spiritual Knowledge + Growth	Returning to Traditional Roots + Culturally Connected + Spirituality + Ceremony	"The berry fast helped me discipline myself a lot. I didn't eat berries, I didn't go swimming, I didn't eat berries for the whole year. I just ate other fruits that I wanted. I did the fast. I went for two days and yeah, that was really hard. That's really helped me discipline myself and get off the bad stuff." "All seven grandfather teachings."

		"Connect with my culture definitely brings up my spiritual health."
	Acceptance	"Sexuality is being your true authentic self. Without regards as to how one might judge, perceive, to be honest."
	Peace	"Maintain a healthy relationship with yourself so you won't have any reason to have some kind of outburst on anyone because you're already dealing with it and you already found a way to let it out in a healthy way."

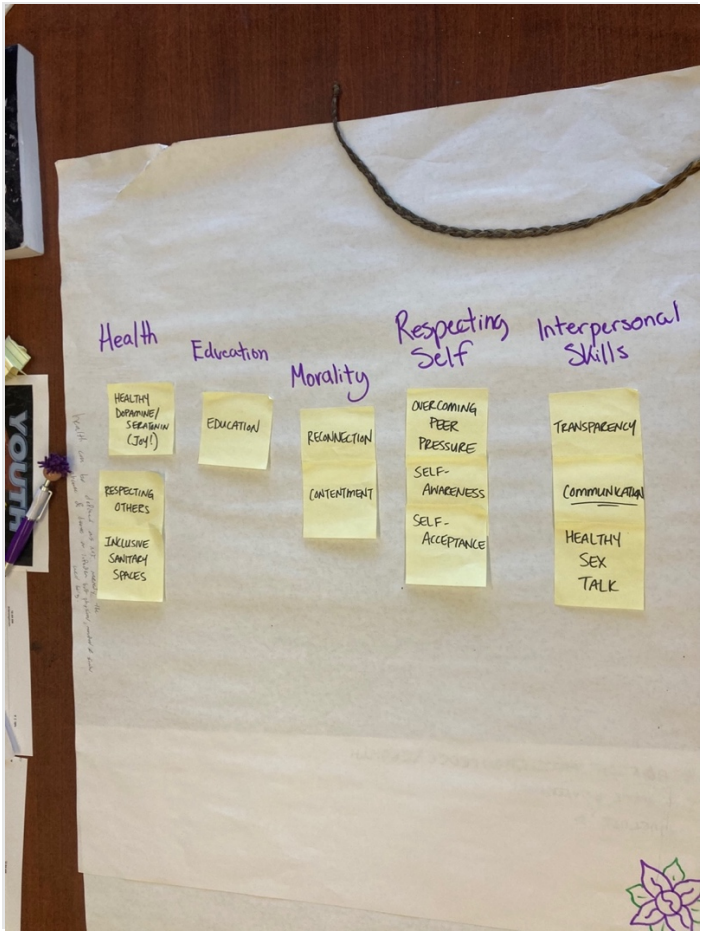

Figure 13: Creating code cards and categorizing codes into general themes.

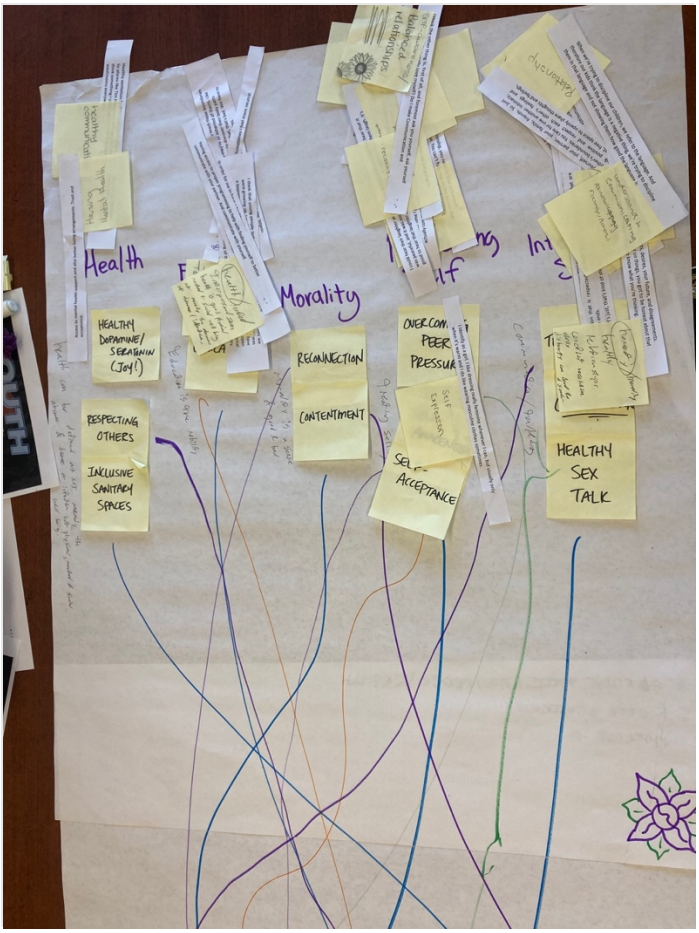

Figure 14: Mind-Mapping Activity (Liebenberg et al., 2015).

The codes that participants linked to the theme of "health" were: **Inclusive Sanitary Spaces, Healthy Dopamine/Serotonin, Respecting Others**. When asked about "healthy relationships", sharing circle participants shared various examples of healthy traits and practices that focused on a general sense of health and wellbeing. Answers were not always specific to relationships but included ways to be and feel healthy, such as having gender neutral washrooms and clean spaces for personal hygiene. One participant named that a healthy relationship meant *"food, transportation. Getting in tune with nature, God, self or culture. Good hygiene and*

personal space and having a safe space to go to". "Healthy dopamine/serotonin" was labelled by a participant who referred to how healthy practices made people *"feel good"* and hence linked this to the theme of health. Youth agreed that many things make up a healthy relationship and that also means having a healthy wellbeing.

Under the theme of education, participants linked the codes **education** and **mental health (for parents)**. While these answers do not directly address the issues of sexual health education and sexual health needs of Wiikwemkoong youth, it demonstrates an inherent desire to be educated. The link between mental health for parents and education is not a clear one but was done so to point to the lack of education for parents when it comes to their mental health. It was discussed that youth want to build healthier relationships with their families, but for that to happen, parents needed to be healthier supports and that meant having more supports for their own mental health.

The youth participants identified the theme of "interpersonal skills" as linked to: **communication, boundaries, honesty/trust, transparency, consideration,** and **healthy sex talk.** The link between "healthy sex talk" and "education" was made by a non-youth participant who felt that their education was missing sexual health teachings and expressed that it would have been important for them to receive these teachings to build a healthy relationship as a young person. One youth participant said that to have a healthy relationship, you need:

> *"Connection. Transparency. You really need to be transparent if you have a healthy relationship. Cause if you're not transparent, if you're not communicating, then the person that you're with won't be able to help you. And that's just, that's kinda shitty…*"

Participants linked the theme of "nurture" to codes: **support system** and **unconditional love.** One participant stated that to have a healthy relationship,

"*…you would need a support system. Cause you can't rely on one person. And you can't do it alone at the same time. So that's why I put talking to family and friends can be very helpful*".

While unconditional love was expressed by one participant as:

*"acceptance of each other's flaws and differences. So when people grow, they constantly change. So when you want a healthy relationship, you've got to be able to grow together because you're always changing tog*ether."

Participants linked the themes of "self-awareness" and "respecting self" to the codes: **self-acceptance, acknowledge feelings/actions, self-care/love,** and **self-awareness.** During thematic analysis, a common word that appeared multiple times in codes and themes was "self". Participants often talked about relationship to "self" when it came to what they needed to build healthy relationships. One participant reflected on their relationship to self and stated,

"I have to like my body. Feeling good about yourself before you get in relationship or have any sexual feeling… and mental health wise, I feel like I need to be loved or feel like I'm loved personally".

The codes that were linked to the themes of "spiritual knowledge and growth" and "morality" were: **contentment, reconnection, self-prioritize, overcoming peer pressure, returning to traditional roots/culturally connected/spirituality/ceremony, acceptance,** and **peace.** Morality was a theme that the youth had agreed to use, however, it can be easily misunderstood as a taboo, or a religious or binary idea of good versus evil. From our discussions, youth defined morality as related to a system of "goodness", or a spiritual goodness, and linked this theme to the codes "contentment" and "reconnection". One participant explained this sense of contentment and reconnection as:

> *"[spending] happy moments with those I love. So spending time with your family and whatnot, it really brings you together. Yeah. Connect with my culture definitely brings up my spiritual health… so yeah, whether it be smudging and not."*

In conclusion, because the activity of generating codes and themes was a new process for both myself and the youth participants, it became a process of mutual learning and discovery. As a first-time co-researcher, I was also learning about thematic analysis and how to apply it to practice. The participants and I found it helpful that one of the Elders had previously participated in thematic analysis in a different research study and was able to provide feedback, guidance, and affirmation on our process together. Overall, youth participants felt they were able to freely engage in exploring codes and themes and discuss their agreements and disagreements over words, terms, and language in their own capacities. It was a positive collaborative experience that was co-constructed by the youth, supported by Elders, and facilitated by me, and no concerns were expressed at the closing circle on the last day of thematic analysis.

Chapter 5: Secondary Colours – Making Meaning and Implications

In this chapter, I will be leading you to the place where the youth and I met to make meaning from the knowledge we gathered and what it could mean for future youth. It is the place of growth of leaves with the support of a stem, as Absolon (2011) describes a journey of transformation guided by community supports. I will be weaving the themes identified by youth participants (see Table 5 and 6) into the broader literature and connecting it to our original research questions (see page 7). In a discussion, I will outline the key themes and how they relate to current literature and if they help to answer our original research questions; lastly, I will end with implications and why this work is relevant to the community and future youth-led research.

Tuck and Yang (2014) illustrated this phase of the research process with secondary colours, which are created by mixing two primary colours. I illustrated this in my *The Three Spirits* painting (Figure 4) by generating orange, violet, and green from layering another primary colour onto each panel of primary colours. It is essentially creating something new from the most foundational elements. This step represents the process of participatory data analysis. In this project, the primary colours represent the two youth-led sharing circles, the foundation, while the secondary colours represent data analysis, the process of creating new ideas and making meaning of the knowledge gathered (Table 1). In alignment with the YPAR method, this participatory data analysis requires youth participants to be engaged in the process of meaning-making by analyzing synthesized transcripts gathered from sharing circles (Liebenberg et al., 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Referring to Absolon's flower analogy (Figure 2), participatory data analysis also aligns with Anishinaabe ways of knowing because it is like the 'leaves' and 'petals' of a flower, which embodies a process of growth and transformation and ways to search for information.

This project engaged Anishinaabe youth as leaders and co-researchers in sexual wellness and aimed to inform future youth-focused sexual health programming by gaining a better understanding of their sexual health priorities. Findings confirm that Indigenous youth need more support from their communities and families to build healthy relationships and sexuality. Over the course of two sharing circles and two thematic analysis meetings, eight overarching themes emerged: Health, Education, Interpersonal Skills, Nurture, Self-Awareness, Respecting Self, Morality, and Spiritual Knowledge & Growth. These themes present how Anishinaabe youth conceptualize healthy relationships with themselves and others and indicate the resources needed to support their sexual wellness and healthy relationships in their home community. For the purpose of clarity and ease, I have combined related themes, Self-Awareness and Respecting Self, and Spiritual Knowledge & Growth and Morality together in this discussion.

Health

Under the theme of ***health***, participants connected the codes **Inclusive Sanitary Spaces, Healthy Dopamine/Serotonin,** and **Respecting Others**. **Inclusive sanitary spaces** was discussed by youth and Elder participants as having access to gender neutral washrooms in the community and having accommodating spaces for personal hygiene. Although some community spaces, like the Wikwemikong Health Centre, have already opened gender-neutral washrooms, participants assert that spaces off-reserve like Tim Horton's, in the town 50 km away, still do not provide inclusive spaces especially for queer, Two-Spirit, and trans Anishinaabe youth, further stigmatizing their identity in predominantly white spaces, as one participant stated (refer to page 68), *"…it's more like physical. So might be sanitation facilities in washroom space, especially Tim Horton's. I don't know. Just cause every time I wanted the washrooms are small, they should be able to provide accommodation*."

There is currently a gap in literature about gender neutral washrooms and clean spaces for personal hygiene for Indigenous youth in Canada. Existing literature about Indigenous experiences in relation to physically accessible washroom spaces come from Indigenous communities in Australia which discuss the importance of improving menstrual hygiene spaces (such as proper menstrual product disposal bins inside washroom stalls) for women and girls, as well as including education, menstrual experiences, and social stigma as factors to Indigenous health and wellbeing (Krusz et al., 2019). In terms of gender-neutral washrooms, Francis et al. (2022) and Ingrey (2023) both offer a critical analysis of how school spaces often limit, erase, or harm trans and gender-diverse students with gendered washrooms leading to increased bullying, stigma, and victimization. Other literature explores gender equity in accessing water, sanitation, and hygiene to ensure health and dignity for all community members (Burt et al., 2016). These findings suggest that gender neutral washrooms and clean spaces for personal hygiene are an important part of supporting students' right to dignity, respect, gender equity, sexual health, and overall health and wellness. These findings are also in line with values outlined by FNHA (2018) regarding Indigenous sexual health as made up of protecting one's body, partners, family, and community for future generations. Thus, the lack of inclusive sanitary spaces for Wiikwemkoong youth as described by participants may contribute to gender-related stigma and protecting and advocating for these spaces is needed to safeguard Indigenous youth sexual health and wellness.

Healthy dopamine/serotonin was defined by youth participants as practicing healthy ways to "feeling good" and finding joy and satisfaction when building relationships with self and others. Participants discussed that having healthy dopamine/serotonin in relationships was an important part of their overall mental health and wellbeing. This also meant finding alternatives to substances, alcohol, and other addictions to find happiness. Youth participants linked positive

mental health to positive sexual health and sexuality. One participant named examples of healthy dopamine/serotonin on page 68 as "*must-have for a successful life: Cats. The cats communicating, using my words. Good bush walk. Helps clear mind".* While there is no existing literature that focuses specifically on healthy dopamine and serotonin in sexual health for Indigenous youth, Simkin and Arnold (2020) studied the links between increased dopamine and serotonin levels and the role of minimizing stress and inflammation on the gut-brain axis that resulted in decreased depression and improved mental health amongst youth. Mental health, according to Anishinaabe teachings, is a vital part of the Medicine Wheel (Figure 15), which encompasses a balance of emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental health spectrums, a "circular journey on which a person travels throughout their life" (Shawande et al., 2013, p. 338). In the Aboriginal Children's Health and Well-Being Measure (ACHWM), a survey completed by youth aged 7.6 to 21.7 years old in three First Nations (Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory being one of them), Wabano et al. (2019) identified mental health as the quadrant in the Medicine Wheel that needed the most improvement and attention amongst Anishinaabe youth (Figure 15). Wabano and colleagues noted that "mental health" was defined by youth as "intellectual health or cognition", thus differing from western definitions of mental health (Wabano et al., 2019, p.320). The literature reflects knowledge generated by youth participants when it comes to healthy ways to feeling good and happy and its impact on mental health and wellness, however, the gap lies in the connection between healthy dopamine/serotonin and sexual health and healthy relationships for Indigenous youth.

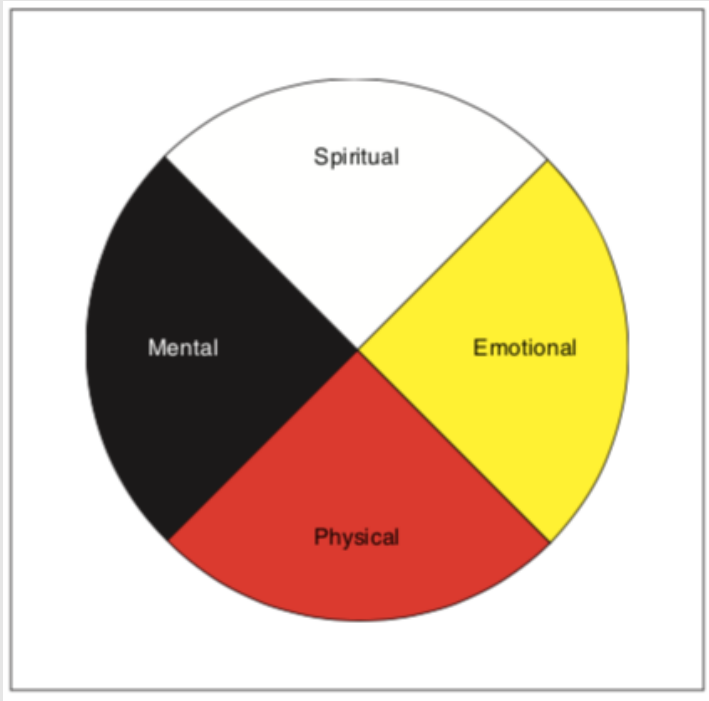

Figure 15: Medicine Wheel (Wabano et al., 2019)

Respecting others was reflected by youth participants as building relationships with healthy boundaries and good communication. As stated by one participant above on page 68, *"a healthy relationship is where both parties respect one another and are able to set healthy boundaries while also communicating effectively"*. In the Seven Grandfather Teachings, respect, *manaaji'idiwin* in Anishinaabemowin, is traditionally defined as "to go easy on one another and all of Creation" and is represented by the buffalo who "respects the balance and needs of others" (Caron, 2024, para. 6). Shawande et al. (2013) assert that a vital part of Indigenous health and healing is respecting the land by protecting traditional medicine teachings. As reflected by both youth participants and the literature discussed in Chapter 2, respect is seen as a necessary part of sexual health and wellness in the teachings of respecting the land as respecting the body, and consent with the land is consent with the body (Simpson, 2014; 2017; WEA & NYSHN, 2016).

These findings suggest that Indigenous youth understand their sexual wellness as interconnected with respecting self, other, the land, and traditional teachings, and not exclusive

to one and other (WEA & NYSHN, 2016; Simpson, 2014). It also suggests that there are gaps in literature supporting gender-neutral washrooms and clean spaces for personal hygiene for Indigenous youth; as well as their assertion about healthy dopamine/serotonin needed to achieve healthy relationships and a healthy sexuality. This is important knowledge as it can contribute to systemic changes in the community and lead to positive health outcomes for Indigenous youth.

Education

Under the theme of *education*, participants linked the codes **education** and **mental health (for parents)**. **Mental health for parents** was discussed amongst youth participants in relation to having healthy sexuality and healthy relationships. A youth participant discussed this on page 69, while also noting some of the challenges faced by parents in accessing support:

> *to have a healthy relationship with my parents, I think they need therapy or to see a psychiatrist to get a diagnosis and help with their mental health and illnesses because they both need help, but they also don't have time to go to therapy because of work and the kids.*

McQuaid et al. (2022) explored the mental health relationship between First Nations parents and their children. They particularly discovered higher levels of depressive symptoms and psychological distress in parents with a family history of attending residential schools, which resulted in an increased likelihood of their children being separated from them (McQuaid et al., 2022). Beginning to heal intergenerational trauma resulting from the legacy of residential schools was shown to decrease the risk of children being in the child welfare system (Baskin, 2016; McQuaid et al., 2022). While youth participants did not name their family history of residential schools nor being separated from their families, literature asserts that intergenerational trauma and mental health in First Nations parents may affect their capacity to

support their children. Hence, youth participants named the need for mental health supports for their families. Lopez-Carmen et al. (2019) also highlight that engaging family and community in mental health support is an essential intervention for improving mental health outcomes amongst Indigenous children. An Elder participant addressed parents raising children in the community with these words (refer to p.68),

> *...when we raise our children as young parents, somebody teach those boundaries to them, not to be ashamed of who they are or ashamed of their bodies. Like exploring themselves. It's not a shameful thing to discover their body parts because of the way society is. That's bad. Don't do that, that's bad. We have to realize, those are not bad things. Those are good things. And we have to love ourselves and we have to teach our children lessons. First of all, you're not people loving anybody if you can't love yourself. That has to come from us and we have to love ourselves fully before we love anyone else.*

As seen in examples of rites of passage discussed in the literature review, youth claim to be supported by their Elders, aunties, and families for their spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical growth and development, however, some youth participants in this project expressed a need for more mental health support for their Elders and families in order to build a healthier relationship with themselves and others (Fox, 2017; Native Youth Sexual Health Network et al., 2023; Risling, 2018).

Within Wiikwemkoong, **education** has been woven into the fabric of the community and is understood as a vital part of a youth's support system. Wiikwemkoong has witnessed a resurgence of language, land-based education, and youth-focused initiatives (Ritchie et al., 2015). Youth participants and community stakeholders agree that education centred around youth leadership is valued in the community. When asked the second guiding question, "how do

you build a healthy relationship?" one participant mentioned above on page 68, *"education because I'm still young. I really want to build my life still"* while another participant answered the question (shown on page 57) with *"having access to proper programming to help with finding yourself to better communicate with your partner*", which demonstrates that youth see access to education as a way to support building a healthy relationship with themselves and others.

Overall, the knowledge shared by the youth participants reflects that receiving certain teachings and education can help them make healthier choices and healthier relationships with themselves and their families. This knowledge shared by the participants echoes findings from the literature review that indicate healing intergenerational trauma, including Elders and families in sexual health education, and maintaining a relationship to culture, language, land, and nationhood contributes to healthy relationships and leads to positive health outcomes for Indigenous youth (Charleyboy, 2014; Flicker et al., 2015; Hunt, 2011; Reading & Halseth, 2013; Simpson, 2017).

Interpersonal Skills

Participants identified the theme of *interpersonal skills* as linked to the codes: **communication, boundaries, honesty/trust, transparency, consideration,** and **healthy sex talk.** Sharing circle participants agreed that building a healthy sexuality means developing healthy relationship building skills which include good communication, healthy boundaries, honesty, and trust. One youth participant reflected on the importance of boundaries with an intimate partner on page 69:

> *Creating healthy boundaries in your relationships and within yourself. And for me personally, I tend to prioritize my partner more than myself sometimes. And so yeah, over*

time I gave too much… so I created more boundaries, communication, communicating everything, and being honest.

FNHA (2018) defines healthy relationships as developing healthy boundaries, consent, self-care, and conflict resolution with each other. In a paper by Boivin et al. (2023), Indigenous youth perspectives on well-being is presented as community care in a YPAR postcard project. In the postcard project, youth asserted that a healing space meant creating boundaries where vulnerability does not have to be feared because trust is established. Much of the current literature on relational **trust** and **transparency** focused on relationships within the context of professional and healthcare settings between service providers and clients (Amaglo, 2022; Cole et al., 2021). There is currently a gap in the broader peer-reviewed literature about these topics within Indigenous youth relationships. However, there is evidence of Indigenous youth exploring these topics in work done by the Native Youth Sexual Health Network. For example, the topics of boundaries; developing honesty, trust, and transparency with oneself and community; having consideration of others; and healthy sex talk are all supported in statements found in the recently released Indigenous Youth Affirmation Deck (NYSHN, n.d.). This is a deck of cards with words of affirmations that I used in our final report meeting with youth participants and a deck I keep at my desk as a daily reminder of the strengths of Indigenous youth. Examples of the statements are below and shown in Figure 16:

Figure 16: Indigenous Youth Affirmation Deck (NYSHN, n.d.)

- I don't need to apologize for asserting my boundaries
- It's okay to move myself away from relationships that are harming me
- It's okay to not go to ceremonial spaces where I don't feel safe
- I deserve to feel safe on my homelands and waters
- Masturbation is ceremony
- All trans bodies are sacred

- Queerness is traditional
- I'm not coming out – I'm coming into the circle (NYSHN, n.d.).

In line with these affirmations are two youth participants who stated that what they need to build a healthy relationship is *"liking myself, having a healthy relationship with myself. Good support system. Need to be heard, transparency and open to receiving and giving love"* and *"a healthy relationship is being honest to each other and treating each other with respect."* (refer to page 70). In communication, a participant on page 68 stated they wanted more *"programs to teach you how to communicate with your partner and yourself better"*. Youth participants agree that fostering healthy relationships and sexual wellness requires practicing multiple overlapping interpersonal skills.

When it comes to **healthy sex talk**, a community-based project engaging Indigenous youth in HIV prevention activism by Flicker et al. (2017) demonstrated that youth see sexual health education as important in the context of viewing sexuality as traditional and sacred, as well as valuing the role of family and Elders. An Elder participant stated on page 69,

> *…when I was a teenager, I don't think we ever talked about sex. Nobody ever said, oh let's have a circle. Let's do this. And again, it's all retracing your steps… I think a lot of it had to do with your parents were at residential school plus how strong the ruling of the church that had it had on the community…But now that's what you hear. Seven grandfather teachings. But it's a way of life. It's a way of life. That's what it's, yeah, that's history. Very good.*

Knowledge shared by participants and reflected in the literature affirm that sexual wellness and healthy relationships are achievable through healthy sex talk and strengthening interpersonal skills of healthy communication, boundaries, honesty/trust/transparency, and

having consideration of self and others. Having more knowledge and teachings about these skills is shown to improve relationship building for youth, resulting in a healthier sexuality (Boivin et al., 2023; Flicker et al., 2017; FNHA, 2018; NYSHN, n.d.). This may be helpful for community members and leadership to know in future programming centred around youth sexual health needs.

Nurture

Participants linked the theme of *nurture* to **support systems** and **unconditional love.** Participants agree that a healthy **support system** is needed to protect and nurture their relationships and sexual wellness. As one youth participant in the sharing circle said above on page 71,

> *…you would need a support system. Cause you can't rely on one person. And you can't do it alone at the same time. So that's why I put talking to family and friends can be very helpful. Having an outlet, emotional or physical, letting out some aggression or even being passionate. I also put don't bottle emotions.*

Ceremonies and traditional rites of passage have been demonstrated to support Indigenous youth in their transition into adulthood in a good way because they are surrounded by a supportive network of Elders, mentors, aunties, and community members (Fox, 2017; FNHA, 2018; Risling, 2018). In an HIV community-based research project by Flicker et al. (2015), results demonstrated that Indigenous Elders held important roles in promoting positive relationships, protecting community, conflict resolution and mediation, and counselling and support. Elders were shown to be an integral part of Indigenous community support systems (Flicker et al., 2015; 2017). Thus, Indigenous youth can build healthy relationships and a healthy

sexuality when they are nurtured by a support system of Elders and community members (Flicker et al., 2015; 2017; Fox, 2017; FNHA, 2018; Risling, 2018).

Youth participants discussed in the sharing circles that a healthy relationship needs to be nurtured by **unconditional love**, which is demonstrated by being open to growth and change in relationships. As one participant stated on page 69, *"and to build my relationship with my partner would be to practice the five love languages like gift giving, physical touch, words of affirmation, acts of service, and quality time".* Simpson and Cardinal (2013) talk about Anishinaabe love as a love rooted in one's own story of resilience, ancestral history, and truthfulness and how this love can liberate from colonial violence. Borrows (2018) also draws on the connection between Anishinaabe law and the rivers as teachers of love. For example, in Anishinaabemowin, the word *Mississauga* is broken down into *micha* and *zaagiin,* which translates to "large river mouth", but *zaagi* also means love, and hence *Mississauga* is also the "place of great love" (Borrows, 2018, p.54). Borrows (2018) examines the personality of the river to identify how love can be demonstrated. As with the river that carries life, abundance, sustenance, and nourishment, so love should also be a free flow of support and nourishment to others. Love strengthens how we act towards one and other and is necessary to nurturing relationships, Indigenous resurgence, and learning about Anishinaabe laws (Borrows, 2018; Corntassel, 2012). Simpson (2014) contends that Indigenous people produce knowledge, love, and compassion when they are supported by the intimacy of relationships with the land, family, and community.

These findings support the idea that Indigenous youth desire healthy sexuality and relationships that are supported by their communities and Elders and nurtured by love. It also suggests that a return to traditional rites of passages and ceremonies can contribute to Indigenous

resurgence, sexual wellness, and positive relationships (Borrows, 2018; Corntassel, 2012; Flicker et al., 2015; 2017; Fox, 2017; FNHA, 2018; Risling, 2018; Simpson, 2014)

Self-Awareness, Respecting Self

Participants linked the themes of *self-awareness* and *respecting self* to the codes: **self-acceptance, acknowledge feelings/actions, self-care/love,** and **self-awareness.** Youth participants expressed the importance of self-acceptance, self-love, and self-awareness when building relationship with others. It was discussed as the most important step before beginning any relationship. This is also reflected in the flower model by Absolon (2011) where research begins with the land and then the situated self. Absolon (2011) discusses **self-awareness** and **self-acceptance** as rooted in Anishinaabe stories, gifts, and how "we come to know" Indigenous identity (p.87). One youth participant shared on page 52 that, *"sexuality is being your true authentic self. Without regards as to how one might judge, perceive, to be honest"*. Another youth participant spoke about self-awareness and self-respect on page 72 as,

> *[maintaining] a healthy relationship with yourself so you won't have any reason to have some kind of outburst on anyone because you're already dealing with it and you already found a way to let it out in a healthy way.*

Lavallée (2009) shares about her lifelong journey of searching to understand herself as an Anishinaabe kwe, of her feelings of **self-acceptance** and "undeservingness", and of **acknowledging** *her* **own feelings**, family history, and identity by unlearning the harmful narratives against her people (p.31). WEA and NYSHN (2016) discuss **self-love** as demonstrated in consent – respecting the law of the land which is deeply connected to the way Indigenous bodies are governed. **Self-care** for Anishinaabe youth is further defined by Shawande et al.

(2013) as self-determination, autonomy, and rebuilding capacity through traditional medicine teachings. A youth participant agrees with this statement saying above on page 57,

> *connecting with my culture definitely brings up my spiritual health. Advance my education because I'm still young. I really want to build my life still. So that'll help accept who I am kind of thing. Practise more self-care is a big thing for me. So yeah, whether it be smudging and not.*

Aligning with the literature, youth participants in this research project assert that self-awareness and self-respect are an important part of discovering sexual wellness and building healthy relationships by strengthening their Indigenous identity and ways of knowing (Lavallée, 2009; WEA & NYSHN, 2016). Indigenous youth models of self-care and self-love include traditional medicine teachings and connection to the land (Absolon, 2011; Shawande, 2013).

Spiritual Knowledge + Growth and Morality

The codes that were linked to the themes of *spiritual knowledge and growth* and *morality* were: **contentment, reconnection, self-prioritize, overcoming peer pressure, returning to traditional roots/culturally connected/spirituality/ceremony, acceptance,** and **peace.** While no specific literature is written about contentment, peace, acceptance, and prioritizing self in relation to Indigenous youth, much work has been done around Indigenous youth strengths and resilience when it comes to sexual health and youth leadership, resulting in feelings of *contentment, peace, acceptance, and prioritizing self* (Hardy et al., 2020; Lesperance, 2016; NYSHN, n.d.; Tuck and Yang, 2014). This can be seen in work by Hardy et al. (2020) where Indigenous youth are centred as leaders and partners in 2SLGBTTQQIA and gender non-conforming research to prioritize their needs, resulting in youth developing a greater sense of self-determination and self-acceptance. The Sexy Health Carnival toolkit, created by Lesperance

(2016), centred sex positivity and self-esteem in a series of activities educating Indigenous youth on sexual and reproductive health issues. This toolkit was used in different Indigenous communities across Canada, since its development in 2012, to revitalize sexual health education in a culturally safe and supportive way so that Indigenous youth may have contentment, peace, and acceptance of their own sexuality within their home communities, as Lesperance (2016) stated, "a crucial part of the carnival is making sure never to shame the things we do, or the actions and steps we take to survive, but rather to provide support and love, as our ancestors and spirits have taught us well to do" (p. 89). Youth participant discussions around feelings of *contentment, peace, acceptance, and prioritizing self* also reflect this knowledge gathered by the literature when it comes to support that centres their sexual health needs, as one participant states on page 70, *"sexuality is being your true authentic self. Without regards as to how one might judge, perceive, to be honest."*

Risling (2018) discusses **reconnection** and **returning to traditional roots** and **ceremony** in the form of rites of passages and unlearning shame about sexuality by reclaiming Indigenous celebrations and ceremonies. This was also reflected among the youth participants, as one youth stated on page 70 above, "connect with my culture definitely brings up my spiritual health". **Returning to traditional ways** of knowing and doing is an important part of Indigenous resurgence and reclamation and has helped youth develop a greater understanding of consent, reciprocity, and sexuality in their relationships (Asch et al., 2018; Corntassel, 2012; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2013). Fox (2017) shows the strength of rites of passage ceremonies by revitalizing language and connection to community. Hatala et al. (2019) also identified relationship to land as a central Indigenous determinant of health and critical to youth wellness, self-determination, self-agency, and building positive human-nature relationships.

Youth participants agreed that a healthy relationship means returning to traditional roots and ceremony such as rites of passage and traditional teachings, as one participant shared on page 71,

> *...the berry fast helped me discipline myself a lot. I didn't eat berries, I didn't go swimming, I didn't eat berries for the whole year. I just ate other fruits that I wanted. I did the fast. I went for two days and yeah, that was really hard. That's really helped me discipline myself and get off the bad stuff.*

Several youth and non-youth participants mention the *Seven Grandfather Teachings* as a foundation to the Anishinaabe values they share (see Figure 6 for the Wiikwemkoong governance structure which is depicted by seven animals and seven character traits based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings). The Seven Grandfather Teachings are taught and known to youth participants and community members through the school curriculum and community traditional teachings. It was also named by youth at the beginning of the sharing circles in the creation of group agreements and protocols. It taught to be foundational to the Anishinaabe way of life in Wiikwekmoong along with other traditional teachings.

In **overcoming peer pressure**, Reynolds et al. (2023) explored peer influence in the context of substance use amongst Indigenous youth in Canada and found that youth who affiliated with peers who did not use substances reduced their overall substance use. Although youth participants did not discuss substance use specifically, they discussed the pressure of partners in relationships. One youth participant gave an example of peer pressure as giving too much to their partner: *"I tend to prioritize my partner more than myself sometimes. And so yeah, over time I gave too much…"* (p.67).

Thus, youth participants articulated that part of learning about sexual health and healthy relationships is returning to their roots, culture, rites of passages, language, and traditional teachings. This knowing is also reflected in the work of other Indigenous researchers who have described Indigenous ways of being as grounded in relationality, resurgence, reciprocity, and its interconnectedness to land and language (Corntassel, 2012; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2013). These findings suggest that including culture, tradition, and spirituality in sexual health and wellness teachings is a vital part of Indigenous youth sexual health priorities.

Implications and Youth-Led Evaluation

The following presents recommendations and implications drawn from the above discussion, as well as from a feedback form developed by the youth facilitators. The original intention of this project was to engage Wiikwemkoong youth in youth-led sexual health research to find barriers preventing access to sexual health and to co-develop a report to present back to community for future youth sexual health programming. However, sharing circles were focused on healthy relationships instead, while topics of sexual health and wellness emerged from these conversations. Like the flow of water, youth facilitators and participants transformed the original sharing circle questions as they felt healthy relationships was foundational to their sexuality (see p.48-49). This research demonstrated that Wiikwemkoong youth view healthy relationships and sexual health and wellness as inseparable, and that they desire support in building healthier relationships and a healthy sexuality. This research also revealed gaps in the broader literature around Indigenous youth sexual health experiences within Canada, suggesting there may be a disparity around supports for Indigenous youth in their sexual health and wellness within their home community.

As every youth is unique and may have different needs, the implications from this research may differ from other youth not captured in the project. However, these conversations can begin to inform future more in-depth conversations around youth sexual health needs and priorities in Wiikwemkoong. It is therefore important to use this knowledge to mobilize community members to further support youth in their journey of sexual wellness. The recommendations from the youth-led sharing circles that emerged from the above discussion conclusions are organized into seven points:

1) Indigenous youth recommend supporting more gender-inclusive washrooms and clean spaces for personal hygiene in the community.
2) Indigenous youth recommend supporting youth to find healthier dopamine/serotonin options, healthier ways to feeling good and happy, when building healthy relationships.
3) Indigenous youth recommend that Elders, families, and community members continue to support youth by seeking ways to connect with the land and culture and heal intergenerational trauma.
4) Indigenous youth recommend more teachings about developing interpersonal skills to improve relationship building and communication with others.
5) Indigenous youth recommend supporting the return to traditional rites of passages in the community to revitalize sexual health in a resurgent way.
6) Indigenous youth recommend continuing to strengthen Indigenous models of self-care and self-love to strengthen their Indigenous identities.
7) Indigenous youth recommend including culture, tradition, ceremony, and spirituality in sexual health and wellness teachings.

The above recommendations suggest that further work needs to be done in the greater landscape of Indigenous youth and sexual health research as revealed by the gaps between youth findings and the current literature. The recommendations also suggest that further support and resources are needed from community leadership and community members to strengthen youth sexual health and wellness in the community. It is recommended that Indigenous communities and leadership support gender-inclusive washrooms and sanitary spaces to dignify and respect youth bodies and sexualities and improve their overall health and wellness (FNHA, 2018; Francis et al., 2022; Ingrey, 2023; Krusz et al., 2019). Youth are also requesting from community resources to help provide healthy dopamine and serotonin options, which are linked to positive mental health, balanced relationships, and sexual wellness (Shawande et al., 2013; Simkin & Arnold, 2020; Wabano et al., 2019). It is suggested that families of youth, Elders, and community members seek to heal their own intergenerational trauma and improve their mental health so that they can become more supportive networks for youth (Baskin, 2016; Lopez-Carmen et al., 2019; McQuaid et al., 2022). It is also recommended for these families, Elders, and community members to revitalize traditional rites of passages which strengthen the support system that nurtures youth relationships (Flicker et al., 2015; 2017; Fox, 2017; FNHA, 2018; Risling, 2018). Community teachers, youth leaders, program managers, and service providers can help provide teachings and meet youth learning needs on interpersonal skills of communication, relationship boundaries, honesty/trust, transparency, consideration, and talking about sex to improve interpersonal relationships (Boivin et al., 2023; Flicker et al., 2017; FNHA, 2018; NYSHN, n.d.). Communities must also model Indigenous self-care and self-love through connecting with the land, language, and traditional medicine teachings to support youth in healthy relationship building with themselves and others (Borrows, 2018; Corntassel, 2012;

Simpson, 2014). Finally, it is important for youth that community stakeholders and decision-makers, as well as community members see the interconnectedness of land and body and be able to weave this into sexual health education and programming and teachings (Asch et al., 2018; Corntassel, 2012; Hatala et al., 2019; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2013). Considering these recommendations voiced by a group of Wiikwemkoong youth, service providers, community leadership, Elders, and families can then use this information to help better support youth needs and improve future community youth programming.

To add to the recommendations revealed by the above discussion, a feedback form developed by the Youth Steering Committee was distributed to all participants on the first day of the data analysis meeting (Appendix G and H). It is important to note that this was not captured in the methodology section as it was suggested by the youth facilitators during the days between sharing circles and data analysis meetings. I am including it here because I believe it demonstrates the leadership and self-determination of youth and the actions they take to meet their own needs. The feedback form included six questions related to the sessions and one question unrelated to the sessions. There was one question purposely included to help youth assess needs for future programming specific to sexual health needs (Appendix H). The question also helped to address the original research question of "what do youth need in order to access sexual health resources and supports within Wiikwemkoong?". The rationale behind this feedback form is that the Youth Steering Committee felt it was important to ask their peers for feedback so they can use the information for future youth-led programming.

In the one question related to sexual health needs, participants were asked what barriers they experienced in accessing sexual health resources and services in the community (Appendix H). The following were responses collected from all participants (Figure 16):

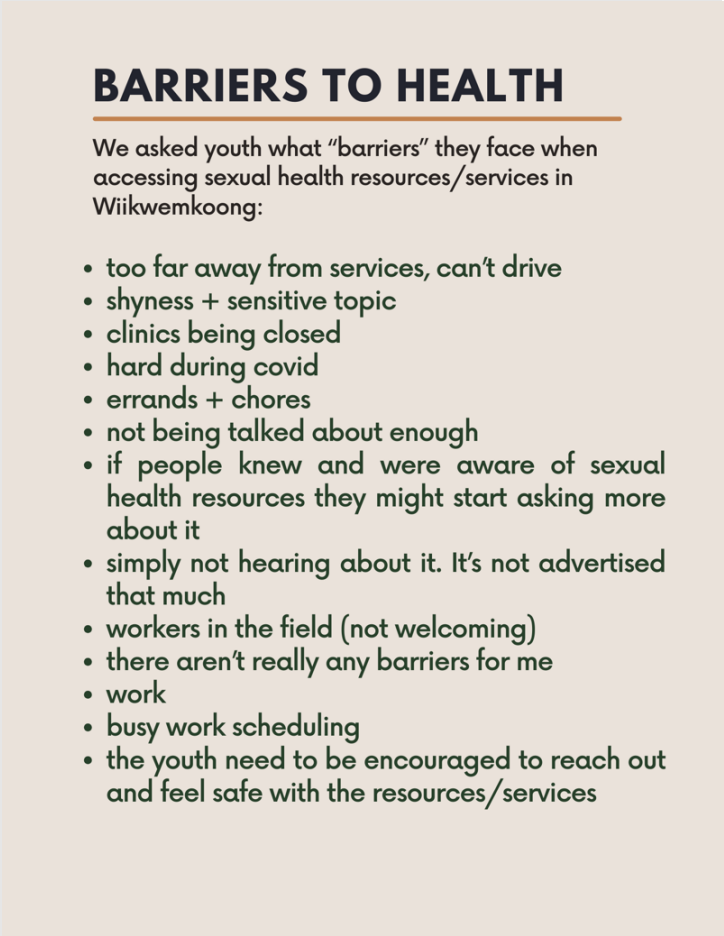

Figure 17: Barriers to accessing sexual health resources and supports in Wiikwemkoong.

Participants noted that sexual health services need to be more accessible, sensitive, safe, welcoming, and advertised in the community for youth to feel more supported and comfortable in accessing resources. In addition, participants noted other barriers such as work, chores, errands, and COVID-19 preventing them from accessing sexual health support. This information helps to illustrate the critical knowledge that youth hold about their own needs and how they can be met. Indigenous youth are self-aware and able to make connections between themselves and their community. The creation of this feedback form demonstrates their leadership and creativity when they are given support and space to lead. Understanding what exists and does not exist for

Indigenous youth in sexual health support is critical to the overall health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities.

In conclusion, the above recommendations and youth feedback form demonstrate that when youth are active participants of knowledge-gathering, research, and meaning-making, they can create positive change and it may lead to positive health outcomes. The recommendations suggest youth desire a balanced and wholistic support network from their communities that include culture, spirituality and tradition; connecting with Elders and families; adequate sexual health education and teachings about relationship building; and finding healthy spaces and ways to be happy and healthy. These recommendations and the themes that emerged from the data analysis inform us of what youth participants prioritize and what is most salient to them. They see these themes as an interconnected part of their Anishinaabe identity and what healthy relationships and sexuality should look like. This youth-led project created a space for Anishinaabe youth to voice their wisdom and changes they want to see in themselves and their community. With this knowledge, we as witnesses, co-researchers, community members, and members of the greater whole, have a responsibility to support youth in their growth and include them in decision-making processes about their own health, bodies, and sexual wellness and further Indigenous research that centres youth needs.

Chapter 6: Tertiary Colours – Closing and Continuing the Journey in a Good Way

In this final chapter, I will be leading you out of this landscape by leaving you with how we can continue this journey in our own way and envision Indigenous youth futurities. May you re-enter the wider world with more understanding and awareness of youth strengths and voices, and hopefully take action in your own way for the benefit of Indigenous youth sovereignty. We must remember that the flower thrives because it is nurtured in an environment of care and relationship to its surroundings (Absolon, 2011). First, I will share how the youth named the project; second, I will reflect on the strengths and limitations of this project; and third, I will present how we will be sharing knowledge and learnings with the community before I finally close this journey in a good way.

Tuck and Yang (2014) illustrated this phase of the research process with tertiary colours, which are created by mixing secondary colours with primary colours. In my *Three Spirits* painting (Figure 4) I created new colours that were softer and more nuanced by layering primary colours onto my secondary colours, creating yellow-orange, violet-blue, and blue-green. This phase is about creating new thoughts and ideas and adding new layers to create deeper meaning.

Project Naming Ceremony

Following the participatory thematic-analysis process, youth participants were invited into a naming ceremony for the project. Tobacco ties were gifted to the youth as reciprocity for this request, as guided by traditional teachings from Anishinaabe Elders. Using knowledge gathered from the sessions, youth engaged in a brainstorming activity to create possible names for the project. This was an optional activity and youth participants were not required to participate and could withdraw at any time. We chose to name the project on the last day of the meetings to ensure a collaborative process that included all participants and to reflect the

findings from the project. It was also meant to help make meaning of the findings and represent the beginning of something new, setting the foundation for future youth-led projects.

To begin, sticky notes were distributed to each participant. Participants were instructed to write their ideas on the sticky note, then place their sticky note in the centre of the table once they were ready to share. After about ten minutes of quiet reflection, the name ideas collected at the centre of the table were read aloud by a volunteer participant. Some names were written in both English and Anishinaabemowin and for some that did not have an Anishinaabe translation, youth participants requested language assistance from the Elders present. The Elders then offered the Anishinaabe word for it and it was immediately written down next to the name. The possible names offered by the youth were:

- Healthy Relationships
- Understanding yourself + others
- Trust – *Pemadagen*
- Truth – *Debwewin*
- Try to get free (from something) – *Wiikwaji*
- Working towards the future
- Wisdom – *Naabwaakaawin*
- Love – *Zaagidwin*
- Honesty – *Gekawadziwin*
- Preparing for the next 7 generations
- Knowing our minds + bodies – *Kindiziyin*

After all the names were read aloud and some given Anishinaabe translation, a space was held for discussion and additional thoughts and ideas. Once consensus was reached to move

forward, youth participants gathered around the names and voted for the one they liked most by placing a checkmark on the sticky note (Figure 18). The name that received the most checkmarks was “knowing our minds + bodies” which was then translated to “kindiziyin” by the Elder. The space was once again opened for discussion before a group consensus was reached to move forward with this name. The group cheered in enthusiasm and excitement at the final approval of the name of this project: Kindiziyin – Knowing Our Minds and Our Bodies.

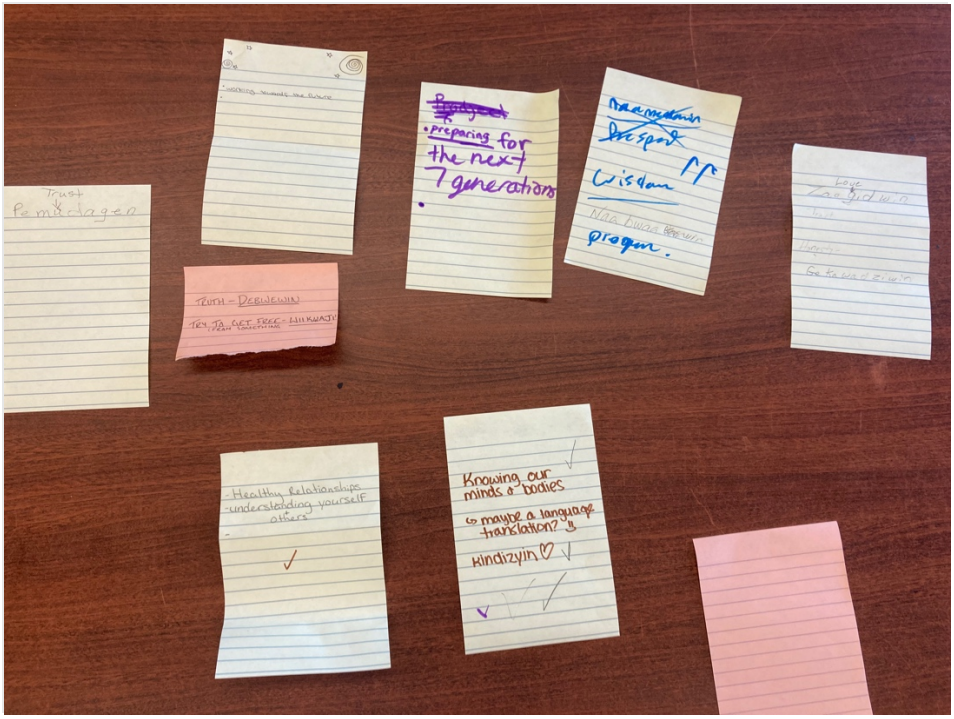

Figure 18: Youth naming ceremony: brainstorming and arriving at consensus

It is important to note that collective consensus and agreement was always obtained before moving forward in all stages of the project to ensure all participants felt their spirits and voices were honoured and to further recognize the importance of consent in relationships (Liebenberg et al., 2015, 2017, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2014; WEA & NYSHN, 2016).

Strengths and Limitations

The limitation of YPAR in this project is that it requires active participation from all partnerships and a long-term commitment (Padgett, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2015). In YPAR, youth are the driving force in the research, however, when this project began, many of the youth facilitators and Youth Steering Committee members had multiple responsibilities and challenges such as childcare, jobs, deaths in the community, grief, addictions, and other challenges faced by youth in the community on a daily basis; hence they were not able to contribute as much time and energy. One of the youth facilitators also brought her toddler to sharing circles due to lack of childcare. Considering these known time constraints, other commitments and responsibilities, and barriers experienced by youth in the community, a long-term commitment of their participation was not realistic (Holkup et al., 2016; Hunt, 2011). Thus, we had set realistic and attainable goals and timeframes for participants prior to their participation and also had to change and adapt the goals throughout the project. At times, this meant that I had to intervene in facilitation and leadership, leading to a possible imbalance in the researcher relationship (Strega & Brown, 2015). In general, the strength of YPAR is that it relies on relationships already established in the community, relationships grounded in mutual trust and care.

It is worth noting that 14-16 participants reflect a small sample size of youth and may not be representative of all the youth voices in Wiikwemkoong. As of 2020, the youth population in Wiikwemkoong was over 300 people between the ages of 12 to 25 years old (Wiikwemkoong, n.d.). This small sample size leaves out the majority of youth perspectives on healthy relationships and sexual health within Wiikwemkonong. It also does not capture the voices of youth younger than 15 years old and older than 25 years old. However, a small sample size in qualitative data has been shown to be sufficient in representing participant experiences, while

larger sample sizes may have more nuanced findings (Young & Casey, 2018). This may be due to participants being able to build more trust and openness with each other in a smaller group and have more time and space to express their experiences, vis-à-vis a larger group where participants do not have time to get to know each other and do not have enough space to share experiences. For these reasons, while this project cannot be used to represent all youth voices in Wiikwemkoong, it can be used to demonstrate a clear example of youth strengths, leadership, and self-determination in the community.

As Instagram, Facebook (used by Wasse-Naabin Youth Centre for recruitment), and emails were used as the primary method of recruitment and communication with participants in this project, it carried low risks worth mentioning. Social media, group discussions, and digital technology pose risks in relation to privacy, mental health, digital literacy, and safety for its users, especially for younger users. However, in a thesis by Intahchomphoo (2019), it was found that within urban and rural Indigenous communities in Canada, social media was used by youth as 'cyber-activism', where they found opportunities to learn about Indigenous rights and getting their voices heard in the world. Overall, digital media usage within Indigenous communities was seen as a positive way to revitalize relationships as long as there are appropriate digital literacy and safety teachings provided to youth (Intahchomphoo, 2019; Steeves, 2014).

Fire, Water, Earth – Knowledge Sharing

In the final stage of my watercolour painting, I applied three techniques, 70% isopropyl alcohol, Pacific Sea salt, and plastic cling wrap, to create different textures and illustrate the three elements: fire, water, earth. This also represents the final stage of the project where youth come together again and share a co-developed report with community.

On May 28th, 2024, I met with youth participants online over Zoom for approximately 1.5 hours to review the final draft of the co-developed report on Canva, an online program that allows for collaborative report designing. The report was also accessible to the Youth Steering Committee for several months to make edits at any time. The report cover was designed by the project's youth artist and myself (Appendix I). We used the youth artist's painting as the main picture and chose motifs and symbols specific to Anishinaabe identity and medicines. The remainder of the report was written and compiled by myself alongside the Youth Steering Committee. At this report meeting, only 5 youth participants and the mental health support worker were in attendance as other youth participants were busy preparing for pow wow season and had other work commitments. The report was reviewed together, and participants were given an opportunity to make amendments or additions. Once participants felt satisfied with the report, they added their name or pseudonym under the list of authors. All participants were given access to reviewing and editing the report on Canva and directed to complete the final draft before the end of June 2024.

As I was preparing for an oral exam of this project in August of 2024, the knowledge sharing phase was not complete at the time of my defence. For this reason, I maintained communication with the youth and worked with them in August/September for community knowledge sharing at a later date. For the knowledge sharing phase, participants used theatre arts, dance, storytelling, and/or other forms of art as a method to share this report (Strega & Brown, 2015; Wilson, 2008). Hunt (2011) recommends using arts-based approaches for youth as a powerful tool for creating dialogue around difficult topics. Youth may also use social media as a platform to share their knowledge (Intahchomphoo, 2019). As theatre arts, storytelling, and dance can be a powerful tool to address challenging, and sometimes triggering, topics amongst

youth who have been raised in a legacy of trauma and colonialism, it is important to ensure proper support systems and resources are available (Absolon, 2010; Hunt, 2011; Loppie & Wien, 2009; Taboada et al., 2016). Service providers from Wikwemikong Health Centre and the Wasse-Naabin Youth Centre are available to trauma-informed support to participants during the knowledge sharing process (Wikwemikong Health Centre, 2020). This co-developed report and knowledge sharing phase enables youth to rebuild relational skills, thus changing the outcomes of their story by reconnecting with their peers, adults, and Elders in the community. It is vital to this project's process that even in knowledge dissemination, that the autonomy of the youth is honoured through consultation, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility as this ensures the research is led by youth and benefits youth (Liebenberg et al., 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

Baamaapii Minwa Kawaapmin – See You Later

In this last section, I want to leave you with my final thoughts that come truthfully and with humility from my body, heart, mind, and spirit. As we know from the beginning of this journey, the land is our teacher and is interconnected with Indigenous knowledges and ways of being (NYSHN, 2023; Simpson, 2014); and so, it has been difficult for me to be physically and geographically distanced from the land, community, teachers, and youth in Wiikwemkoong, from which this work is situated, during the writing stage of this project. While I am committed to keeping this work relevant and beneficial to community, I have not been able to return home during this time and thus, at times, found it challenging to engage with the writing process meaningfully.

At the time of writing of this work was also a time when Indigenous lands were being actively occupied and stripped of its people and culture in an on-going genocide in Palestine (and beyond, from Turtle Island to other lands, waters, and territories), mobilizing me to join in

community collective actions to influence those in power. It was also a time when many spirits entered the earth portal, and I was called to support multiple babies arriving earthside in my birth justice work. What has kept me grounded and allowed me to write this final chapter are the authentic lifelong relationships I have with Wiikwemkoong youth, my accountability to community, and my practice of putting down prayers, medicines, and intentions for loved ones during this process. Although I visit the community one to three times a year and stay connected with the youth and other community members, I recognize that relationality can at times be tenuous when someone is not consistently present. I recognize my own privileges as a non-Anishinaabe community member and non-Indigenous co-researcher in Wiikwemkoong who has had the mobility to enter/leave the community at my own will. Many of the youth participants have remained in the community or returned after post-secondary education and chose to stay or simply have nowhere else to go. I want to acknowledge that in my best efforts of shifting power, naming my positionality, power, and privileges, doing reflexive work, and creating space to ensure this work is led by youth, there remains elements of systemic power that I have not been able to dismantle because of the colonial powers I still operate within and have internalized (Loppie, 2016; Walia, 2013).

When I was presenting this research project to community, I encountered feelings of hesitation, suspicion, ambivalence, and backlash from some community members, which may have been received differently if this project was not affiliated with an academic institution such as the University of Victoria. Although, these responses were placated by community leaders in support of the project, this compelled me to further protect and safeguard the knowledges shared with me and remain accountable to community so that this project returns to community and benefits community. I am reminded of when I lived in Wiikwemkoong and I also participated in

research studies where I met bright and eager researchers coming into the community, gathering data, building relationships with us, and then leaving us, never to be heard from again. I remember it felt exciting at first when they enticed us with giveaways, free food, and friendship, but they always left us feeling empty, betrayed, and stunned, feeling like yet another resource extraction. I, too, felt hurt and exploited by outside researchers intending to do "no harm". I want to acknowledge that the harm I experienced is in no way the same as generations of harm experienced by Indigenous people who have been a subject of research. I also recognize my privilege of being invited by the community to serve as a helper and that my involvement in these research projects was by choice. These experiences urged me to turn to academia to explore anti-oppressive research and look to Indigenous ways of research that ground itself in relationships and honour community protocols.

While I mostly had a sense of ease and familiarity when preparing this project with the youth, it also challenged me in ways I did not expect. From all my years of youth programming within the community as a nurse and community member, I did not anticipate academic and institutional challenges such as ethics applications, several meetings with Chief & Council and leaderships, lack of funding, writing proposals, and even a pandemic that led to a community-wide lockdown. This all took more time and was more responsibility than running a typical program in the community. Because of this, I navigated undulating feelings and emotions of resentment, stagnation, and fawning towards academia and institutions that made me question if there was a place for Indigenous youth research within the academy at all. However, in the end, I recognized that this research process is an important part of ensuring consent, accountability, and responsibility with community, knowing that this work began with the strengths of community.

And it is my hope that it will also contribute to acts of liberation for Indigenous youth in academia.

To close this thesis, yet leave this space open for future work, I want to acknowledge that this project is a continuation of work that has already been done in the community and began before my arrival. This work was led by youth who were brought into this world by ancestral knowledges and Anishinaabe traditions despite historical and on-going present-day colonization, imperialism, racism, capitalism, patriarchy, and effects of genocide and intergenerational trauma (Baskin, 2016; Loppie & Wien, 2009). This work will continue and perpetuate for as long as Indigenous peoples are on this land, until all Indigenous land is given back sovereignty, and until we all join in the decolonial struggle to #landback Turtle Island and beyond for the liberation of all people. I hope that as we come to the end of this journey, your witnessing of this work will challenge and change the way you see Indigenous youth in this world and how you show up in your community. I hope you will remember that this research joins others in rewriting, revitalizing, and resurging the stories of youth power that have been stolen, hidden, and forgotten by those in power over generations of oppression (Risling, 2018). It is in the spirits of the youth where we can reimagine our futures and, as one of the Elder participants stated (Appendix E),

> *[the youth] are our future, the ones that are going to lead the community… it's going to be the youth that are going to bring their people back to the language and the ceremonies and to reconnect with the land and the water and everything that is around.*

It is my hope that this research will be led by future youth who keep *re-searching* the land, their bodies, and their sexuality just as this work was built upon the love and care of other relatives and past youth leaders. To the best of my ability, in supporting the co-creation of new stories and re-storying older truths within Indigenous communities and within myself, I hope that

my involvement in academia, my life's work as a nurse and birth worker, my community decolonial organizing work, my connection to the Anishinaabe community of Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, my accountability to Wiikwemkoong youth, and the strengths of all my relations will help me to carry this work "in a good way", for *mino-bimaadiziwin,* "the good life", for future generations, and that you will also do the same. G'Chi-Miigwech and g'zaagin.

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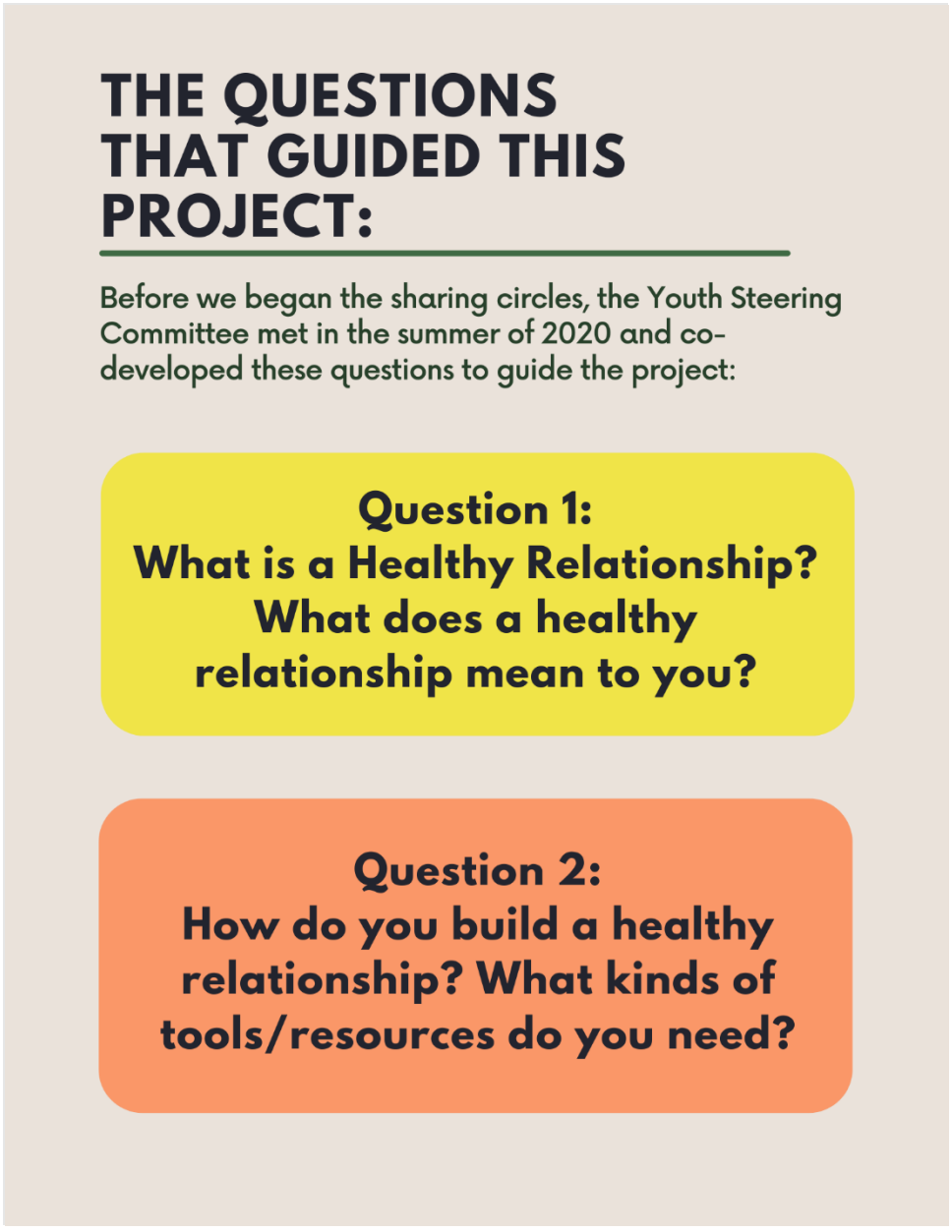
Appendices

Appendix A: Youth Co-Developed Sharing Circle Questions



Appendix B: Research Agreement with Wiikwemkoong

Research Agreement Form

Title of the study:

Wiikwemkoong Youth Speak Up on Sexual Wellness: The Land and Our Bodies

1.5 This research agreement establishes the basis of the relationship
1.6 between Olvie Li (Principal Researcher)

1.7 of the University of Victoria (Institution of the Princpal Researcher)

1.8 and Naandwechige-Gamig (Wiikwemkoong Health Centre)

In signing this document, the principal researcher and the representatives of Wikwemikong Health Centre acknowledge the following:

1. All research activities and reports or publications arising from research in Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory will conform to the research principles outlined in the Guidelines for Ethical Aboriginal Research, and the code of ethics corresponding to the professional body most closely related to the area of study of the research project (e.g., TriCouncil Policies), as well as the draft ethical guidelines for Aboriginal health research on file at Noojmowin Teg.
2. All data obtained from, or collected at, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory shall be coded in a manner that guarantees the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants; that is, data will be coded in a way that does not allow for identification of individual research participants.
3. Data from the study will be stored in a secure location. Audio, video, and interview notes will be labelled with pseudonyms and linked to a numerical code. Transcripts, surveys and other raw data will only be seen by members of the research group.
4. Data obtained from Zoom on the UVic Zoom application (The University of Victoria hosts and configures a Zoom application) is configured to be stored within Canada (as opposed to the U.S. where Zoom is based). The recordings are then stored on the researcher's local computer device and not on the Zoom "cloud". The principal researcher will also have access to assistance through UVic Systems (helpdesk@uvic.ca) or the Protection of Privacy Office (privacyinfo@uvic.ca).
5. Data stored on the SurveyMonkey Service at the University of Victoria will be stored only in Canada. According to the SurveyMonkey "*Terms of Service, Version 1.0*":
    1. "SurveyMonkey employees and subcontractors ("Customer Support Staff") will not access the Survey Data from outside Canada, except (a) when authorized by the Customer for the purpose of implementing, maintaining, repairing, troubleshooting or upgrading the customer's account or the Services ("Customer Support Services"), or (b) for data recovery purposes

Adapted from GEAR – Guidelines for Ethical Aboriginal Research (2003), Noojmowin Teg Health Centre

repairing, troubleshooting, or upgrading the customer's account or the Services ("Customer Support Services"), or (b) for data recovery purposes in the event of a system failure. Customer Support Staff will only ask for authorization to access the Survey Data as a last resort, after exploring every reasonable alternative. After receiving such authorization, Customer Support Staff will only access as much Survey Data as required to perform the Customer Support Services and will limit the period of access to the minimum time necessary." (SurveyMonkey Terms of Service, Version 1.0, March 15, 2018).

6. Upon completion of the study, data and records that are collected in the context of the research study remain the property of WUT and Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre). This could include completed surveys or questionnaires, transcripts, and tapes from interviews. The analysis and interpretation that arises from the raw data will remain the property of the research participants (youth and Elders), the research steering committee, WUT, and Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre).
7. Authors of a publication (community reports, journal articles, presentations, or products) will be listed in the order of the significance of their contribution to the writing of the publication and will include all, and only those individuals who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the work reported, and without whose contribution the work would not be complete. Authors of a piece may include the research participants, Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre) staff persons, volunteers, and community members who have made contributions to the writing of the publication. Members of the steering committee and other individuals instrumental to the project will be acknowledged in all publications.
8. The Principal Researcher will present results and the final report to Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory (WUT) Chief and Council and Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre). Any reports or publications arising from the research shall be submitted to the WUT Chief and Council and Health Services Director prior to distribution to communities and agencies or submission for publication. The WUT Chief and Council and Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre) will have the right to accept or reject the distribution or publication of the report.
9. The researcher shall report on an ongoing basis to the Health Services Director and the Research Steering Committee or designate on the development, planning, implementation, and results of the research.
10. The data collected and stored may not be made accessible to other researchers and/or used for research purposes other than those agreed upon without written consent of Naandwechige-Gamig's (Wikwemikong Health Centre) and without informed consent and knowledge of participants.
11. Signatures:

Adapted from GEAR – Guidelines for Ethical Aboriginal Research (2003), Noojmowin Teg Health Centre

Appendix C: Consent Forms

University of Victoria

SurveyMonkey Online-Consent
-For Youth and Elder Participants

For individuals who prefer an interactive online consent via SurveyMonkey
SurveyMonkey online-consent will be obtained if:

- Participant has limited literacy; and/or prefers to engage via online methods; and/or
- To ensure readability, understandability, and easy engagement as opposed to formalities that often result in barriers for youth to access information. The social media consent will be designed by one of the youth steering committee members.
- To ensure cultural and age appropriateness as there may be participants who would prefer not to provide conventional written or verbal consent structures
- *This consent will be distributed to youth via social media (e.g. videos and posts on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, etc.) and handled by the Principal Researcher with the Instagram account: @WikyYouthVoices (already registered). The following script will be included in their design:*

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Introduction:

Page 1.
"Aanii! Biindigen!
This is a consent form to participate in a youth-led sexuality research project in Wiikwemkoong.

Consent *means you have been given proper information about something and agree to be part of it because it sounds fun, interesting, and cool to you!*

Always ask questions if you are unsure. You can always say no. It is your right!
Everything created in this project will be shared with you and used with your permission☺

You will receive another $50 honorarium for each 'data analysis' meeting you attend.
You can opt out of this anytime you want.

One last 2-hour meeting…
A report that summarizes the data you analyzed will be presented to you. You will have the chance to read it and make any changes you want before it is presented to community members and Chief & Council. You will also receive $50 honorarium for this meeting, and a chance to co-author the youth-collaborative report!

I would like a copy of the report to review before it is sent to community members.
Answer function**: "YES (EHN). My email address is: _____ / NO (KAA)"**

Creative Art Project (OPTIONAL):
To make sure community members listen to youth voices, you will also be invited to participate in a creative art project (it can be dance, theatre, visual arts, poetry, music… the sky is the limit!) to present your project to the community. This will be a fun way to connect with other youth and community members! But it is optional to participate. This will take approximately 5-10 hours of your time to prepare depending on how big your project is. And you will receive $100 honorarium for your completed project."

There will also be a raffle for an iPhone 14 for all participants!
All participants will receive a medicine bundle and a handmade gift."

Poll function: "***Got it! / I don't get it. I have a question.***"

Page 7.

This project is called: *Wiikwemkoong Youth Speak Up on Sexual Wellness: The Land and Our Bodies*
But you will get a chance to name the project in a naming ceremony as this is your project!

This project is funded by *the University of Victoria – Internal Research/Creative Project Grant. You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca.*

The main project leader is:

- *Renée Monchalin, Assistant Professor, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, Email: rmonchalin@uvic.ca; Phone Number: 250 472 4431*

The co-leaders are:

- *Olvie Li, Social Dimensions of Health (MSc) Student, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, Email: olvieli@uvic.ca; Phone Number: 705-618-0836*
- Diane Jacko, Health Services Director, Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre), Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Email: djacko@wikyhealth.ca; Phone Number: 705-859-3164
- Youth Steering Committee & Elder: Jayda Kagige, Dakota Wemigwans, Ashley Assinewe-Bennett, and Carroll Kitchikake

Poll function: "***Got it! / I don't get it. I have a question.***"

Potential Harms and Benefits:

Page 8.
"There are pros and cons to all projects. Here are some we thought of below:

The possible harms in this project could happen during sharing circles if you share personal experiences that give you unhappy memories or feelings of sadness and stress. The research team members and Health Centre staff can connect you to supports you need. We will give you a list of services and resources before each sharing circle and after you give consent for this project. They will be present during sharing circles to support you throughout the sessions as well (you can privately message them on Zoom to speak with them in a separate break-out room).

If you do not want to Zoom in from home, or if you do not want your family to know about your participation, we will have a private room at the Health Centre for you to Zoom in from.

The possible benefits in this project could be having your voice and ideas heard to improve sexual health for the youth in Wiikwemkoong. The results from the study will help make sexual health programming to be more relevant, accommodating, and culturally safe for Wiikwemkoong youth. This project hopes to build leadership and self-determination amongst youth by strengthening their relationship with the land/water, language, cultural practices, and Elders in your community. This could make a safer and more inclusive space for youth who have different, but good, sexual health needs.

Do the risks and benefits, pros and cons of this project make sense to you?
Poll function: "***YES (EHN)/NO (KAA)***"

Do you consent to allowing this project to use your voice in this way?"

Poll function: "***YES (EHN)/NO (KAA)***"

Voluntary Participation:

Page 9.

"Voluntary Participation:
It is your choice to be part of this project.
You can say no.
You can also change your mind at any time even if you said yes before. That's OK! You don't have to explain.

If you decide you want to back out of the project, we might not be able to take your ideas out of the recordings. But your name will not be identified."

Poll function: "***Got it! / I don't get it. I have a question.***"

Confidentiality:

Page 10.

"Confidentiality:
All information that discloses your identity will not be released or published without your consent unless required by law, such as disclosing abuse or acute risk of harm to yourself or others. All information that is gathered about you in this project is kept safe by de-identifying it (not using your name) and encrypted (password protected) and locked in a drawer at the Wiky Health Centre.
The research team on the first page of this document will have access to your transcripts for data analysis purposes only. You will not be directly identified in these transcripts. The original audio recording will be deleted once the audio recording has been downloaded to a safe password protected encrypted file at the Wikwemikong Health Centre. It is important to understand that despite the protections described, there continues to be a small risk of an unintentional release of information.

But be aware that anything you share within sharing circles is known by those in the circles and is only kept safe through an honour system and a code of ethics you will develop together."

I consent to have my voice recorded, transcribed, and de-identified.
*Poll function: "**YES (EHN)/NO (KAA)**"*

If not, do you consent to having details recorded from the sharing circles with written notes?
*Poll function: "**YES (EHN)/NO (KAA)**"*

Do you have an email address where we can send you a copy of this SurveyMonkey consent form?
"YES (EHN), my email is: _____ / NO (KAA)"

For your honorarium, we need your e-transfer information (please enter your email or phone number):
_____

Do you need a private room or location separate from your home to complete Zoom-calls from?
*Poll function: "**YES (EHN)/NO (KAA)**"*

Poll function: "***Got it! / I don't get it. ~~I will DM you.~~ I have a question.***"

Page 11.

"This project will protect the identity of youth and their stories.
Your legal name will not be used.
Do you have another name? A Spirit Animal? An Avatar?"

Answer function*: **(write your answer here)***

"We will NOT tell your parents/guardians/family about your participation in this project.
You have the decision-making power!

You are also NOT required to tell your parents or family that you are participating in this project. However, we encourage you to tell a trusted friend or family member about this if you feel safe or comfortable. This is so that you have a support system that is chosen by you! We will also give you a list of supports from within the community that you can access if you do not wish to tell anyone about this.

Would you like to keep your participation confidential from your parents/guardians/power of attorney?

Poll function: YES(EHN)/NO(KAA)*"*

Ownership & Storage of Materials:

Page 12.
"What happens to all the materials?
You will get a copy of the report we put together.
Wikwemikong Health Centre will also keep the information for as long as they need so that they can meet your needs and the needs of other youth better. Nobody else will get to keep the materials after the project is over.

Zoom and SurveyMonkey will be hosted by the University of Victoria in B.C., Canada (even though their site admin will still be based in the U.S.), but the information will only be saved on a computer in Wiikwemkoong and not anywhere else

The Zoom recordings will be destroyed after your interview is transcribed. All other study data will be stored at Wikwemikong Health Centre indefinitely for the use of future programming relevant to Wiikwemkoong youth. All data stored in the Principal Investigator's computer will be stored for 5 years following study completion, at which time it will be securely destroyed by the Principal Investigator of the study."

Poll function: "***Got it! / I don't get it. I have a question.***"

Informed Consent:

Page 13.
"If this all sounds AWESOME and EXCITING for you to participate and <u>all</u> your questions have been answered, entering YOUR NAME below means you understand what this project is about, and you CONSENT to being part of this youth-led project.

A recap of this project and the time you will spend on it:

- 2 Days, 2 hours/day – Youth-facilitated sharing circles with questions about how you view sexuality and sexual health in Wiikwemkoong (10-15 youth participants [including 2 Youth Facilitators] + 2 Elders + 3 Mental Health Youth Workers + 1 UVic student)
- 2 Days, 2 hours/day – Youth-participatory data analysis meetings where you will learn to categorize the information we learned from the sharing circles (same participants from sharing circles invited)

- 1 Day, 2 hours – A report that summarizes your reflections from the sharing circles will be presented to you. You will have the chance to read it and edit it before it is presented to the community. This is also an opportunity for you to co-write/co-author the report.
- Optional: 2-3 Days, 2-3 hours/day – Youth-led community sharing projects where you will have the chance to share with Wiikwemkoong what you learned from this project and name the project (only youth and Elder participants invited to participate).
- A total of 10 hours of meetings and an extra 5-10 hours if you decide to do a community sharing project.

Remember that there are always risks in participating in the study. You can withdraw at any time. You can also ask questions at any time. All information related to you will be kept confidential. Nothing will be shared unless required by law (such as suspected abuse, neglect, or acute harm to yourself or others).

If you don't want to participate, that's okay! You can still be entered to win an iPhone 14! Chi-Miigwech!

If you have questions or concerns:

- *Contact the main project leader, Renée Monchalin (Email: rmonchalin@uvic.ca; Phone Number: 250 472 4431) or co-leaders Olvie Li (Email: olvieli@uvic.ca; Phone Number: 705-618-0836) and Diane Jacko (*Email: djacko@wikyhealth.ca; Phone Number: 705-859-3164), or any member of the Youth Steering Committee: Jayda Kagige, Dakota Wemigwans, Ashley Assinewe-Bennett, and Carroll Kitchikake;
  OR
- *Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria, (250) 472-4545, ethics@uvic.ca*

"I understand and consent to participating in the youth-led sexuality project in Wiikwemkoong"
Answer function: "(YOUR NAME)"

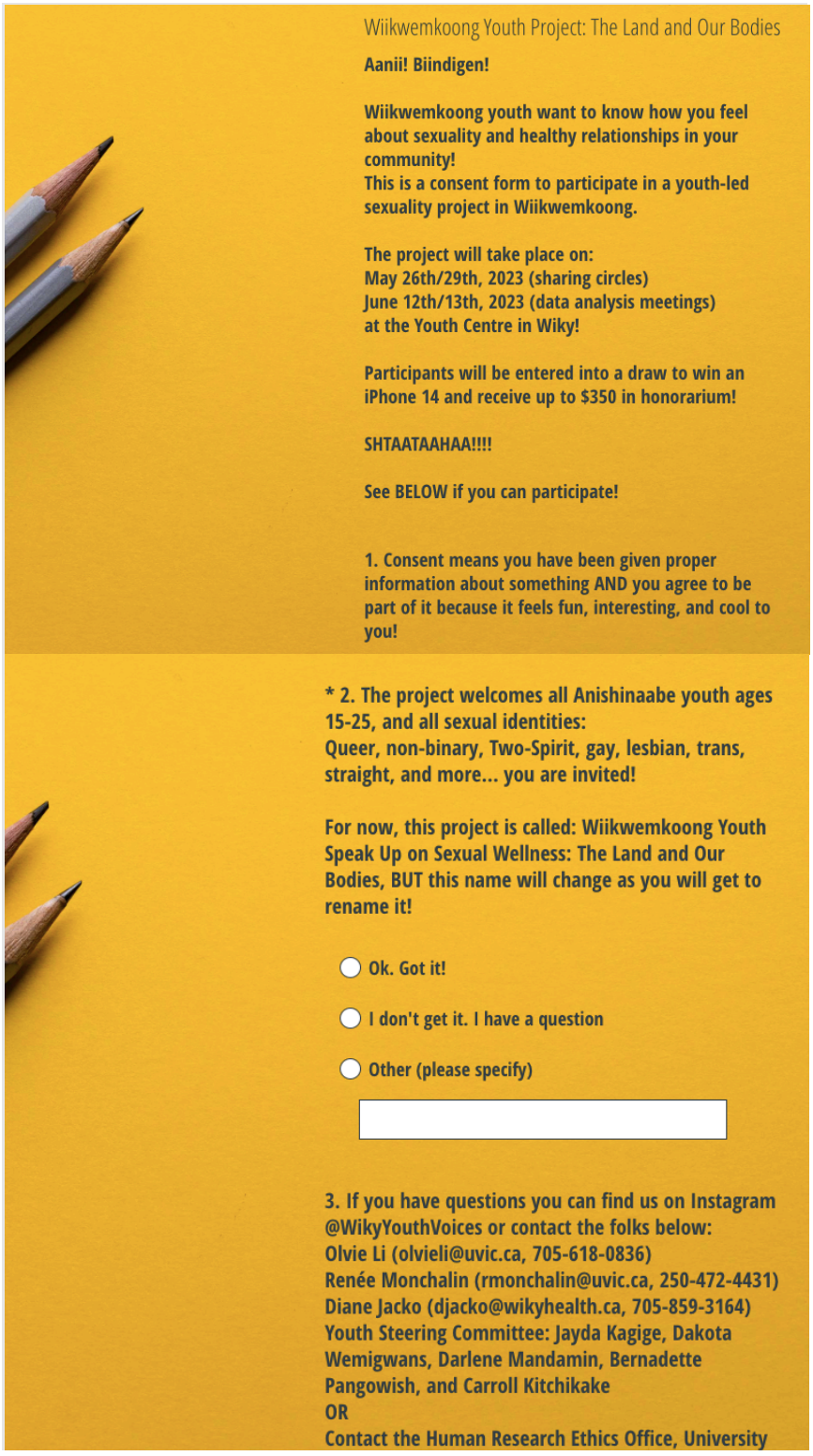
"I do NOT want to participate in the youth-led sexuality project in Wiikwemkoong"
Answer function: Check Box

"I have some questions"
Answer function: Short Answer

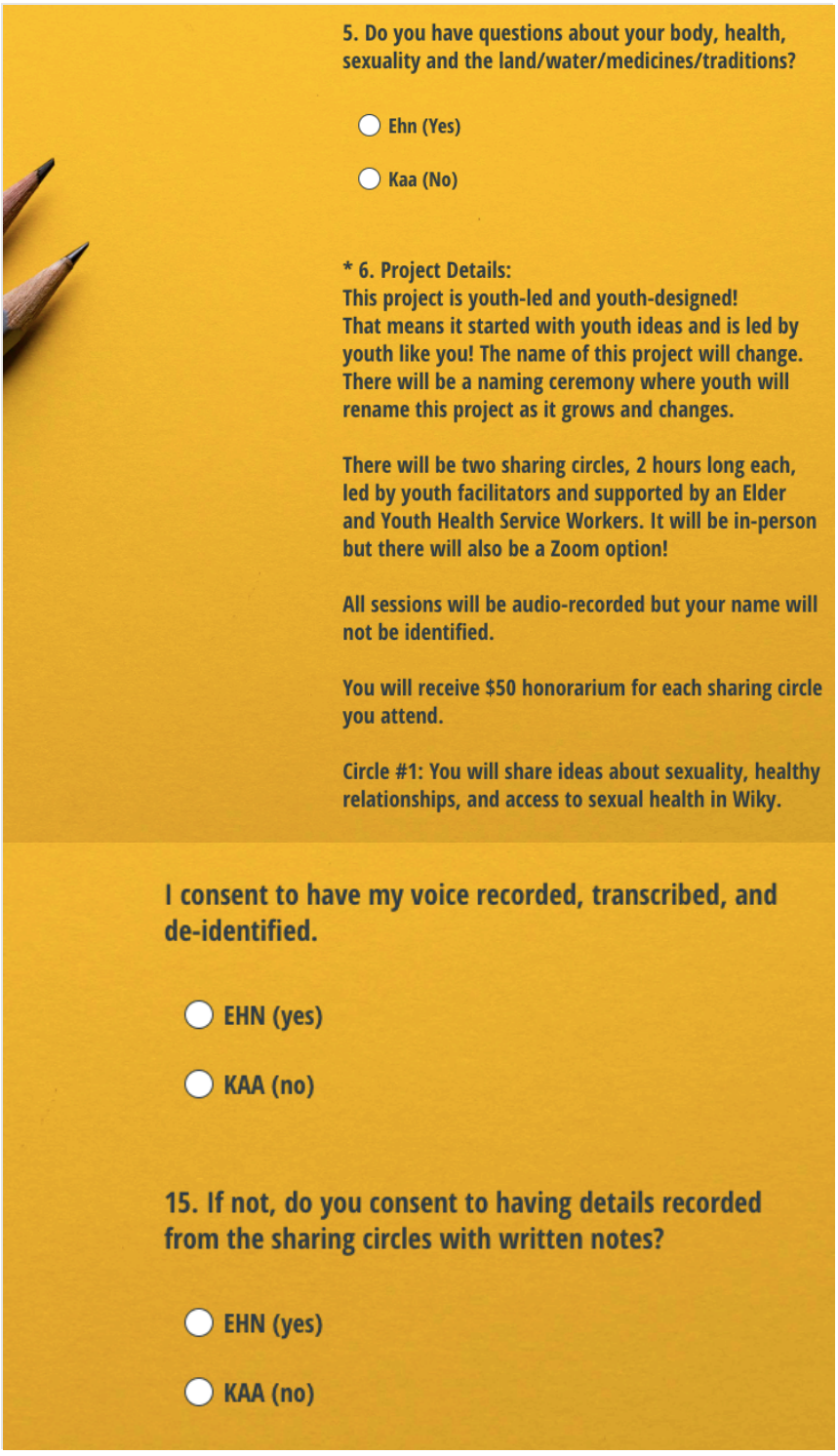
PI/PA Office Use:

I, the research team member, have reviewed this SurveyMonkey Online-Consent completed by the participant named (write name of participant here): _____ and reviewed the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participation in this project. All questions that have been raised about the research in this online form have been answered.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Research Team Member	*Signature of Research Team Member*	*Date*



Above: Screenshot of the SurveyMonkey consent form as seen on the webpage



Above: Screenshot of the SurveyMonkey consent form as seen on the webpage

University of Victoria

Verbal Participant Consent Form
-For Youth and Elder Participants

For individuals who prefer Verbal Consent
Verbal consent will be obtained if:

- Participant has limited literacy; and/ or
- To ensure cultural appropriateness as there may be participants who would prefer not to provide written consent (e.g., due to suspicion of research related to the history of harmful/violent research in Indigenous communities, or being uncomfortable with written English); and/or
- Participant does not have access to internet/computer.

Interviewer must check each box below to ensure that they have read and reviewed each section with the participant.

☐ **Project Title:** Wiikwemkoong Youth Speak Up on Sexual Wellness: The Land and Our Bodies
(*temporary project name. Participants will name project in naming ceremony).

☐ **Project is funded by:** University of Victoria – Internal Research/Creative Project Grant. *You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca.*

☐ **Principal Investigator:**

- Renée Monchalin, Assistant Professor, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, Email: rmonchalin@uvic.ca; Phone Number: 250 472 4431

☐ **Co-Investigators:**

- Olvie Li, Social Dimensions of Health (MSc) Student, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, Email: olvieli@uvic.ca; Phone Number: 705-618-0836
- Diane Jacko, Health Services Director, Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre), Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Email: djacko@wikyhealth.ca; Phone Number: 705-859-3164
- Youth Steering Committee & Elder: Jayda Kagige, Dakota Wemigwans, Ashley Assinewe-Bennett, and Carroll Kitchikake

☐ **Purpose and Objectives of the Research:** This project aims to engage Anishinaabe youth, Elders, and service providers in youth-led research in the context of sexual health within Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory. The study will employ a strengths-based, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach. Youth aged 15-25 years old will participate in two youth-facilitated sharing circles. Youth will also use findings to determine sexual health needs and priorities amongst their peers in Wiikwemkoong.

You will have the opportunity to share about your ideas of healthy sexuality, sexual identity, and your experience with accessing sexual health resources in the community. Through listening to and documenting your experiences, we want to make health services more relevant for Anishinaabe youth in Wiikwemkoong. You can skip or withdraw anytime you are uncomfortable with participating.

☐ Participation:

- You have been selected to participate because you self-identify as Anishinaabe; you live in Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, or live off-reserve but have lived in Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory and used their health services; and you are 15 years of age or older.
- Participation in this project is entirely voluntary.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position in the community or how you will be treated.

☐ Procedures: If you agree to participate in this youth-led project, you will participate in two youth-led sharing circles and have the option to attend two data analysis meetings, one report meeting, and/or participate in a knowledge sharing creative project. You will be asked to give a verbal consent at the end of this conversation (or give a written consent) before the sharing circles take place to confirm that you understand this information. A brief overview of this project:

- 2 Days – Youth-facilitated sharing circles with questions about how you view sexuality and sexual health in Wiikwemkoong (10-15 youth participants [including 2 Youth Facilitators] + 2 Elders + 3 Mental Health Youth Workers + 1 UVic student)
- 2 Days – Youth-participatory data analysis meetings where you will learn to categorize the information we learned from the sharing circles (same participants from sharing circles invited)
- A co-developed report (written and reviewed by you) that summarizes what you learned will be shared with Wiikwemkoong community members and local service providers and be made available online.
- Optional: 2-3 Days – Youth-led community sharing projects where you will have the chance to share with Wiikwemkoong what you learned from this project as well as name this project (only youth and Elder participants invited to participate). You will have the choice to do this through arts-based methods and share it at a community event.

☐ Duration: The two sharing circles will last approximately 2 hours each, the two data analysis meetings will last approximately 2 hours each, the report review meeting will last approximately 2 hours, and the final optional creative knowledge sharing project can take up to 10 hours (a total of up to 20 hours spread out over one month).

☐ Zoom Anonymity and Confidentiality: Sharing circles and meetings will be held online and in person, and audio recorded on Zoom and converted to audio files. The University of Victoria hosts and configures a UVic Zoom application, and it is configured to store data within Canada (as opposed to the U.S. where Zoom is based). The recordings are then stored on the researcher's local computer device and not on the Zoom "cloud". The research team will also have access to assistance through UVic Systems (helpdesk@uvic.ca) or the Protection of Privacy Office (privacyinfo@uvic.ca).

☐ Recording and Transcription: Please note that recording of the sharing circles will only occur if you give consent. Zoom voice recordings will be transcribed word for word. If at any point during the sharing circle you wish to stop the recording, we will respect your decision and the recorder will be stopped. We can proceed with the sharing circle whether it is recorded or not. Alternatively, details can be recorded from the sharing circle with written notes if you give consent. You will be given a copy of your transcript upon request. Audio recordings will be destroyed once transcribed information has been analyzed. The recordings and transcripts will be assigned identification numbers and will not be labeled with your name or other identifiers.

☐ **Potential Harms:** Potential harms could occur during the sharing circles if you share personal experiences that trigger unpleasant memories or feelings or distress. The research team members and Health Centre staff is well connected to community health services and resources and can link you to any supports if necessary. A list of support services and resources will also be provided to you prior to the sharing circles and after you give consent for this project. Service providers will be present during sharing circles to support you throughout the sessions as well (you can privately message them on Zoom to speak with them in a separate break-out room).

If you do not want to Zoom in from home, or if you do not want your family to know about your participation, you may attend in person or you may use a private room at the Health Centre to Zoom in from.

☐ **Potential Benefits:** Potential benefits include the opportunity to have your voice and ideas improve the health service gap in sexual wellness for the youth in Wiikwemkoong. The results from the study will influence sexual health programming to be more relevant, accommodating, and culturally safe for Wiikwemkoong youth. This project seeks to build leadership and self-determination amongst youth by strengthening their relationship with the land/water, language, cultural practices, and Elders in their community. By focusing on this objective, the project will honour the needs of Anishinaabe youth, and community protocols. The result would be a safer and more inclusive space for diverse Indigenous youth with diverse sexual health needs.

☐ **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be respected and no information that discloses your identity will be released or published without consent unless required by law, such as disclosing abuse or acute risk of harm to yourself or others. Identifiable information will not be included in the final transcripts. Names, contact information, and any other personal identifiers (such as date of birth), will be removed from transcripts before data analysis. Data will be de-identified (by using a unique study identification number instead of any identifying information) and only the principal investigator listed on the first page of this document will have access. You will not be directly identified in these transcripts. The original audio recording will be deleted once the audio recording has been downloaded to a safe password protected encrypted file at the Wikwemikong Health Centre.

You are not required to inform your parent/guardian about your participation in this study. The research team will not inform your parent/guardian without your consent. This is your choice. However, we encourage you to inform a trusted friend or family member about your participation in this project in order to create a support system for yourself. We will also provide you with a list of supports you can access from within the community.

The research team on the first page of this document will have access to your transcripts for data analysis purposes. The final copies of your transcripts will be kept by the Principal Investigator on a password protected encrypted file at Wikwemikong Health Centre. It is important to understand that despite the protections described in this section being in place, there continues to be the risk of an unintentional release of information. The chance that personal information or study data will be accidentally released or accessed without authorization is small.

☐ **Disposal of Data**: The Zoom recordings will be destroyed after your interview is transcribed. All other study data will be stored at Wikwemikong Health Centre indefinitely for the use of future programming relevant to Wiikwemkoong youth. All data stored in the Principal Investigator's computer will be stored for 5 years following study completion, at which time it will be securely destroyed by the Principal Investigator of the study.

☐ **Study Results:** You will have an opportunity to co-author academic publications and a community report summarizing the study results. The goal of the publications and report will be to inform health services so they can be more relevant for Anishinaabe youth. You will meet with the research team to review the report and publications before it is presented to Chief and Council. Once it is approved for community distribution, you will have the opportunity to participate in a creative project to present the report to the community. You can contact the research team listed on the first page of this document if you wish to receive the results of the study.

☐ **Reimbursement:** If you are deemed eligible to participate in the study, you will receive a handmade gift, a medicine bundle, a chance to win an iPhone 14, and $50.00 honorarium for each sharing circle/meeting as a gratitude for your time (for a total of $200 for all four meetings). You will also receive $100 for the knowledge sharing creative project if you decide to share your findings with the community. We will be e-transferring you this honorarium at the end of each sharing circle/meeting. You can withdraw from this project at any point with no negative consequences and you do not need to return your honorarium. If you withdraw before the start of the sharing circle/meeting, no honorarium will be sent to you, but you may still enter a draw to win an iPhone 14.

☐ **Participation and Withdrawal:** Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to decline to participate in this study, or to withdraw from this study at any point with no negative consequences. You can leave the sharing circle at any time. You can withdraw your data after the interview has been completed. If you decide to leave the sharing circle while it is in progress, we will give you the option of having all of your information withdrawn from the study or allowing us to retain the information collected up to the point of withdrawal. However, please note that once the data has been de-identified and mixed into the data pool, it may not be possible to withdraw all your data.

☐ **Researcher's Relationship with Participants:** Please let us know if you are comfortable with your research team. If there is a potential for a perceived power relationship, you may withdraw without any penalties.

☐ **Questions or Concerns:**

- Contact the Principal Investigator, Renée Monchalin, or co-investigators Olvie Li and Diane Jacko, using the information at the top of page 1;
- Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria, (250) 472-4545, ethics@uvic.ca

After reading through the consent form with the participant, ask them the following: The research study titled, *"Wiikwemkoong Youth Speak Up on Sexual Wellness: The Land and Our Bodies"* has been explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have the right not to participate and the right to withdraw. The potential harms and benefits of participating in this research study have been explained to me. I know that I may ask now, or in the future, any questions I have about the study. I have been told that data relating to me will be kept confidential and that no information will be disclosed without my permission unless required by law. I have been given sufficient time to listen to the information in this document to understand my participation in this study fully.

☐ **yes** ☐ **no**

I want to be sent a copy of my transcript for review and approval.

☐ **yes, mailed** ☐ **no**

If yes, please write an address for the transcript to be sent to and phone number to follow up:
_____

I consent to have my voice recorded, transcribed, and de-identified.
☐ yes ☐ no

If not, do you consent to having details recorded from the sharing circles with written notes?
☐ yes ☐ no

Do you have an email address where I can send you this verbal consent form signed with my signature?
☐ yes, email is: _____ ☐ no

Please provide e-transfer information for your honorarium (either a phone number or email address):
_____

Do you need a private room or location separate from your home to complete Zoom-calls from?
☐ yes ☐ no

Do you want your participation in this project hidden from your parent/guardian/power of attorney?
☐ yes ☐ no

PI/PA Office use only:

I, the research team member, have explained to the participant named (write name of participant here): _____ the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participation in this project. All questions that have been raised about the research have been answered.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Research Team Member	*Signature of Research Team Member*	*Date*

University of Victoria

Participant Consent Form
-For Service Providers

Project Title: Wiikwemkoong Youth Speak Up on Sexual Wellness: The Land and Our Bodies

Project is funded by University of Victoria – Internal Research/Creative Project Grant

Principal Investigator:

- Renée Monchalin, Assistant Professor, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, Email: rmonchalin@uvic.ca; Phone Number: 250 472 4431

Co-Investigators:

- Olvie Li, Social Dimensions of Health (MSc) Student, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, Email: olvieli@uvic.ca; Phone Number: 705-618-0836
- Diane Jacko, Health Services Director, Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre), Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Email: djacko@wikyhealth.ca; Phone Number: 705-859-3164

Purpose and Objectives of the Research: This project aims to engage Anishinaabe youth, Elders, and service providers in youth-led research in the context of sexual health within Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory. The study will employ a strengths-based, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach. Youth aged 15-24 years old will lead two youth-led online sharing circles. Youth will also use findings to determine sexual health needs and priorities amongst their peers in Wiikwemkoong.

Participation:

- You have been selected to participate because you are an employee of Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre) and provide health/community services to youth in Wiikwemkoong.
- Participation in this project is entirely voluntary.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position within Naandwechige-Gamig (Wikwemikong Health Centre) or how you will be treated.

Procedures: If you agree to participate in this youth-led project, you will participate in two sharing circles and have the option to attend two data analysis meetings, and one report meeting. You will sign the consent form (or give a verbal consent) before the sharing circles take place to confirm that you understand the information.

Duration: The two sharing circles will last approximately 3 hours each, the two data analysis meetings will last approximately 3 hours each, and the report review meeting will last approximately 3 hours (a total of up to 15 hours). Your role is to listen and support youth and Elder participants and their experiences of sexual wellness in the community. Through listening to and documenting these experiences, we want to make health services more relevant for Anishinaabe youth in Wiikwemkoong. You can skip or withdraw anytime you are uncomfortable with participating.

- 2 Days – Youth-participatory data analysis meetings where you will learn to categorize the information we learned from the sharing circles (same participants from sharing circles invited)
- 1 Day – A report that summarizes the reflections of the participants from the sharing circles will be presented to you. You will have the chance to read it and edit it before it is presented to the community. This is also an opportunity for co-authorship.

Duration: The two sharing circles will last approximately 2 hours each, the two data analysis meetings will last approximately 2 hours each, and the report review meeting will last approximately 2 hours (a total of 10 hours). Your role is to listen and support youth and Elder participants and their experiences of sexual wellness in the community. Through listening to and documenting these experiences, we want to make health services more relevant for Anishinaabe youth in Wiikwemkoong. You can skip or withdraw anytime you are uncomfortable with participating.

Zoom Anonymity and Confidentiality: Sharing circles and meetings will be held online and in-person and audio recorded on Zoom and converted to audio files. The University of Victoria hosts and configures a UVic Zoom application, and it is configured to store data within Canada (as opposed to the U.S. where Zoom is based). The recordings are then stored on the researcher's local computer device and not on the Zoom "cloud". The research team will also have access to assistance through UVic Systems (helpdesk@uvic.ca) or the Protection of Privacy Office (privacyinfo@uvic.ca).

Recording and Transcription: Please note that recording of the sharing circles will only occur if you give consent. Zoom voice recordings will be transcribed word for word. If at any point during the sharing circle you wish to stop the recording, we will respect your decision and the recorder will be stopped. We can proceed with the sharing circle whether it is recorded or not. Alternatively, details can be recorded from the sharing circle with written notes if you give consent. You will be given a copy of your transcript upon request. Audio recordings will be destroyed once transcribed information has been analyzed. The recordings and transcripts will be assigned identification numbers and will not be labeled with your name or other identifiers.

Potential Harms: Potential harms could occur during the sharing circles if listening to personal experiences trigger unpleasant memories or feelings of distress. The research team members can link you to any supports if necessary. A list of support services and resources will also be provided to you prior to the sharing circles and after you give consent for this project.

Potential Benefits: Potential benefits include the opportunity to influence sexual health programming to be more relevant, accommodating, and culturally safe for Wiikwemkoong youth. This project seeks to build leadership and self-determination amongst youth by strengthening their relationship with the land/water, language, traditional and cultural practices, and Elders in their community. By focusing on this objective, the project will honour the needs of Anishinaabe youth, and community protocols. The result would be a safer and more inclusive space for diverse Indigenous youth with diverse sexual health needs. It may not benefit you directly as a service provider.

Privacy and Confidentiality: Confidentiality will be respected and no information that discloses your identity will be released or published without consent unless required by law, such as disclosing abuse or acute risk of harm to yourself or others. Identifiable information will not be included in the final transcripts. Names, contact information, and any other personal identifiers (such as date of birth), will be removed from transcripts before data analysis. Data will be de-identified (by using a unique study identification number instead of any identifying information) and only the principal investigator listed on the first page of this document will have access. You will not be directly identified in these transcripts. The original audio

recording will be deleted once the audio recording has been downloaded to a safe password protected encrypted file at the Wikwemikong Health Centre.

The research team on the first page of this document will have access to your transcripts for data analysis purposes. The final copies of your transcripts will be kept by the Principal Investigator on a password protected encrypted file at Wikwemikong Health Centre. It is important to understand that despite the protections described in this section being in place, there continues to be the risk of an unintentional release of information. The chance that personal information or study data will be accidentally released or accessed without authorization is small.

Disposal of Data: The Zoom recordings will be destroyed after the sharing circle is transcribed. All other study data will be stored at Wikwemikong Health Centre indefinitely for the use of future programming relevant to Wiikwemkoong youth. All data stored in the Principal Investigator's computer will be stored for 5 years following study completion, at which time it will be securely destroyed by the Principal Investigator of the study.

Study Results: You will have an opportunity to co-author academic publications and a community report summarizing the study results. The goal of the publications and report will be to inform health services so they can be more relevant for Anishinaabe youth. You will meet with the research team to review the report and publications before it is presented to Chief and Council. Once it is approved for community distribution, youth and Elder participants may choose to complete a creative project to present the report to the community. You can contact the research team listed on the first page of this document if you wish to receive the results of the study.

Reimbursement: If you are deemed eligible to participate in the study, you will receive a handmade gift and a medicine bundle, and a chance to win an iPhone 14 as gratitude for your time. However, you will not receive honorarium as you will be paid by your employer during "work hours" or flex time. You can withdraw from this project at any point with no negative consequences.

Participation and Withdrawal: Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to decline to participate in this study, or to withdraw from this study at any point with no negative consequences. You can leave the sharing circle at any time. You can withdraw your data after the interview has been completed. If you decide to leave the interview while it is in progress, we will give you the option of having all of your information withdrawn from the study or allowing us to retain the information collected up to the point of withdrawal. However, please note that once the data has been de-identified and mixed into the data pool, it may not be possible to withdraw all your data. The expected duration of your participation in this study, inclusive of this discussion, the sharing circles, data analysis meetings, and report review is up to 10 hours over one month (to be paid by your employer).

Researcher's Relationship with Participants: Please let us know if you are comfortable with your research team. If there is a potential for a perceived power relationship, you may withdraw without any penalties.

Questions or Concerns:

- Contact the Principal Investigator, Renée Monchalin, or co-investigators Olvie Li and Diane Jacko, using the information at the top of page 1;
- Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria, (250) 472-4545, ethics@uvic.ca

The research study, ***"Wiikwemkoong Youth Speak Up on Sexual Wellness: The Land and Our Bodies"*** has been explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have the right not to participate and the right to withdraw. The potential harms and benefits of participating in this research

study have been explained to me. I know that I may ask now, or in the future, any questions I have about the study. I have been told that data relating to me will be kept confidential and that no information will be disclosed without my permission unless required by law. I have been given sufficient time to listen to the information in this document to understand my participation in this study fully.

☐ yes ☐ no

I want to be sent a copy of my transcript for review and approval.

☐ yes, mailed ☐ no

If yes, please write an address for the transcript to be sent to and phone number to follow up:

_____

I consent to have my voice recorded, transcribed, and de-identified.

☐ yes ☐ no

If not, do you consent to having details recorded from the sharing circles with written notes?

☐ yes ☐ no

Do you have an email address where I can send you this consent form signed with my signature?

☐ yes, email is: _____ ☐ no

I, (name of participant here): _____ have read and understood the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participation in this project. All questions that have been raised about the research have been answered.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Service Provider Participant	*Signature of Service Provider Participant*	*Date*

_____	_____	_____
Name of Research Team Member	*Signature of Research Team Member*	*Date*

Appendix D: Youth-Designed Recruitment Poster and Instagram Account

FOR ANISHINAABE YOUTH, BY ANISHINAABE YOUTH.

Wiikwemkoong Youth Talk About Sex: The Land and Our Bodies

WIKY YOUTH WANT YOU.

Wiky youth want to hear youth talk about sexual health needs in the community!

The Project: Two youth-led sharing circles, a co-created analysis + report, and a youth-designed community sharing project.

- For youth ages 15-25 years old
- Location: Wasse-Naabin Youth Centre/Online-Zoom Option
- May 26/29th, 2023 (sharing circles)
  June 12/13th, 2023 (data analysis)

HONORARIUM, PRIZES, AND A RAFFLE TO WIN AN IPHONE 14!!!

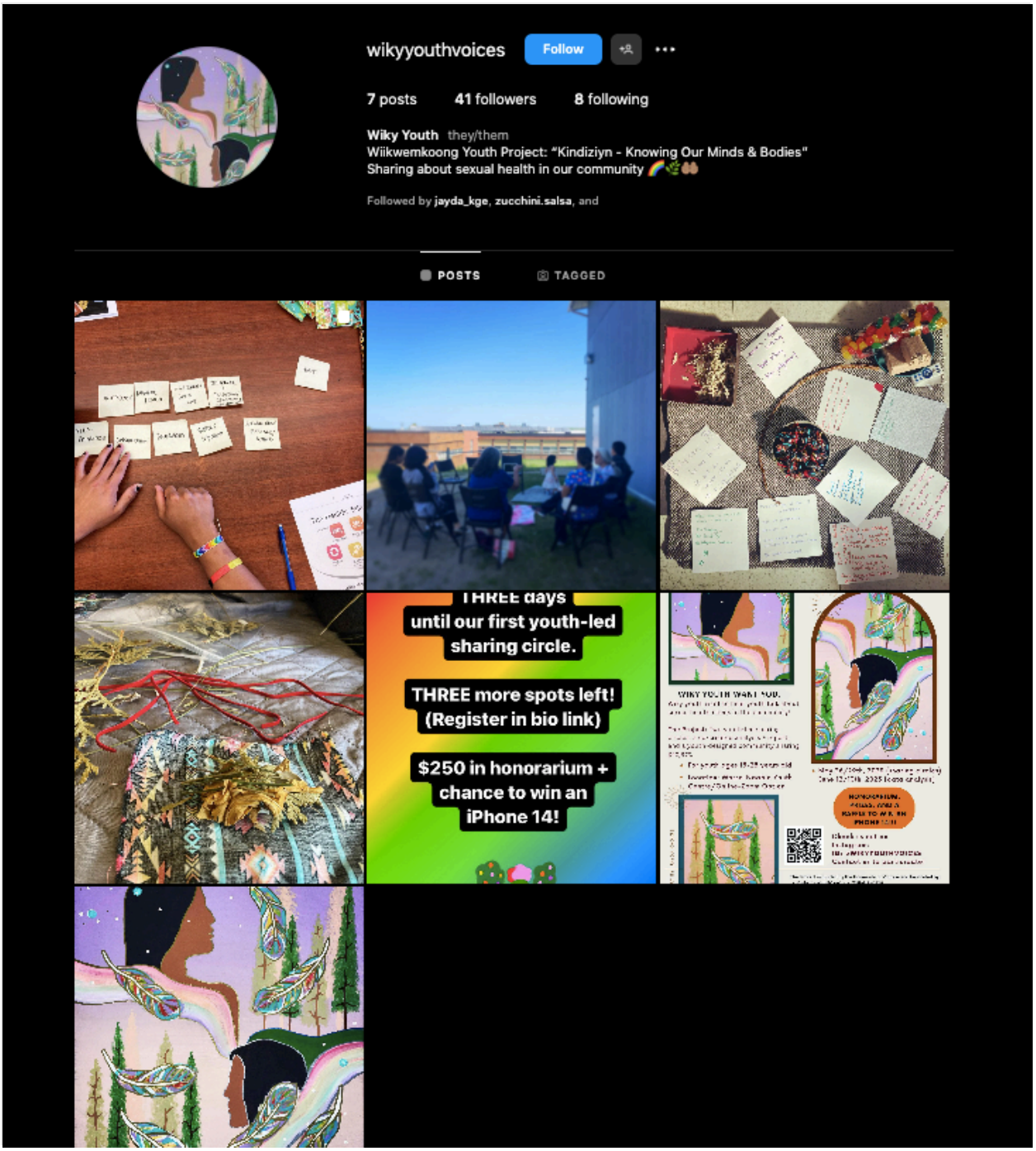
ART BY JAYDA KAGIGE

Check us out on Instagram:
IG: @WIKYYOUTHVOICES
Contact us to participate!

This Project is funded by the University of Victoria and facilitated by:

- Olvie Li - olvieli@uvic.ca | 705-618-0836
- Diane Jacko - djacko@wikyhealth.ca | 705-859-3164
- Renée Monchalin - rmonchalin@uvic.ca | 250-472-4431
- Youth Steering Committee & Elder: Jayda Kagige, Dakota Wemigwans, Ashley Assinewe-Bennett, and Carroll Kitchikake

*All results & data will be kept by Wikwemikong Health Centre for future youth services and programming with youth participant consent


wikyyouthvoices
Follow
7 posts
41 followers
8 following
Wiky Youth they/them
Wiikwemkoong Youth Project: "Kindiziyn - Knowing Our Minds & Bodies"
Sharing about sexual health in our community
Followed by jayda_kge, zucchini.salsa, and
POSTS
TAGGED
THREE days until our first youth-led sharing circle.
THREE more spots left! (Register in bio link)
$250 in honorarium + chance to win an iPhone 14!

Appendix E: Transcript – Day One Sharing Circles

May 26, 2023 – Youth Centre, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory:

Speaker 1: A person from our community, a beautiful lady, and she talked to me and she was saying, do you ever realize that when we talk to our children, we speak to them in English? She says, then when we go on to understand what we're saying or when we're trying to discipline them, we refer to the language. And she said, therefore our kids think the language is a negative thing, we're trying to discipline them in that language and not showing them how good the languages. We're doing in a negative way. And she said it turns young people off from learning the language. Which is probably true in some ways because I know if I'd get a scolding when I was growing up and it was in the language, I remember always putting my head down, it hurt more when we were spoken to in the language in a negative way than when some people said things in English because our language is so descriptive and it's so therefore it's causes us to be hurt more and see you in a negative way when someone speaks to us.

Speaker 1: So those are some of the things that I think about that I'm really happy to be sitting here with you, young people because you are our future, the ones that are going to lead the community. And I remember also being told one time that it's going to be the youth that are going to bring their people back to the language and the ceremonies and to reconnect with the land and the water and everything that is around. They said it's be the young people that are going to bring the older people back to the culture and spiritual ways, which is very true. I find that a lot of the younger people are more spiritual and more with the spiritual ways than people that are my age.

Speaker 1: So those are some of the things that we'll learn as we continue to meet. We'll learn things together, you will teach me a lot of things that I do and hopefully I'll be able to teach you some things and share with you some of the things that I do, so it's be a privilege and is an honour to sit here and to have the best signatures. I know O had asked me to talk about the medicines and we have the four medicines and we made these ties yesterday with the four Sacred medicines. And before we did that, we smudged, we smudged ourselves, we smudged the materials we are going to use to make these ties. And I sat in the kitchen and I did my ties while the other ones were in the living room doing their ties and it sounded so good cause I could hear their laughter and hear them talking and you could just hear that it was peaceful and it was such a happy occasion. Especially hearing these, the two young people that are doing the ties. Cause it's good. It's good to hear them laugh. It's good to hear that laughter and that happiness and joy. So these are the ties. We can all take one. I know there

was a lot of happiness and a lot of joy, that's what I felt and that's how these were done yesterday. Nahow, Miigwech.

Speaker 3: As much as I'm learning, so I'm a helper in social work at health clinic and I was just where I'm current coach for having me.

Speaker 2: Yeah. Yeah. And we're meeting again on Monday night. So if you guys want some pizza, free food and prizes, you'll still get to be in the draw.

Speaker 2: Yeah. Does that work for everyone? Four to six. If it doesn't work for you for Monday, then let me know. We can change the time.

Speaker 2: so another thing is I've invited someone from Nadmadwin to come so that if anybody feels like they need to talk to somebody, then you can talk to T. And so if you folks online, if you, let's say you really want to talk to somebody about something that's going on in your life, then you can do go into a breakout room with T and then everybody else here as well. Yeah. I'll send you a list of people that can support you as well. And then we have some pamphlets here I can send.

Speaker 4: Grandma, Should everyone smudge? Should we do a smudge?

Speaker 2: On the laptop? Yeah, if you have medicines. We made medicine pouches for everybody.

Recording stopped for icebreaker games

Speaker 5: And so before we start, we will develop agreements with each other because what we talk about could be really sensitive. You don't have to, but if it comes up, we need to hold each other accountable and make sure I call it the Las Vegas rule where whatever happens here stays here. So think like Las Vegas rule, whatever happens stays here. And you can maybe I'll write that down to you, but I'll hand out papers.

Speaker 5: And this will hold true every time we meet together. I'll have all the cards on the ground so we can remind each other of what we agreed to do. So those of you online think about it. Think about what kind of agreements or protocol yourself, the write down…How you want to be treated.

Speaker 1: Oh, I'm never ever going to end up in that kind of a relationship. And that is what happens in those kinds of relationships. I hear you wanting to kind of unpack “do we attract certain things and our life”. And just because you do, there's certain things that you could do that help you feel better so that you're not attracting

those things. But it doesn't mean that you need to carry that blame. Yeah. But that is what happens to a lot of people. You end up like that or it's like saying, oh you know what, I'm never going to end up with somebody that has a drinking problem or a drug problem. No, not for me. I'm not Because you're, you've been brought up in that environment then a lot of times when you look at it, you, you're putting yourself right through the same kind of thing again. But it's in a relationship that you have to learn those things. You have to unlearn what you learn. Yeah. And you are saying it in a really good way is because there is a certain amount of learning that happens from seeing patterns before behaviour. Yeah. But you also am hearing you saying that you're learning. And so if you're capable of learning those things, you're also capable of unlearning them. Yeah, that's good thing. That's what we up to look at. Those kind of things.

Speaker 2: No, and I think it's sometimes what we are suffering with on the inside because we can only be in relationships that are as healthy as we are. If we are unhealthy ourselves, we are let's say in a pattern of addictions or if we have any traumas that is unhealed.

Speaker 1: We don't even knowingly do it. It's unintentional. Yeah. Yeah. People don't knowingly do those things or cause themselves to be in those kind of relationships. So no, what I'm hearing you say is that you, there's no shame… there's no shame in that. But it is something that sometimes you carry and it's important to explore those things so that you go forward in a good way, in a more healthier way. Yeah. Yeah. And I don't know, I don't know how men feel cause I'm not male so I don't know how they feel like being in a relationship like that. I know

Speaker 1: A lot of men are in abusive relationships too

Speaker 1: Well I think it's important unpack the fears and that kind of thing too. Cause sometimes it's out of those fears that put us into those positions and from both sides.

Speaker 4: So would you like me to share what the girls are saying?

Speaker 3: Maybe once everyone's done and then we can, once everyone is ready, we can, I just want to put these, We've got a few stories here.

Speaker 3: So is everyone done, ready or thinking?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I think people are ready too.

Speaker 5: Well what I think a healthy relationship would be good communication. Always being honest with important too to sexuality. I think it's just who?

Speaker 6: Okay. So partner, your family friend. So just some one could be know each other's boundaries. You care for one another. Intimacy, talk, touch, etc. So talk positive and then each other's feelings and communication, affection, trust,

Speaker 7: Free space to openly share thoughts and feelings,

Speaker 8: Relationship can be with yourself, your partner. Communication that is respected on both ends and also boundaries that are respected on ends.

Speaker 9: But I got active listening, acknowledge each other's feelings, knowing one's self worth and embracing one another's faults. Miigwech. What do what that again? I got active listening. Oh nice. Acknowledged each other's feeling, knowing one's selfworth and then embracing one another.

Speaker 10: So I creating healthy boundaries in your relationships and within yourself. And for me personally, I tend to prioritize my partner more than myself sometimes. And so yeah, over time I gave too much… so I created more boundaries, communication, actually communicating everything, and being honest.

Speaker 10: Yeah. I probably used to think that love is lust and I used to be in those relationships that didn't honour me… learned to honour myself more so I find a lot people but then sometimes you're just in those situations. And I lived with my husband and we had five children and when I was pregnant with my fifth, he said I need space. And I'm like okay. So yeah. And then I met the husband I have now, I have now partners. I kind of thought you make a commitment, you stay with it, but it doesn't always work that way. Takes two people to want that commitment. With my husband over 20 years and we had a daughter together, so he's pretty much dad to all his six children and he's my best friend. And if you asked him what sexuality is about, he would say communication.

Speaker 2: That's a good one.

Speaker 4: And that may sound somewhat simple and everything too, but like I said, it took a long journey to get feel comfortable with myself. I've had trauma so it makes it real challenging to who you would attracting in your life and how you feel about your own self-worth and yeah, that's my story. And often I think you'll find that people have had tough backgrounds are the Counsellors.

Speaker 3: That's why you're good at your job.

Speaker 2: So one of our friends online is saying that I identify as a girl dress as more feminine. Sometimes she feels more neutral.

A healthy relationship is being honest to each other and treat each other with respect.

Sexuality is being your true authentic self. Without regards as to how one might judge, perceive, to be honest, she says, I dunno, I identify as a girl. I like dressing really feminine whenever I can, but usually only when it's warm and I do like wearing masculine clothes sometimes a healthy relationship is where both parties respect one another and are able to set healthy boundaries while also communicating effectively.

I think also a healthy relationship consists of the person knowing who they are outside of ties to their significant other.

A lot of you I was hearing you bring up communication, connection, trust and boundaries. And I think some really identified some things that really are good subjects to kind of unpack a little bit more and see what they mean. cause those are really good keys I think to healthy relationships

I think the other things is, first of all, and foremost ask you yourself, ask yourself that question: Do I really love myself? Do I make Communication and boundaries?

Speaker 1: And I think the other thing is in when we raise our children as young parents, somebody teach those boundaries to them children, not to be ashamed of who they're or ashamed of theirs. Like exploring themselves. It's not a shameful thing to discover their body parts because of the way society is. That's bad. Don't do that, that's bad. We have to realize, but those are not bad things. Those are good things. And we have love ourselves and we have to teach our children lessons. First of all, you're not people loving anybody if you can't love yourself. That has to come from us and we have to love ourselves fully before we love anyone else and communication and all that.

What your partner and all that, but that we all have this idea. We have to realize those are our idea of what love should be. We need to know ourselves.

Speaker 1: Give that person their transgender to and if you know and they don't want to say something, it's not the time. Say just back ready. Yeah. We weren't told these things. We assault sexual. You were lucky if somebody sat down and said you're going to be, these are things to prepare you. Those are things that we're these.

Speaker 11: I think the berry fast helped me discipline myself a lot. I didn't, didn't eat berries, I didn't go swimming, I didn't anything that tradition and I didn't eat berries for whole year. I just ate other fruits that I wanted. I did the fast. I went for two days and yeah, that was really hard. That's really helped me discipline myself and get off the bad stuff. Drugs and whatnot. If you have a will, there's a way.

Speaker 2: Yeah. Thank you for that. Yeah. Ceremony and our medicines. Yeah, it's all part of it. Thank you. Anybody else? No. Does anybody else want to add anything online? Just type it in the chat.

Recorder stopped before closing prayer

Appendix F: Transcript – Day Two Sharing Circles

May 29, 2023 – Youth Centre, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory:

Recording started after opening ceremony, games, check-ins, and discussion question

Speaker 1: Access to mental health support and also better living arrangements. Trust and acceptance.

Speaker 2: I think in order to be in a healthy relationship, you need to love and accept yourself first before loving someone else. You can't fully rely on this person that you love more than yourself for happiness.

Speaker 4: Having access to proper programming to help with finding yourself to better communicate with your partner.

Speaker 2: Programmes to teach you how to communicate with your partner and yourself better. Yeah. Okay. That's a good one.

Speaker 4: And communicate with yourself.

Speaker 6: Open communication. It would be like with your partner or if go to somebody to talk to them If be able to communicate openly, give and take talking openly, seeking advice from someone when needed. Be open minded and discuss things.

Speaker 6: I think with older people, I think it would be different than what the younger people,

Speaker 5: The things you would need to access.

Speaker 2: For sure. For sure. But it's also good to know what you think.

Speaker 5: I put honesty about your needs, your wants, desires, your future, and disagreements. So if you don't agree with your partner on things, you got to be honest about that and open also, you can't expect them to know what you're thinking. Yeah. Yeah. So you got to be honest about your needs and wants. Not belittle your opinions, but being able to be open about it. Time to do quality activities you both enjoy. So the gift of time to each other is really important. I feel like that's a resource in a relationship, especially if you have children or jobs or school or you move and you're distance from each other. But the gift of time is really important for a healthy relationship.

Speaker 7: Acceptance of each other's flaws and differences. So when people grow, they constantly change. So when you want a healthy relationship, you've got to be able to grow together because you're always changing together. But being of accepting of the new things that people, their experiences say they developed different ideas and opinions or they develop flaws that bug you and get under your skin, you still have to accept it and be non-judgmental for who they are.

Speaker 8: it's more like physical. So might be from the day is sanitation facilities in washroom space, especially Tim. I don't know. Just cause every time I wanted the washrooms are small, they should be able to provide accommodation. And that's what I think once upon time, somehow I kind slipped and I went into the tight like this, I almost fell in there and I thought, what if I fell in there? I hit my head.

Speaker 8: Anyway, that's just a one example. But so most of the washrooms been since Covid was pretty good. They're very, but now they're very small rooms and especially these big companies. Yeah. Make money on the kids. That

Speaker 2: Healthy sanitation facilities and cleanliness in washroom space in big companies. So places like Tim Hortons to have cleaner washrooms and everything. Which I think something I could say is I think of as accessibility. And when it comes to sexuality, a lot of our washrooms are gendered male or female. And some people are non-binary or non-gendered. And so having a clean bathroom is so important. But also having an appropriate bathroom for people who may not feel like they belong in any gender or sex. And so that's a really good point. And I think that's a very practical thing as we become more aware of different genders. The third gender or two-spirit or however you want to call yourself or identify yourself.

Speaker 7: Abuse of young people working at Tim Hortons.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And the abuse of young people working at, I've seen it so many times at that Tim Hortons where the young people there are getting abused by inpatient customers. The drive-thru.

Speaker 1: It'd be nice to have family washrooms everywhere

Speaker 9: I was just going to say all the seven grandfather. All seven grandfather teachings.

Speaker 10: Yeah. Good. Okay. I put quite a bit down so I put spend happy moments with those I love. So spending time with your family and whatnot, it really brings you together. Yeah. Connect with my culture definitely brings up my spiritual health. Advance my education because I'm still young. I really want to build my life still.

So that'll help accept who I am kind of thing. Practise more self-care is a big thing for me. So yeah, whether it be smudging and not.

Speaker 10: And to build my relationship with my partner would be practise the five love languages like gift giving, physical touch, words of affirmation, active service and quality time. Wow.

Speaker 11: Love self and others.. Must have for a successful life: Cats. The cats communicating, using my words. Good bush walk. Helps clear mind.

Speaker 12: His company or quality time, food, transportation. Getting in tune with nature, God, self or culture. Good hygiene and personal space and having a safe space to go to.

Speaker 13: What I put for, what I think I would need to have relationship is think you would need a support system. Cause you can't rely on one person. And you can't do it alone at the same time. So that's why I put talking to family and friends can be very helpful. Having an outlet, emotional or physical, letting out some aggression or even being passionate. I also put don't bottle emotions. Don't bottle emotions totally transparent.

Speaker 13: And then I wrote, have maintain a healthy relationship with yourself so you won't have any reason to have some kind of outburst on anyone because you're already dealing with it and you already found a way to let it out in a healthy way.

Speaker 14: Connection. I wrote T and C on the bottom because later on I can't remember from someone. I was like, oh that's right. Transparency. You really need to be transparent if you Have a healthy Relationship. Cause if you're not transparent, if you're not communicating, then the person that you're with won't be able to help you. And that's just, that's kind of shitty.

Speaker 14: You could just communicate exactly how you're feeling and why you're feeling that way and that person can do anything… what you need or what you don't need and things would be better. And then connection mostly because being outside is really healthy for me and I love being outside and it brings me lots of energy. So that's a big part for me to just be connected to the land and yeah. Chi Miigwech.

Speaker 15: I wrote liking myself, having a healthy relationship with myself. Good support system. Need to be heard, transparency and open to receiving and giving love.

Speaker 15: I have to like my body. Feeling good about yourself before you in relationship or have any sexual feelings and mental health wise, I feel like I need to be loved or have feel like I'm loved personally. I like to do meditation and aroma therapy and

herbal teas and they kind of get me set in a good space throughout my day and in my evening I feel like I, I'd, I'm better when I feel listened to and then I feel safe. So being heard and being present, being really in the moment and not having other distractions. And that's something I like to practise more and more to actually just be with people when this is where I am, this is what I'm doing. And not distracted by other things or somewhere else. So I feel like I need to be present to have a good relationship. Thinking about my husband and my family and I don't know everything. I guess good to be present. Yeah,

Speaker 16: In order for me to have a healthy relationship with my parents, I think they need therapy or to see a psychiatrist to get a diagnosis and help with their mental health and illnesses because they both need help, but they also don't have time to go to therapy because of work and the kids. So that is valid.

Speaker 1: Yes. That is really good. Actually, a coworker and I were talking about that today. When you have sessions like this, you should almost have sessions for the parents or families or whatever at the same time. So that you're saying, Hey, be open and share. But the person that you maybe need to share with also needs to be going through the same lesson. So they're open to hearing you. Yeah,

Speaker 6: Young people these days know a lot more than what

Speaker 6: And they're more open than we were. I think a lot of it had to do with your parents were at residential school plus the how strong the church,

Speaker 6: The ruling of the church that had it had on the community. So I think that young people today are, they're very smart compared to the way we were growing up. I really commend them for that because I don't think, when I was a teenager, I don't think we ever sex. Nobody ever said, oh let's have a circle. Let's do this. And again, it's all retracing your steps. And like I said, it's like that what we were told. It's going to be the young people that are going to bring the older people back and in touch with their cultural ways. They're in their spiritual ways. They're the ones that are going to teach these ways to the older people. And you can see it. Yes, you can see it in the community thing. And I always think that young people are, they're really,

Speaker 6: If I can compare it to you have the little birds in a nest and they're tripping like that for their parents to come and feed them. That's the way our young people are. They're hungry. They want that knowledge. They want to touch base and they want to know they're traditional ways. They want to know all these things. And it's with them that are going to take us to these things. The older people, when you do listen to young, a lot of the younger people, that's what they say. When my son, he was in his early twenties, we had a big discussion him and he said, I find it very easy to talk to and talked about like Mrs. He said, I find it easy

to talk to people that age. And he said, and people my age and younger. And he said, but it's people that are at your age level.

Speaker 6: He says, I find it very hard to talk to them. He said, because a lot of them are very close minded. And he said, it's just the way you were brought up. And he said, you don't want to change, you don't bend. You're very close minded about things. We had a big discussion about that sounds and we were, we're lucky because we were already following our traditional reason rather. And that's why I say you've got to be open minded and you've got to listen. And part of it, this is we're learning from young people as I secure, I'm learning things and I'm learning how smart young people are and we need to nourish them and we need to encourage them to continue in those ways and to develop all the strong gifts that they have because they're here to teach us and we have to start listening. The whole community has to start listening to, no, can you watch? That's why we're here.

Speaker 6: I guess same thing that C was saying that when he went to school here for the school is right there. Where? Here? Yeah. Oh, sitting. Yeah, we had a school here. We went there, I went there. Cecilia went there. Really? Yeah. And I went to school here. This part wasn't even here. And one school was out. You were nowhere around here. If you came around here, the nuns saw you and then they'd call you. And I remember we were playing with a, and the only non-native kids that were around were the teachers who had kids and they attended school with us. And when you went to school, like you were with a bunch of native kids, you didn't know there was really anybody else out there. And you knew there was nuns and priests and that you were scared of them. Yeah. Like was authority.

Speaker 6: Yeah. So after school you didn't come anywhere near here? I remember go to to school, then my girlfriend and I made the mistake of playing with one of the kids. We were friends with this family. And the father was the principal. I think he was the principal, the teacher at the school. And we played with their kids after school. And we were sliding. I can still remember that because we were sliding right down here. There was a little stair step stairs there. And we slid, we were playing with those kids. And then nun called us from the office there. This was about five o'clock in the afternoon and we were sliding and playing with those kids and that nun called us. So we went thinking nothing. We went with those kids and she told that young boy, oh, you better go home now it's time to go home. It's supper time. So after he went and then my girlfriend and I, we started walking away to go home too for supper. And that nun goes, NA, choose used coming here and we have to go into the school. And next thing you know we have this black strap on our hands. And we were told, you are never supposed to be in the school yard. One school is out. That was a no no that to be in the schoolyard. So that's mine. That's my fault.

Speaker 6: Yeah, there was a school there. It was [inaudible] That school was everything. I went to school there for grade three. And then it was a, that was where the first nursing home I think was in. Yeah, really? Yeah. And then it was the nursery school was there

Speaker 2: Like the hub centre. Yeah.

Speaker 6: And then from there they built that hub centre. That was one of mine. That building. Wait,

Speaker 2: Which building? It's not there anymore. It's sitting around like

Speaker 6: Top. It's the one right beside the rooms, right?

Speaker 2: No, it's right here. It's right here. We're sitting right on top of where it used to be.

Speaker 2: We're sitting where the washrooms are

Speaker 6: In the bush over there. Outside

Speaker 6: Oh yeah. I think, yeah. There wasn't little washrooms in the classroom because however, remember we had to come and go to this building. The only washrooms were in the back. There was a teacher residence and upstairs was a teacher residence. And that's the only place that had Washingtons. You had to come over to, what was this called? School, it was called after that. It was like the Washingtons were just over there. Just wooden wass extension. This was called same IIA school. This part here is actually built after they call it Saint Ignatius. And then it was called Pnac School. Richard's still called Pnac school. Is it after chief pk? Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So they kicked out the nuns there. I don't know exactly what happened that time, but they him to leave apparently. Cause there was two Harmon. The kids. Yeah. And I remember when I was in grade two here, we started school and somebody, you only spoke the language. English was a foreign language. And we started school at September. And then I still remember when we had to line up and we're going into classroom and this lady standing a real pretty petite lady. And she looked me at that. She goes [inaudible].

Speaker 6: And we're all just looking at her. We had no idea she could only speak French. And here we are. We only speak the language in here. We had this teacher, she was right from France. Wow. Indian affairs right from France. Come and teach him. Wow. Yeah. I can't remember what her name was. My mind not that sharp. But I still remember that. And when I was in grade one, we had this nun that taught us. She was pretty big. Pretty big nun. And I'm a tight little girl and she

was, I guess they taught us religion right from grade one I guess. But I remember her talking about sins in my, I went home and I told my mom, I said, Hey, I got these sins and I'm talking in Indian and I'm picking up these little stones. And I go, I have a sin here on my heart. And then I picked up another couple of sins. I go, oh. And I got these sins because I, I'm told a lie. And then I was telling her, and they said, if you don't go to church, then you have this big sin. And I picked up a big rock showing here. To me, that's what they were. They were rocks, they were soul.

Speaker 6: That's the experience we had. And when we went to school here, boys never had anything called sex education either. They didn't have that because you had nuns teaching you. Right. It was a very strict Forbidden. Forbidden. Yeah. That was tab. Even with now growing up with this, I don't think your parents really sat down and talked to you about your sexuality or anything. That's all your why keep your legs crossed. My dad

Speaker 2: Would tell me, politics cross your legs.

Speaker 6: Cross all the time there over there. But he was teasing us. But nobody ever sat down or even when they were teaching us things, nobody ever sat there and said, okay, I'm going to give you this seven grandfather teaching. They just told you respect other people. These were like, it was just daily life. They never said, these are the seven grandfather teachings. Those are what you live by and what they taught you. But now that's what you hear. Seven grandfather teachings. But it's a way of life. It's a way of life. That's what it's, yeah, that's history. Very good.

Speaker 3: Miigwech everyone, thanks for being online you all, before J closes us off in the prayer, I'm going to do our spinning wheel of prizes.

Appendix G: Participatory Data Analysis Day 1 and 2 Schedules

Youth Participatory Analysis June 12/13th 4-6pm

Day One:

Time	Activity	Notes
4:00pm	Food	
4:15	Opening Prayer	
4:20	Circle Check-In	
4:30	Feedback Form	
4:45	What is Data Analysis? Presentation	
5:00	Snack Break	
5:10	Familiarizing with data	Zoom participants go to separate room
5:30	Generating Initial Codes	
5:45	Closing Circle- Check out	
5:55	Closing Prayer	

Day Two:

Time	Activity	Notes
4:00pm	Food	
4:15	Opening Prayer	
4:20	Circle Check-In	
4:30	Identify relationships between codes and themes	
4:45	Identify Themes – Code Card Game	
5:00	Snack Break	
5:10	Final reflections	
5:20	Tobacco + Naming Ceremony	
5:35	Check-Out	
5:55	Draw for iPhone 14!	
6:00	Closing Prayer + Thank yous	

Appendix H: Program Feedback Form

WIIKWEMKOONG YOUTH:

THE LAND AND OUR BODIES

1. What do you think of the topics we covered in the sharing circles?

2. What topic(s) do you want to hear more about/talk more about?

3. How did the session(s) assist you?

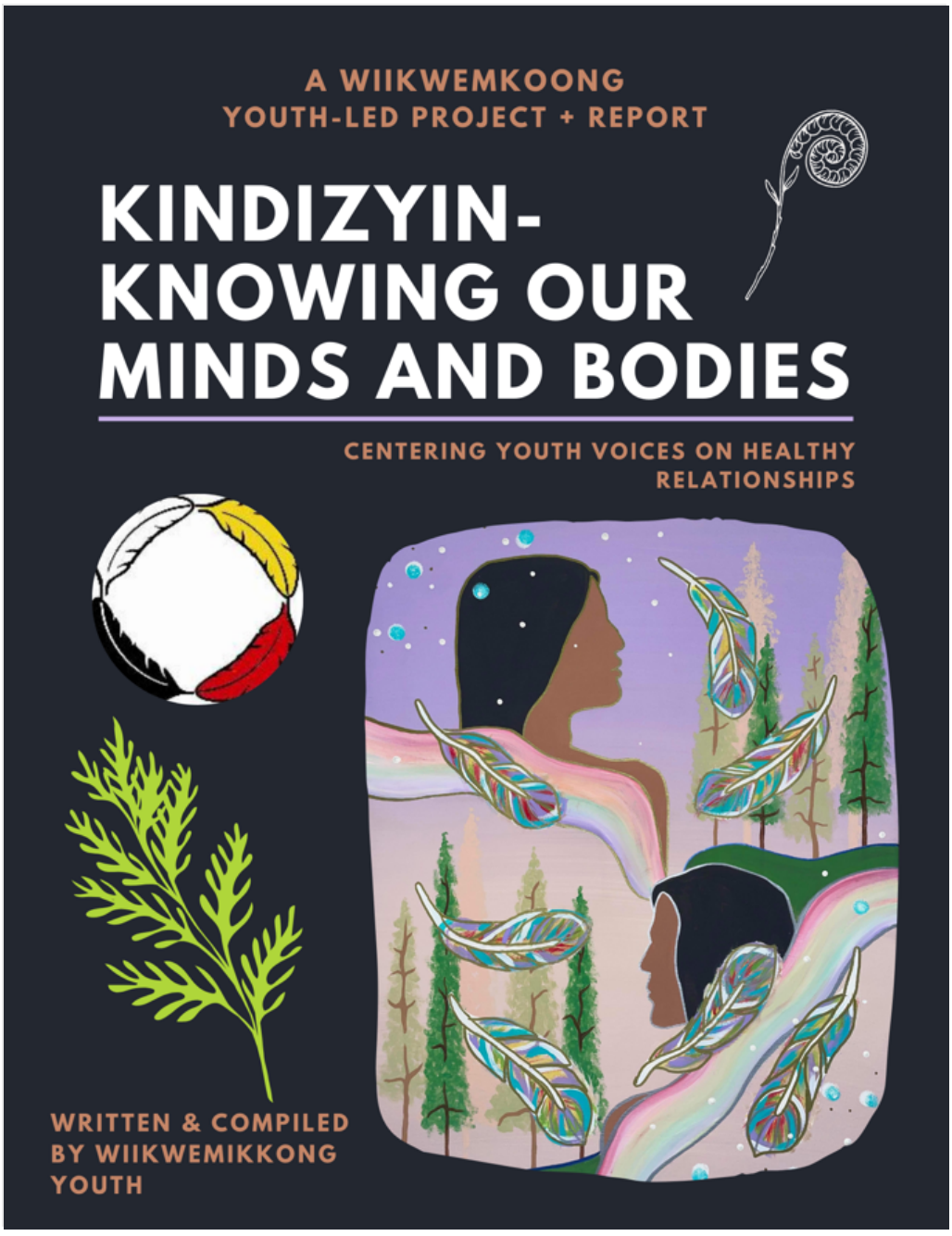
4. What are some highlights from the session(s) you have attended?

5. What are some barriers that prevent you from accessing sexual health resources/services in Wiikwemkoong?

6. How could our team do better in these meetings?

7. Any feedback from the session(s) you have attended? (Eg; Food provided, People that facilitated, Venue, Knowledge that has been shared, etc.)

Appendix I: Co-Created Report – Returning to Community, Knowledge Sharing




CODES
We made codes from our conversations:
Healthy Dopamine/Serotonin
SELF-ACCEPTANCE
Healthy Sex Talk
Boundaries
Self-Care/Love
EDUCATION
Transparency
PEACE
unconditional love
Acknowledge Feelings/Actions
CONSIDERATION
Self-Prioritize
Mental Health
for Parents
SUPPORT-
SYSTEM
Honesty/Trust
Self-Awareness
RECONNECTION
RESPECTING OTHERS
CONTENTMENT
Returning
to
Ceremony
+Tradition
Communication
Inclusive sanitary spaces


THEMES
Then we grouped them into themes:
Spiritual Knowledge + Growth
EDUCATION
Health
RESPECTING SELF
Morality
Nurture
interpersonal-skills
Self-Awareness