"Day by Day: Coming of Age is a Process that Takes Time": Supporting Culturally Appropriate Coming of Age Resources for Urban Indigenous Youth in Care on Vancouver Island

by

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B.Sc., University of Calgary, 2006

M.Sc., University of Calgary, 2011

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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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.

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Abstract

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's first call to action is to reduce the number of Indigenous children and youth in care, including keeping young people in culturally appropriate environments. While we work towards this goal, culturally appropriate resources are needed to support children and youth as evidence shows that when Indigenous youth have access to cultural teachings, they have improved physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health outcomes.

Our project focused on the protective qualities of Indigenous coming of age teachings. Together with our community partner Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services, we worked to develop resources that inform and advocate for a culturally-centered coming of age for urban Indigenous youth living in foster care in Victoria, British Columbia on Lekwungen Territory. This dissertation begins with a literature review to provide the social and historical context surrounding urban Indigenous youth-in-care's access to coming of age teachings. This is followed by a description of the Indigenous research paradigm that guided our work, what it meant for us to do this project *in a good way,* and the methods that we used to develop three visual storytelling knowledge sharing tools. Three manuscripts are presented, two published and one submitted, that reflect a strength-based vision of coming of age shared by knowledge holders who participated in our community events.

The first manuscript retells the events of the knowledge holder's dinner, where community members shared their perspectives on four questions related to community engagement and youth support. An analysis of the event's transcripts revealed key

themes including the responsibility of creating safe-spaces for youth, that coming of age is a community effort, and the importance of youth self-determining their journey. A graphic recording and short story are used to illustrate and narrate the relationship between key themes and related signifiers. This manuscript highlights the willingness of the community to collectively support youth in their journeys to adulthood.

The second manuscript focuses on our two youth workshops that had the objective of understanding what rites of passage youth in SCCFS's care engage with and how they learn what cultural teachings were most important to them. The findings suggest that when youth experience environments of belonging, and know they are 'part of something bigger', qualities like self-determination, self-awareness, and empowerment are strengthened.

The third manuscript focuses on how we translated our project findings into different storytelling modalities using an Indigenist arts-based methodological approach. The project findings provided the inspiration and content for a fictional story called *Becoming Wolf*, which was adapted into a graphic novel, and a watercolour infographic. These knowledge sharing media present our project findings in accessible and meaningful ways that maintain the context and essences of our learnings.

This research illustrates how Indigenous coming of age is an experience of interdependent teachings, events, and milestones, that contribute to the wellness of the body, mind, heart, and spirit of youth and the Indigenous community more broadly. Through our efforts, we hope to create a shared awareness about the cultural supports available to urban Indigenous youth that can contribute to lifelong wellness.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the knowledge holders who have worked and sacrificed to carry coming of age teachings forward for the benefit of future generations.

Prologue: Locating Myself in this Research

I entered the offices of SCCFS on the morning of February 15, 2019. It was the first day I had been out in my car since the big snowfall, and because of this I was early for the meeting. I came into the office and could hear a morning song and drumming. What a great way to start the day I thought! I sat with my knitting while I waited for the group to be ready. I noticed my hands were shaking, but I didn't know why, as I didn't feel nervous?!

As I reflect on this first team meeting, a gathering of eight women from all different backgrounds, I think about how our inquiry began by asking, "What does coming of age mean for Indigenous youth in foster care"? Over the course of the project, we gathered many voices to help answer that question, including voices from the literature, at our community dinner, and from the youth at our workshops. I learned that (re)connecting to coming of age means simultaneously looking backwards and forwards, picking up teachings and carrying them into adulthood.

During this project, I learned that Coast Saalish coming of age ceremonies for youth were guided by the gifts that the Creator gave them to share; gifts that youth embodied, not what they ought to. Understanding that I would be engaging in a personal journey, I had to turn inward to understand and acknowledge the gifts that I was bringing to share. Though I was born a Treaty 7 person, my knowledge about protocol and ceremony is largely rooted in Coast Saalish teachings as my journey to a more personal decolonized praxis began on the Saanich Peninsula in southern Vancouver Island. Looking back, I see that my relationships were largely cultivated through sharing textile-related knowledge; specifically, spinning, knitting, and weaving within the Coast Saalish community. Drawing on this practice became central to my research and helped me to

engage with different arts-based activities during our research events and conceptualize new ways to interpret and engage with the information being gathered.

This work draws strongly on embodiment, experience, and respectful engagement. Therefore, I feel it is important that I position myself as a learner and not an expert. I share some reflections in italicized text that were part of my learning journey – reflections on different engagements, how I made sense of things that were learned, or milestones that represent our accomplishments. Understanding my place and position in this work as a facilitator and knowledge gatherer was key in seeing what I could bring to this journey, helping to celebrate the gifts and contributions of everyone involved.

Chapter 1 Introduction

"We need culturally appropriate coming of age resources for our young people" These were the words Jennifer Chuckry, Executive Director at Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services, shared when we first met in May 2018. We connected through my mum, Connie, when she, on a different occasion met with Jennifer at Surrounded by Cedars' office and brought up some work I was doing with a friend's organization, 'Period Posse', a not-for-profit group that was raising funds and awareness around menstrual equity and equitable access to menstrual supplies. Jennifer's early words have kept me focused on what the objectives of our project are. Together, we worked to develop these resources – knowledge sharing tools that reflect the community's direction, advice, guidance, and knowledge. Our hope is that these materials will help to convey the importance of coming of age in the life course of Indigenous youth, with the intention of (re)writing strength-based narratives that truly reflect their spirit and strength.

This project explores how (re)connecting urban Indigenous youth to coming of age teachings can be protective to wellness, and support and enhance resiliency both individually and in the broader urban Indigenous community. We are guided by the mission and vision of our community partner, Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services (SCCFS):

> To provide child and family services strongly rooted in Indigenous cultural values and world views while ensuring urban Indigenous children and youth grow up connected to family, community, and culture ... to support the empowerment of the urban Indigenous community to continue the reclamation of traditional systems of caring for and protecting children so no child or youth will be placed into care (Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services, 2019).

SCCFS advocates for (re)connecting to spirit and identity through familial, hereditary, and cultural linkages because these are the strongest protective factors in promoting the safety and well-being amongst Indigenous people. These protective factors buffer risks associated with intergenerational and colonial trauma and can be facilitated through activities including land-based learning, language programming, traditional arts and crafts, and, specific to this project, coming of age teachings (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Claxton, 2015; Flicker et al., 2014; Hallett, 2005; McIvor et al., 2009). The intention of this project is to advocate in solidarity with this message by recognizing the strength of the teachings and their multi-dimensional healing abilities.

Background

Coming of age is a crucial rite of passage for Indigenous youth, but colonization has severely undermined the passing of coming of age teachings from generation to generation (Anderson, 2011; Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2011; Markstrom, 2008; Reading & Wien, 2009). The importance of having access to cultural knowledge during adolescence was emphasized in a landmark study identifying cultural continuity as one of several protective factors against Indigenous youth suicides (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998). At national and international levels, the importance and right to cultural continuity for youth has been recognized by the Canadian Constitution, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 30; United Nations General Assembly, 1989), and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (Article 15; United Nations, 2008).

The connection with "place" be it homelands, territories, or a feeling of belonging, is crucial to maintaining cultural continuity for youth because "Aboriginal people suffer when absent from

the land" (Little Bear, 2009, p. 23). Angel Joe Koe, an 18-year-old woman from Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories says:

> When someone is looking unhealthy, we say "*Nanakat gwats'I'hindii*" Go out to your land. We say that because we know that the land will heal you. The land is essential to our way of life. *Ihik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit*, the sacred place where life begins (We Matter, 2018).

This project is connecting to culture during the adolescent years because it is a grounding force during the physical, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual changes that emerge during this time. Passing teachings to youth serves multiple functions including supporting individual empowerment, strengthening individual and collective well-being and resilience, and supporting cultural continuity (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Little Bear, 2009; Markstrom, 2008; Ritchie et al., 2014). Resilience, in this context, is the persistence of cultural values and teachings despite historical adversity (Kirmayer et al., 2011), where the support it provides youth during adolescence can help to maintain a trajectory of wellness into adulthood (Reading & Wien, 2009). Evidence shows that when youth have the autonomy to share their voices, they have higher self-esteem and a greater commitment to friends, family, community, and themselves (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2011; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Suleiman et al., 2006). It is in this spirit that this project was designed, to foreground the voices of our youth participants.

Nearly 30% of the First Nations and Inuit populations in Canada and 22% of the Métis populations in Canada are under the age of 14 (Statistics Canada, 2016) and these young people are coming of age during a period in historical time when their communities are mobilizing to gain political, social and human rights (Flicker et al., 2014, p. 18). There are numerous youth-led

grassroots campaigns that have taken on critical issues related to health and wellness including the following: We Matter (committed to youth empowerment, hope, and life promotion), Taking Action 4 Youth (art and aboriginal youth leadership for HIV prevention), and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN - addressing issues of sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice) among many others. The youth in these projects say that developing strength and resilience through prayer, having strong communities, and being connected to their lands is what they need to overcome hardships and cope during hard times.

Significance of the Study

Victor Turner wrote extensively on the life stage of adolescent 'coming of age' and the significance of liminality, a period of transition that is simultaneously a state of having been, being, and becoming (Turner, 1994). He stressed that we needed to understand this period better because of the "…potential richness and cultural significance of what all too often has been dismissed as a residual category, an interstructural phase…" (Lessa & Vogt, 1999, p. 234).

Reflecting on the interstructural phase of Canadian history as the space between what is referred to as pre-contact or pre-colonial and today's contemporary society, it is the events, actions, and policies within that space that shape how we come to know Indigenous coming of age today. Early activities that specifically targeted those ceremonies celebrating the passage from childhood to adulthood, attempted to dismantle the potential for communities and nations to thrive. The intentional and systematic disruption of cultural continuity in teachings through mechanisms like the Indian Act, the residential school policy, and the Sixties Scoop are directly and indirectly responsible for the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in care today (Hughes, 2006).

Our project seeks to contribute to efforts that make visible the strength of Indigenous youth by celebrating a life passage that was actively and intentionally invisibilized for the sole purpose of weakening Indigenous people. The outcome of disconnecting Indigenous youth from coming of age teachings and ceremonies, remains visible in the disproportionate representation of Indigenous youth in Canada's child-welfare systems. In British Columbia, "an Aboriginal child is 9.5 times more likely to be taken into care than a non-Aboriginal child, and half the children in care in the province are Aboriginal…" (Hughes, 2006, p. 49). In 2011, 3.6% of all First Nations children (i.e., not including Métis or Inuit) in Canada under the age of 14 were in care, compared to 0.3% of non-Aboriginal children (Turner, 2016).

Through this work, we support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) calls to action; first and foremost, to reduce the number of Indigenous children in care, including keeping children in culturally appropriate environments (4iii; TRC, 2015). While we work towards the goal of keeping children and youth in their communities with the services that they need for strong families, access to culturally appropriate resources is needed now to support children and youth through their transition towards adulthood. Our support of the TRC's call to action (4i) to support Indigenous governments and organizations in maintaining their own Indigenous child-welfare agencies (TRC, 2015) guide the work that we are doing.

This work also addresses issues of equity in knowledge development, including who can guide and lead research. This study was guided by SCCFS and engaged with an Indigenist research framework, which means centring the work around our relationship with SCCFS, being accountable to what we said we would do, and how they wished to see it be done. Using this framework aligns our work with other emancipatory research agendas, but specifically focuses

on visioning Indigenous futures as defined by Indigenous people themselves (Rigney, 1999; Wilson, 2013).

Together with SCCFS, we were actively striving to embody the concept of looking in one direction together and having “a good heart” (Wilson, 2008, p. 60). We did this by following the knowledge and wisdom shared by the youth and knowledge keepers, who told us what direction we should be walking in. This direction meant placing urban Indigenous youth in a central role as peer researchers and collaborators, which often challenged ways that knowledge would be shared. Upon reflection, these challenges were both internal and external to our team, however, the significance of this work always brought us together.

Our project aligned with an Indigenous research paradigm, which includes doing research “in a good way”. Doing research in a good way involves community consultation, having strong community participation, and using methods that acknowledge and align with Indigenous ways of knowing and doing (Cochran et al., 2008). More broadly, working within this paradigm assumes that the intentions and processes of the data collected are as important as the knowledge acquired or created (Flicker et al., 2015). For our project, this meant gathering the wisdoms shared during our research events in culturally appropriate ways, collaboratively developing our knowledge sharing materials with SCCFS, and ensuring that our findings are shared with the community in ways that benefits them. By both conducting our work in a good way and using visual storytelling to share our findings, we hope that this work encourages critical discourses about ways to meaningfully co-create and embody research knowledge.

Organization of this Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 of this dissertation provides a brief overview of the research area and grounds the work in the social landscape of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Chapter 2 is a literature review that engages with Cindy Blackstock's Breath of Life Theory to explore the multi-dimensional way historical, cultural, familial, and Eurocentric political structures have intersected the lives of Indigenous youth in Canada, and why (re)establishing connections to the land is so central to (re)connecting to Indigenous coming of age teachings. Chapter 3 describes the Indigenous research paradigm guiding our approach to the project and the ways we used Indigenous methodologies to direct our work and design our study. Chapter 4 describes the ethical procedures we followed, summarizes the methods used to gather, analyze, and interpret our data, and describes how we developed our knowledge sharing tools. Chapters 5 to 7 are the manuscripts prepared for this thesis. Chapter 5 describes our first community engagement event, a knowledge holder's dinner. The manuscript describes the methodologies, methods, and interpretation of the sharing circle transcripts. It also includes the graphic recording that was completed to illustrate the key themes and findings emerging from the knowledge holder's dinner event. Chapter 6 describes how we applied our learnings from the knowledge holder's dinner to support planning for the two youth workshops. This manuscript outlines the adapted methodologies and methods used to gather wisdoms from the youth and the narrative analysis method used to understand Indigenous coming of age from their perspectives. Chapter 7 focuses on how we shared our project findings through creative writing and visual storytelling in ways that maintained our commitment to center our community relationships during all stages of the project. Chapter 8 includes the final discussion that connects our project findings within Indigenous and critical theoretical frameworks and reflects on the strengths, limitations, and implications for future work.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This literature review provides the foundation for the discussions around (re)connecting to coming of age teachings by providing an account of the cultural, historical, and structural contexts surrounding Indigenous adolescents coming of age. To connect these different but interrelated contexts, I used Cindy Blackstock's Breath of Life Theory (Blackstock, 2009, 2011). There are few studies that specifically address the impact adolescent rites of passage have as a culturally appropriate, positive action initiative[1] supporting the health and wellness of Indigenous youth. Much literature exists that acknowledges the significance of coming of age transitions as a cross-cultural phenomenon (Delaney, 1995), but emphasizing the direct and indirect implications of (re)connecting to Indigenous coming of age teachings and ceremonies at individual and community levels requires us to braid together strands from many discourses.

The literature review began in November 2019 and the main objective was to identify literature that discussed: (1) Indigenous youth rites of passage and coming of age; and (2) how adapting and/or evolving these practices can help to prepare Indigenous youth for adulthood in contemporary times and places, including urban settings. The search was not limited to youth living away-from-home or in foster care, as we recognized that the nature of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, and the impact of colonial policies that led to the displacement of Indigenous families is a history shared by all Indigenous children and youth.

[1] Positive action initiative is a strength-based term coined by HIV Older Valerie Nicholson to replace the word "intervention" (Mellor et al., 2019). "Older" is a term distinct from Elder, though it is intended to reflect a knowledge holder role. An "HIV Older" refers to an Indigenous person who is living long-term with HIV and is recognized by their community as having wisdom and experience to support other Indigenous people living with HIV.

In consultation with a health science librarian at the University of Victoria, a search strategy was developed that included key search terms and suitable databases to cross reference resources. Databases searched included PsychINFO, Sociological Abstracts, Bibliography of Native North Americans, Anthropology Plus, and Google Scholar. Searches included peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed literature. No limitation on publication dates were imposed to initially recover as many references as possible. Results were limited to research studies, position papers, and commentaries that took place in Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. Searches were conducted using the Advanced Search function and combinations of the initial key words included variations on Indigenous (e.g., Aboriginal, Native American, Inuit, American Indian, etc.), “coming of age” (including menarche and puberty), “rites of passage” (including ritual*, ceremon*, traditions), and “youth” (or adolesc*). As a secondary screening tool, Google Scholar and the University of Victoria’s Summons search engines were used to search key words or specific references. Google Scholar was used to search for articles and cited works that consistently appeared in all search combinations. Their bibliographies were also searched for articles that were not found in the initial queries.

Although the main objective of the search remained consistent through the writing of this chapter, what follows became much more strongly informed by the project’s events and my growing understanding of Indigenous coming of age than was originally intended. The knowledge I gained has shaped my understanding of the way cultural and historical contexts have collided and have directly and indirectly impacted Indigenous coming of age. It became clear to me, that a stronger foothold was needed to demonstrate, even in an abbreviated way, the lengths the Federal government went to disrupt cultural continuity. In doing so, I hope that I have

emphasized the strength of Indigenous communities *in spite of* the systemic barriers and disruptions that were designed to disconnect youth from their teachings, families, and lands.

Adapting the Breath of Life Theory

I have used Cindy Blackstock's Breath of Life Theory to guide how we can conceptualize the role that (re)connecting urban Indigenous youth in care to traditional coming of age teachings might have in restoring balance to Indigenous families (Blackstock, 2011). The theory hypothesizes that "...structural risks affecting children's safety and well-being are alleviated when relational worldview principles are in balance within the context and culture of the community" (Blackstock, 2011, p. 1). By engaging with a theory grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, she suggests that we can better assess, address, and redress harms that the Canadian child welfare system has created and perpetuated for Indigenous children, families, and communities (Blackstock, 2011). If Indigenous child welfare was approached from an Indigenous worldview, it would first consider the ancestral experience of that child and subsequent interventions in their life would take into consideration the consequences of those interventions seven generations into the future (Blackstock, 2009). The conceptual model for the Breath of Life theory is presented below in Figure 1.

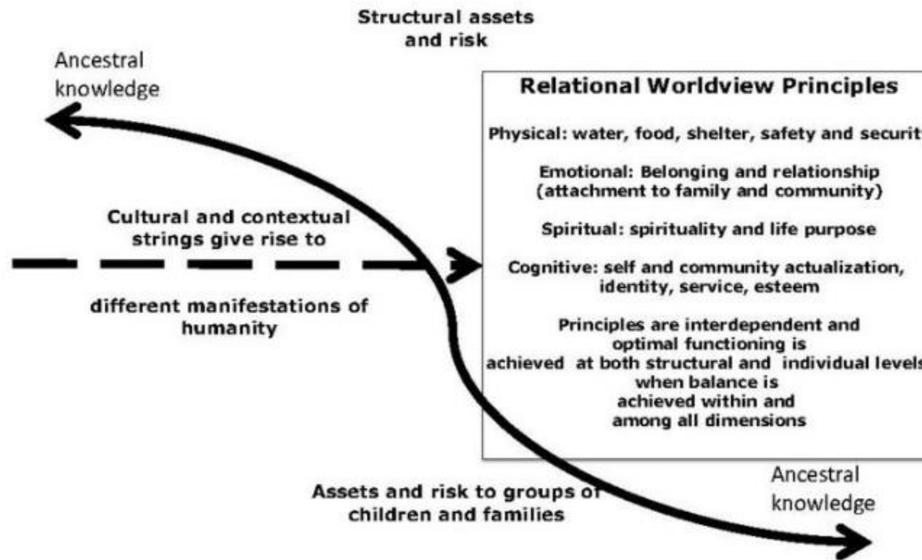

Figure 1: The Breath of Life Theory (Figure 4; Blackstock, 2011).

In Canada, regardless of ancestry, child welfare for Indigenous children and youth is generally guided by Western social work theories, which present limitations to improving child welfare in an Indigenous context (Blackstock, 2009). Not only are those theories and approaches "...not robust enough to address the cultural and contextual realities facing First Nations children..." (Blackstock 2009, p. 10), they emanate from the same ideological framework that tried to dismantle the Indigenous family unit. Approaches to Indigenous child welfare need to differentiate between (a) Indigenous knowledge, (b) Indigenous knowledge disrupted by colonialism, and (c) colonial knowledge itself (Blackstock, 2019).

Because the Breath of Life Theory is rooted in Indigenous ontologies, human beings are seen as "indivisible from the Earth, the universe and from human existence across time" (Blackstock, 2019, p. 857). By extension, this means that when we consider Indigenous child welfare through this theoretical lens, we take into consideration the importance and relevance of ancestral knowledge, the ways that multiple contexts (e.g., historical, social, cultural, etc.) intersect and

influence individuals, families, and communities, and how this interconnectivity is reflected in the balance or imbalance of one's body, mind, heart, and spirit (Blackstock, 2011; Figure 1). In Figure 2, I show how the Breath of Life theory can be used to conceptualize contemporary, yet culturally-centered coming of age experiences or life-stages for Indigenous youth.

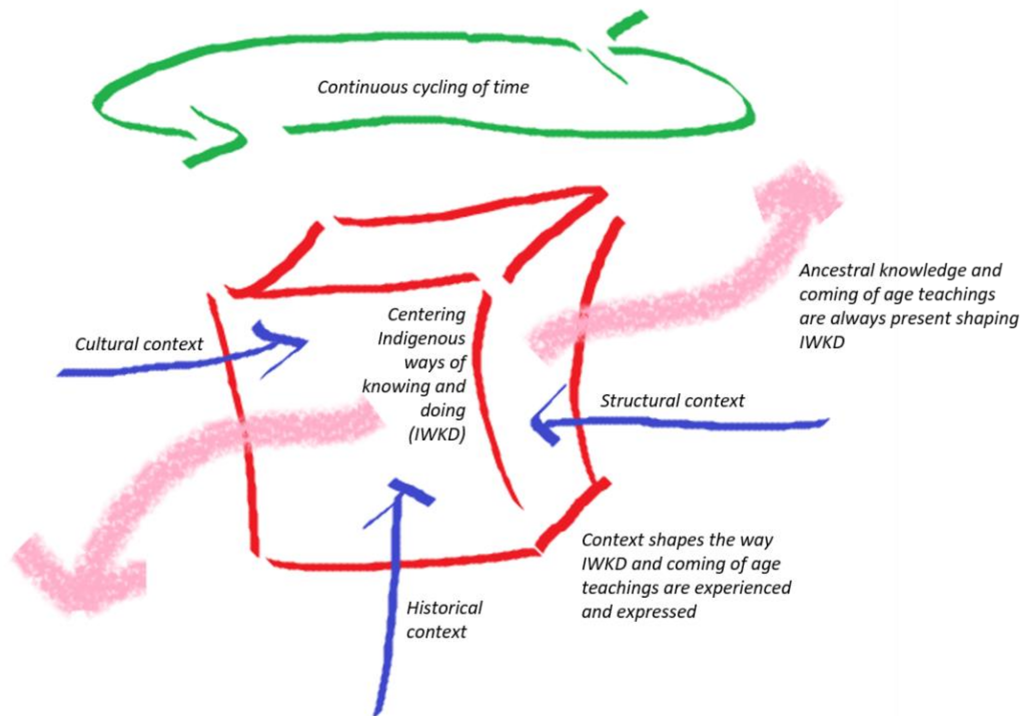

Figure 2: The Breath of Life Theory applied to Indigenous coming of age teachings.

Note: This illustrates how coming of age teachings emanate from Indigenous ways of knowing and doing (IWKD) and are continuously shaped by ancestral teachings. This shows how IWKD are influenced by and adapt to many different contexts across time, land, and nationhood, but persist in perpetuity. Adapted from Blackstock, 2011 (p. 8).

From this perspective, we would consider an individual's adolescence to be connected to the historical events that are shaped by multiple contexts across space and time. 'Space' is expansive and could represent physical or spiritual space, and 'time' is equally expansive and extends both to the beginning of time and into the future. Therefore, when Indigenous coming of age is situated within this context of space and time, one's experience is shaped by ancestral knowledge

that has sustained Indigenous cultures throughout time but is also shaped by the colonial history and structural outcomes that have disrupted the physical, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive principles that help to sustain wholistic health and wellness. These intersecting contexts influence the coming of age knowledge and teachings that are passed between generations directly from Elders and knowledge holders, but these contexts are also passed indirectly through blood memory or genetics.

This literature review considers the different elements that shape coming of age from this theoretical perspective and is organized into the following four sections. Section 1 provides a background on Indigenous ontologies and how ancestral teachings are shaped by place-based ways of knowing and doing. Section 2 focuses specifically on how Indigenous beliefs and values shape the transition from childhood to adulthood or 'coming of age'. Section 3 discusses how Canada's history of settler-colonialism has disrupted the passing of Indigenous coming of age teachings and, specific to this project, structured the child welfare system in such a way that Indigenous youth are over-represented in foster care. Finally, Section 4 explores how an Indigenous-led, culturally centered, and equity-focused approach to Indigenous child welfare will help maintain individual, family, and community wellbeing in ways that will optimize wellness opportunities for Indigenous youth across health domains.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Doing

Indigenous ways of knowing and doing are rooted in an interconnected relationship with the land, where everything in nature shares an equal status and an interrelated existence (Aikenhead & Ogawa, 2007; Cajete, 2000; Little Bear, 2014). It is a "kincentric" ontology that regards all living and non-living beings as relatives, strengthening which the bonds between people, communities, and their environments (Turner & Clifton, 2009). Indigenous models of health

flow from this relational ontology, where maintaining good health is a synergy of social, individual, and environmental factors (First Nations Health Authority, 2020).

Because personal experiences are integral to explaining natural phenomena, Indigenous knowledge is simultaneously objective and subjective (Cajete, 2004; Meyer, 2014). Passing knowledge between generations is equally personal and depends on the relationships between the teacher, the learner, and the surrounding environment (Brant-Castellano, 2000; Hart, 2010). Methods of knowledge transfer are modelled through protocols, ceremonies, and traditions unique to each nation and territory. This method of knowledge transfer ensures that values and beliefs are passed from generation to generation in ways that are specific to circumstances or contexts surrounding those teachings, helping to strengthen the continuity and adaptability of knowledge throughout time (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

Teachings are passed from generation to generation, often from Elders to children. Teachings take many forms including oral, visual, and tactile forms like songs, stories, artwork, handwork (e.g. weaving, beading, carving, etc.), and spiritual forms like ceremonies and rites of passage. Knowledge that was shared in Indigenous languages reflected the environments of learning and discovery. For example, Chief Ian Campbell tells us that the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) language, a wind language, "...reflects the rhythm of the land. As the wind blows off the ocean, it goes over the islands, up the valleys, into the glaciers, and it drops again" (Indigenous Tourism BC, 2014). Listening to the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh language, he tells us, you will hear the many inflections and sounds, like the wind, that reflect the territory. Teachings, therefore, also reflect this. For instance, how you would travel across land and water or what you might fish, hunt, or pick to eat based on the knowledge gathered in those places across generations. If we consider the vastness of the Canadian landscape, and the more than 70 Indigenous languages spoken

(McIvor, 2018), we can begin to understand the diversity of stories, knowledges, and sacred histories that exist.

Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, some unique and others shared between nations, comprise the foundation of Indigenous cultures. The root word of culture is *cultura,* an active word, meaning to grow or cultivate. Ways of knowing and doing are expressions of a society's culture, and are "...an adaptable and ever-changing process and not something that remains stuck in the past" (McIvor et al., 2009, p. 16). The long tradition of sharing knowledge between nations maintained the liveliness and survival of Indigenous knowledge across millennia and the loss of languages is partly reflected in the fragmentation of Indigenous ceremonies, teachings, and ecological knowledge (McIvor et al., 2009; Vizenor, 2008).

The capability for resilience, "a capacity to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change" (Turner & Clifton, 2009, p. 181) is what has enabled Indigenous ways of knowing and doing to exist for thousands of years. Central to our discussions regarding coming of age teachings is how Indigenous youth celebrate and connect to their ancestral teachings while, for some, living away from their home territories, living in urban centres, embracing multiple forms of knowledge sharing, and honouring many intersecting identities. However, outside influences shaping 'what it means to be Indigenous', have often hindered efforts to (re)connect to cultural teachings. These constructions may come from the imaginations of individuals or groups whose voices or expressions are socially dominant and might not reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Examples include frontier paintings, Hollywood films, or song lyrics (King, 2012). Alternatively, narratives of Indigenous people may try to relegate Indigenous ways of knowing and doing to the past, which prevents Indigenous peoples from contributing to broader social, political, and economic futures (Risling Baldy, 2018).

Although systematic efforts have been made to erase Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, narratives of strength that celebrate the continued life and resilience of Indigenous communities have also been shared for generations (Christensen, 2012; Turner & Clifton, 2009; Cunsolo Willox et al., 2013). Indigenous scholar Jeff Corntassel, speaks to the fluid nature of stories and the way that telling and (re)telling stories is itself a process of remembering and maintaining balance (Corntassel, 2012). Consider the actions of the Grandmother Water Walkers, who are creating "new" narratives to encourage Indigenous people, particularly young people, to take up their roles, rights, and responsibilities as protectors of the land and water. In 2003, Anishnaabekwe Grandmother Josephine Madamin walked around each of the Great Lakes with a copper pail of water in one hand, and a staff in the other. She did this to raise awareness of the sacredness of water, saying,

> As women, we are carriers of the water. We carry life for the people. So when we carry that water, we are telling people that we will go any lengths for the water. We'll probably even give our lives for the water if we have to. We may at some point have to die for the water, and we don't want that (Mother Earth WaterWalk, 2017, n.p.).

This walk, and the many that followed, simultaneously protested the pollution of the Great Lakes, advocated for Indigenous women's rights to protect water, and taught about the sacred responsibility of being a water carrier. In creating contemporary narratives that are grounded in ancestral knowledge, the Water Walkers are contesting those stories that suggest Indigenous women and Indigenous people more broadly are powerlessness to protect the environment (Nadasdy, 1999, 2005; Pasternak, 2016).

The celebration and embodiment of teachings can also be learned and practiced everyday in small ways that celebrate and connect young people to Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. These can be practiced in urban, rural, or remote places, in ways that maintain connections and foster strength between Indigenous people and their cultures amidst changing environments and landscapes (Corntassel, 2012; Women's Earth Alliance & Native Youth Sexual Health Network, 2016). Specific to this work, these practices are an important part of deconstructing outdated narratives that suggest an incompatibility between "Indigenous" and "urban" and move forward towards (re)storying living traditions in contemporary contexts.

Rites of Passage and Indigenous Coming of Age Teachings

Indigenous coming of age teachings and rites of passage are vehicles to pass on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, and were historically a major component of child-rearing practices (Olynick et al., 2016). Teachings and ceremonies reflect the community or nation's cultural and societal values, roles, and beliefs, and prepare children to be knowledge holders as they pass into adulthood (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). Traditionally, Elders worked to cultivate a sense of individualism, while also teaching youth their responsibilities in relation to their tribe (Mckay-Riddell, 2006). David Lertzman shared part of his conversation with Nanaimo-Cowichan educator Bill White who spoke of the importance of Elders in guiding young people through this transition,

> The old people perceive the state of limbo to be the most vulnerable for young people...Sacred rules, sacred rites, words of advice, which in effect too are sacred, are applied through childhood in order to prepare young people for states of transformation (Lertzman, 2002, p. 7).

Coming of age is marked by stages of separation, preparation, transition, and welcoming or (re)emergence from one life stage to another (Delaney, 1995; Sullwold, 1998; van Gennep, 1960). In adolescence, the transitional stage has been called "betwixt and in between," where individuals are pushed out of the comforts of childhood into the precarity of developing their own identity (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003; Turner, 1994). During these uncertain times, rites of passage can connect young people to the world in ways that encourage positive and healthy identity formation, where they can learn the responsibilities of taking up an adult life (Anderson, 2011; Sullwold, 1998). Personal growth during this time might involve reflecting on where one feels most "like themselves," what their direction may be in life, how this connects to their younger self, and how their identities are affirmed among their peers and community (Erikson, 1994). Acknowledging the growth of the young person and their (re)emergence as an adult can depend on how they embody and enact the cultural teachings that have been passed to them.

Coming of age teachings, like all Indigenous teachings, are place-based and share some similarities, but also differ in their expression depending on each nation and community. For example, during the Sunrise Ceremony of the Mescalero Apache, the coming of age ceremony happens "in fours" to represent the four sacred mountains (VICE Life, 2018). There are rites that represent the four life stages of being a baby, a child, a teenager, and an adult, and rites that involve running for example, demonstrating a symbolic separation from one phase to another (Farrer, 1994; VICE Life, 2018). During this ceremony, the young woman is painted with white clay, becoming "White Painted Woman," to show her embodiment of her spiritual heritage and that she has embraced her power as a woman (Traditional Native Healing, 2015). The physical embodiment of ancestral teachings is present in other cultures, such as during the Navajo Kinaalda, where a young woman takes on the persona of "Changing Woman" or *Asdzáá*

Nádleehé, the Mother Earth figure from whom creation flows (Markstrom, 2008). Rituals, similarly, take place across four days, and include symbolic rites like washing hair, body painting, corn grinding, and feats of strength. The ceremonies are intended to teach girls what life will be like when they reach adulthood, which also gives meaning and validation to what they learned during childhood (Markstrom, 2008; Markstrom & Iborra, 2003).

Coming of age for Indigenous youth is a community affair, involving preparation, participation, and ultimately, witnessing the transformation of young people from children to adults (Farrer, 1994; Markstrom, 2008). Similar to women's ceremonies, those for young men also involve a commitment from the community whether it is through the organization of a hunt and the celebration of the first kill, or the completion of a vision quest or spiritual journey (Lertzman, 2002; Olynick et al., 2016; Thomas, 2015). The 'Nlaka'pamux (Interior Salish) Vision Quest, a traditional rite of passage for young men, might involve months or years of training and preparation (Lertzman, 2002). This lengthy preparation starts in childhood and was described to me during our knowledge holder's dinner when we were told, "...it's a process, like, you don't start by killing the fish. That is a really hard thing to do, you have to work up to this, so you might start first by just coming along on the fishing trip"[2] (R. John, *personal communication).* This preparation is needed so that young people are in the spiritual position where the gifts passed to them during these ceremonies remain with them for the rest of their lives.

Coming of age teachings experienced as rites of passage contribute to the development of protective qualities like self-esteem, empowerment, and independence (Lertzman, 2002; Mellor et al., 2020). Youth who are not connected to their ancestral communities can still establish this

[2] This quote has been paraphrased from the original conversation.

connection in ways that make sense for them and contribute to the collective strength of their nations. This is a reminder that they belong to a community and share a responsibility in preserving that community (Sullwold, 1998). Passing on coming of age teachings creates what Nishnaabe Elder, Edna Manitowabi refers to as *kobade,* meaning “a link in a chain, a link between generations, between nations, between states of being, and between individuals” (Simpson, 2014, para. 22). The reciprocity imbued in both sharing and receiving teachings, specifically those that prepare Indigenous youth to be healthy, proud, and strong caregivers, ensures the ongoing strength of their ancestral chain, despite or regardless of physical distance from their communities of origin.

Structural and Historical Context

Indigenous beliefs about creation, which includes the sacred relationship between people and the land, are embedded within Indigenous coming of age ceremonies and practices (Markstrom, 2008). Rites of passage pass these relational beliefs from one generation to the next, and in doing so, preserve cultural ways of knowing and doing, strengthening community solidarity (Bengtson & Oyama, 2007). For example, Joseph Geronimo, grandson of Apache leader Geronimo, said of his granddaughter’s coming of age Sunrise Ceremony, “...it will keep her strong the rest of her life. And not only that, it will keep the tribe strong” (VICE Life, 2018). The knowledge passed between generations is influenced and shaped by the living experiences of knowledge holders. If those experiences include physical, social, emotional, and spiritual trauma, the knowledge passed down to younger generations may carry that trauma with it (i.e., intergenerational trauma) (Bengtson & Oyama, 2007).

In this section, I consider how differing structural and contextual factors have influenced the passing of coming of age teachings and how this might shape contemporary rites of passages and

ceremonies for Indigenous youth today. The focus of this section turns first to actions made by the Canadian government pre- and post- Confederation that worked to dismantle the connection between Indigenous peoples and their homelands, specifically by targeting children and families. Recognizing and addressing the structural framework created by settler-colonialism and its influence on Indigenous child welfare foregrounds why *(re)*connecting to coming of age teachings is so significant for the wellbeing of Indigenous youth, families, and communities.

Pre-war, Post-contact: Creating Soul Wounds

Governance structures and Indigenous legal orders across the territories of what has become "Canada" have existed for more than 15,000 years (Borrows, 2010). These structures ensured the safe passage of five hundred generations of Indigenous children into adulthood, surviving disease, drought, and social conflict. Systems of governance, unique to each nation, were sustained through holistic ways of knowing that upheld respectful relationships with nature (Clifford, 2016; Henderson, 2002). Maintaining these governance structures ensured that knowledge systems would be carried forward to future generations (Claxton, 2015).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples identified four major phases of colonialism which provide context to the shifting relationship between Indigenous peoples and Europeans (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The first began with the arrival of Europeans at the end of the 1400s through to the 1600s. This century is characterized more by tolerance and respect between Indigenous peoples and Europeans, when relationships focused on resource industries like fisheries and the fur trade. Although the strength of these governance structures began to decline following the onset of this first period, it is important to acknowledge that these early Indigenous-colonial relationships experienced allyship in varying degrees, including the exchange of ecological knowledge, military alliance, and material trade. Indigenous people

maintained sustainable food supplies and continued to flourish, establishing trade agreements with European settlers and providing sustenance for their communities (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015). An example of mutual agreements between Europeans and Indigenous peoples is the Two Row Wampum belt, circa 1613, a symbol of the Living Treaty between the Haudenosaunee people and the Dutch Settlers. The Two Row Wampum symbolizes an agreement,

> ...together we will travel in Friendship and in Peace Forever; as long as the grass is green, as long as the water runs downhill, as long as the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, and as long as our Mother Earth will last (Onondaga Nation, 2018).

Figure 3: The Beaded Tow Row Wampum Belt (Gusweñta).

Note: This belt representing the living treaty symbolizing that friendship and peace will endure forever between nations (Onondaga Nation, 2018).

The second phase is marked by the establishment of colonies during the 1500s through to the Royal Proclamation of 1763. During the 1700s stronger trading and military alliances were established, concurrent with the wars between France and England over the dominance of North America. Early treaty making also began which documented the recognition of Indigenous peoples as self-governing entities (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015). Guiding the treaty making process was the Royal Proclamation of 1763 that declared Indigenous people were autonomous and not to be disturbed on their lands, an important piece of legislation that continues to be

foundational to the protection of Indigenous rights in Canada today (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013).

During the third phase (1764 to 1969), the roles of Indigenous peoples as military allies diminished following the War of 1812, and to accommodate the influx of European settlers, the federal government continued to displace Indigenous peoples from their lands and territories onto marginal reserve lands. These restrictive measures led to increased poverty and an associated extreme loss of life from declines in fur trading, food insecurity from a loss of access to traditional hunting grounds, and the rapid spread of infectious diseases (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015).

The rights of Indigenous people as laid out in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the many treaties signed with nations, were regarded as interfering with settler expansion under the colonial enterprise, and later, the newly formed federal government. Efforts to disenfranchise Indigenous people through assimilationist policies were a way to gain access and control of territories. This gained momentum with the release of the Bagot Commission Reports in 1845 and 1847, which used the "civilization policy" to target assimilation by dismantling the Indigenous family unit, specifically recommending the removal of children from their parents and placing them in residential schools (Wolfe, 2006). The Bagot Commission Reports led to federally legislated assimilation efforts including the *Gradual Civilization Act* (1857) and later, the *Land Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement for Indians* (1869). The former worked to incentivize enfranchisement at the cost of forfeiting tribal affiliations and land bases, and the latter introduced the membership models that led to status/non-status identity legislation intended to dismantle Indigenous governance structures (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015).

In 1876, the *Indian Act* was passed as a centralized mechanism to systematically assimilate and displace Indigenous people (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015). Through the *Indian Act*, the federal government effectively had control over Indigenous identity, political structures, landholding, resources, and economic development on reserves (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). With the *Indian Act*, various amendments led to escalating bans of cultural practices throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, including the ceremonies associated with different coming of age periods (Olynick et al., 2016). The Act became the conduit through which residential schools were able to exist, whereby children were forcibly separated from their parents and placed in boarding schools to remove the influence of family, reserves, and culture. The efforts to assimilate Indigenous people into settler-society deprived children of the opportunity to learn the ways of their people and denied Elders their role in ensuring the sustainability of community and culture through education and mentorship of children and youth (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015).

Post-WWII Reparations: Deepening the Scars

The aftermath of the second world war coupled with the abuses suffered during successive generations of residential schools, left a legacy of poverty, trauma, and declining health in Indigenous communities. This period coincided with the ushering in of "helping professions" that focused on post-war social reparations and the 1951 amendment to the *Indian Act* which delegated health, welfare, and education services to provincial governments (Bennett et al., 2005). The significance of this amendment was that instead of addressing the damage created by federal policies, the government offloaded its responsibility to Indigenous Peoples onto the provinces (Bennett et al., 2005; Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005; Kirmayer et al., 2000). What resulted was the dispatching of social workers by provincial governments to address these issues.

Trained in Western traditions, these workers approached Indigenous communities with the same ideology that rationalized assimilation of Indigenous peoples (de Leeuw et al., 2010; Hanson, 2009).

The ensuing period was characterized by mass child apprehension, which later became known as the "Sixties Scoop" (Johnson, 1983). During the 1960s through to the 1980s, more than 11,000 Indigenous children were apprehended and adopted into non-Indigenous homes, largely without the consent of their families (Hanson, 2009; Trocmé et al., 2004). It was not until the Child, Family, and Community Services Act of the 1980s that social workers were required to notify the Band Council that they were going to remove a child from the community (Fournier & Crey, 1998).

Healing Wounds and Reconnecting Families

Many Scoop survivors became caught in a cycle of not fully knowing their culture, heritage, and Indigenous identity while also not being able to relate to the Western culture they had been thrust into (Bennett et al., 2005). This limbo continues to be experienced by many Indigenous youth today in what Blackfoot scholar Leroy Little Bear calls "Jagged Worldviews Colliding" (Little Bear, 2000). Ongoing intergenerational trauma related to these successive efforts to eliminate Indigeneity created "soul wounds", a term psychologists Duran and Duran (2000) describe as "...the trauma suffered by the psyche over half a millennium of systematic attempts at genocide directed at Indigenous people" (p. 98). They argue that once the soul is wounded, wounds manifest in a collective suffering which requires a community-based approach for healing to emerge.

The National Indian Brotherhood, the precursor to the Assembly of First Nations, was part of the early healing work in Canada. They released a report in 1972, *Indian Control over Indian Education,* that helped to draw attention to the disproportionate number of children apprehended by child welfare services (Fournier & Crey, 1998; Hanson, 2009; Johnson, 1983). In response to the damage caused by Western child welfare practices to Indigenous communities, they led an initiative to establish Indigenous-run and Indigenous-controlled agencies to deliver culturally based services and to restore the right never surrendered by Indigenous people to raise their own children (Bennett et al., 2005). The responsibility to raise their children was bestowed upon Indigenous people by the Creator, and Indigenous laws are clear about child welfare,

> If for any reason children were left without parents, an extended family member, or an interested citizen of the community would assume responsibility for those children. Those children then became members of that family, but the original birth family was not forgotten nor ignored. (Bennett et al., 2005, p. 24)

The efforts of the National Indian Brotherhood led provinces to amend adoption laws in ways that prioritized Indigenous child placements as follows:

1. Place children and youth with their extended family first

2. Place children and youth with another Indigenous family second

3. Place children and youth with a non-Indigenous family (Hanson, 2009).

For on-reserve Indigenous youth, the 1990 First Nations Child and Family Services program was created to transfer administration of child and family services from the province or territory to the local band (Hanson, 2009). Bands thereafter had to administer services according to

provincial or territorial legislation, though the financial support came from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) (Hanson, 2009). Urban Indigenous communities were funded by the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) (Government of British Columbia, n.d.).

Persistent funding disparities at the federal level between Indigenous youth compared to non-Indigenous youth reflect the inequities between populations and prevent change from taking place for the over 40,000 Indigenous children and youth in care (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2016). The discrimination against Indigenous children and families by the federal government was exposed even further, when in 2016, "the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that the Government of Canada discriminated against First Nations children by providing flawed and inequitable child welfare services and *[failed]* to ensure equitable access to other government services" (Blackstock et al., 2020, p. 3). The recent passing of Bill C-92, *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families* (2019), was a landmark piece of legislation aimed at addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in care and promote the establishment of community-controlled child welfare agencies (Stefanovich & Tasker, 2020). And yet, control over the Bill's content was not in the hands of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit peoples and remains a pan-Indigenous document that continues to impose western concepts of child welfare on Indigenous children and families (Blackstock et al., 2020). In addition, the Bill has no funding commitments attached to it and, according to the Assembly of First Nations, funding amounts required to equitably address the care needs for Indigenous youth through Indigenous-led child welfare would be 3.5 billion dollars (Barrera, 2019). In a recent interview, Cindy Blackstock said that "...it's difficult for communities to establish and operate their own systems under the law without any attached funding" and she

points out that the Federal Government’s $149 billion in COVID-19 relief efforts demonstrates that funding could be made available if it was a priority (Stefanovich & Tasker, 2020, p. 4).

Although the focus may shift toward family restoration and healing, the lack of funding for Indigenous communities and child welfare agencies inhibits their ability to address the root causes of child apprehension, argued by many to be the systemic poverty faced by communities (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015; Trocmé et al., 2004). The post-war child welfare system cites “neglect” as the leading reason for child removal in Indigenous communities and extensive evidence has demonstrated that this is linked to the colonial drivers of poverty, lack of equitable service provision, and lack of culturally-centered interventions (Blackstock et al., 2020; Brittain & Blackstock, 2015; Kirmayer et al., 2000; Trocmé et al., 2004). Perceptions of neglect continue to manifest in sub-standard and overcrowded housing, lack of access to clean water and healthy food, and disproportionate policing of Indigenous peoples (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005; Ma et al., 2019). While Indigenous children are more likely to receive out-of-home services, services designed to *prevent* children from entering care are under funded on reserves by up to 22% (Ma et al., 2019)

Bringing about Balance and Healing

Disrupting Intergenerational Trauma

The historical, political, societal, and economic impacts of colonialism influence the structures that shape the wellbeing of Indigenous communities today (Blackstock, 2009; Reading, 2018). The structures unique to Canada’s settler-colonial past have become woven into the living experiences of Indigenous youth, families, and communities through the ongoing enforcement of racialized policies and the cumulative effects of trauma (Brokenleg, 2012). The resulting effects are complex, impacting the body, mind, heart, and spirit of individuals and more broadly the soul

wounds in need of healing and care (Duran et al., 1998). The influence of these effects during adolescence is acute and even exaggerated because this period is so strongly associated with shaping the identities that influence one's life course trajectories (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). In maintaining our alignment with the Breath of Life theory, we also understand how this shapes not only this life, but the lives of future generations (Blackstock, 2009).

Recalling that Indigenous knowledge construction is largely based on experiential learning informed by the intergenerational transfer of objective, subjective, and spiritual learnings, we can see how coming of age teachings are part of a living canon of knowledge that is shared by each individual across each generation (Brant-Castellano, 2000; Claxton, 2015). We see how attempts were made to impact the mechanisms that transmit culture like banning ceremonies, languages, and disrupting land bases through reports, policies, and legislation and dislocating families and communities from one another (Harris, 2004). In many cases, the living canon of Indigenous knowledge related to coming of age teachings has been influenced by individual and collective trauma, which lead to harmful changes in the content, messaging, and methods of passing teachings to future generations (Brokenleg, 2012; Duran et al., 1998; Garrett et al., 2014; Olynick et al., 2016).

When we consider the effects of structural violence on Indigenous identities – the systematic ways that social structures prevent people from maximizing their potential (Galtung, 1969) - we can understand how this creates intergenerational trauma. This violence has disrupted knowledge around intimate connections at the partner, family and community levels including how to model healthy relationships, and healthy parenting (Brokenleg, 2012). As a consequence, the intergenerational trauma that persists may reveal itself during adolescence through feelings of shame around one's physical development, skewed power imbalances in gender roles, self-

destructive forms of initiation into adulthood, or lateral violence between genders, communities, and/or nations (Clark, 2016; Lys & Reading, 2012; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Canada), 2019).

Recognizing that "...resilience is closely intertwined with trauma", adolescent rites of passage reflect a culturally-centred method of teaching resilience through transformative experiences (Brokenleg, 2012, p. 9). By identifying and acknowledging the roots of trauma, we can work to treat the soul wounds, and not just the symptoms, disrupting the cycle of intergenerational trauma and supporting identities comped of strength and pride (Brokenleg, 2012; Duran & Duran, 2000). Responding in culturally centred ways, like (re)connecting to coming of age rites of passage and ceremonies, (re)constructs what it means to be "Indigenous" from a place of strength and solidarity.

Blackstock and Trocmé (2005) say, "that diverse Aboriginal nations have demonstrated resiliency for thousands of years prior to the arrival of colonial powers, and certainly by surviving through the myriad of traumas brought on by colonisation" (p. 13). However, the resilience of Indigenous communities is not a substitute for the Canadian government to absolve themselves of their responsibilities under Bill C-92, UNDRIP, or any other legislation or treaty. The Government still needs to uphold their commitments and provide the funding and support services necessary for Indigenous Peoples to take control over child welfare services, including having access to culturally centred care (Blackstock et al., 2020).

The Role of Equity

The Breath of Life Theory was revisited in 2019 to foreground the importance of equity in reducing the structural factors leading to the disproportionate representation of Indigenous

children and youth in foster care (Blackstock, 2019). This will involve addressing the chronic underfunding of culturally-centered social and child welfare services and factors including social exclusion, poverty, and substandard housing that diminish the capacity of Indigenous peoples to care for their children and place Indigenous families at greater risk of identification to child welfare systems (Blackstock et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2019). Addressing these root causes and strengthening the pathways that lead to positive outcomes across the health determinants spectrum might include improving access to culturally safe health services, education systems, the paid labour force, fair justice systems, and/or social supports (Krieger, 2008; Reading, 2018; Reading & Wien, 2009). Brittain and Blackstock (2015) have identified three main positive action initiatives that are needed to bring about meaningful change:

1. The opportunity for Indigenous children and youth to grow up safely with their families
2. The assurance that children and youth will enjoy high levels of health and wellness
3. The opportunity to receive an equitable education that provides access to learning their languages and cultures.

These initiatives need to be Indigenous determined and include plans that increase access to a broader range of services that are grounded in Indigenous cultural values and practices.

Walking in Two Worlds

"...if a person is whole and balanced, then he or she is in a position to fulfill his or her individual responsibilities to the whole" (Little Bear, 2000, p.79).

(Re)connecting to coming of age teachings is, in some ways, similar to what is described as *biskaabiiyang*, an Anishnaabe word meaning “a returning to ourselves” (Geniusz, 2009) or “the need to look back and carry knowledge forward (Simpson, 2011). Leroy Little Bear argues that colonization created a fragmented worldview among Aboriginal people, one that consisted of Aboriginal worldviews and imposed European worldviews, and he calls this jagged-worldviews colliding’ (Little Bear, 2000). This he tells us, raises difficulties for Indigenous people, particularly young people, in attaining harmony in their daily lives. Bringing about balance, however, is a paradox of sorts, as it asks us to honour cultural teachings within a society that worked to damage the continuity of these teachings and traditions.

In this project, we seek a paradigm of coming of age that can balance ancestral teachings with living in contemporary times, helping Indigenous youth to “walk in two worlds”. Is it possible that an acculturated way of being can honour both the traditional teachings of Indigenous peoples and acknowledge that ways of knowing and doing have been adapted to a society dominated by Western ideologies? The distinction between acculturation and assimilation is important when discussing cultural change. Where the former refers to the purposeful retention and practice of one’s culture while navigating new and/or different cultures, the latter refers to the abandonment (forced or otherwise) of ones culture to “take on” that of the dominant society (Aikenhead & Ogawa, 2007).

Acculturation, as a means of cultural survival, might mean selectively adopting certain Western practices, while maintaining strong ties with one’s Indigenous roots (Aikenhead & Ogawa, 2007). This was found to be true in a study about ways that Carrière First Nation families were navigating contemporary child rearing while living in an urban community in Northern British Columbia (Olynick et al., 2016). This study sought to demonstrate how child-

rearing differs from generation to generation and how this is strongly evident today due to the lasting effects of residential schools (Olynick et al., 2016). Older generations may have used more traditional and communal methods to raise children, however, those generations affected by residential schools may have lost, or not been exposed to this knowledge. Consequently, residual trauma-related impacts from the abuses suffered at residential schools, may have been passed down to the children and grandchildren of school survivors. They in turn, may be coping with this intergenerational trauma, while working to develop a different bi-cultural upbringing for their children (Olynick et al., 2016). This might involve the recognition of both Indigenous rites of passage (e.g., coming of age ceremonies) and Western rites of passage (e.g., high school and post-secondary graduation).

In as much as there is the balancing of Indigenous and Western cultural ways, there is also the balancing of intersecting adolescent pressures. For Indigenous youth, this might mean balancing race, sex, gender, and geographies with a lens of "Red Intersectionality", which also considers the influence of colonial and historical contexts that shape reserve politics, lateral violence, and identity politics (Clark, 2016). The added challenge in adolescence more broadly, is that these identities themselves are in the process of forming and are vulnerable to many different kinds of influence and coercion (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). Teachings that are shared through intergenerational guidance via ceremony, rites of passage, and day to day teachings help to navigate this, offering "...resources and scripts that suggest where things might make sense, feel right, and provide the resources for uncertain futures in an uncertain world" (Wexler et al., 2013, p. 397). Take for instance, the female coming of age ceremonies that involve embodying a strong spirit woman (e.g., Donaldson, 2006; Markstrom, 2008; Risling Baldy, 2018; VICE Life, 2018). The ceremony itself pushes young women to identify, embody, and experience the power of their

peoples' strongest female archetypes, like Sky Woman for the Iroquois, Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabe, Changing Woman for the Navajo, White Painted Woman for the Apache, or White Buffalo Calf Woman for the Lakota and Sioux among many others.

Indigenous knowledge has persisted across millennia which gives us some insight in its ability to evolve and change, including changes related to the ways coming of age teachings are passed between generations (Olynick et al., 2016). Alexa Manuel, a member of the Upper Nicola Okanagan First Nation, spoke to the CBC in 2015 about how she was guided by her aunties to prepare for her coming of age ceremony through thirteen months of training that included standing in cold water and avoiding interactions with boys (CBC Radio, 2015). This preparation was completed while still living in an urban setting, attending school, and participating in extra-curricular activities, and helps us understand how young Indigenous people can be attentive to their cultural practices in their day-to-day lives no matter where they live.

Culture camps are another way young people can receive culturally immersive teachings, including those associated with coming of age, but on a schedule that aligns with the Western school year. For example, camps hosted by the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society (FVACFSS) offer summer youth camps including the Warrior Camp for young men and the Natural Changes Camp for young women. Each of these involves games and cultural ceremonies for young people, including guidance and blessings from Elders, to help them prepare for their transition to adulthood (Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society [FVACFSS], 2020). Koeye Camp, run by members of Heiltsuk First Nation south of Bella Bella, BC welcomes youth to their boat-access-only lodge for immersive experiences in ecological and cultural learning (Qqs Project Society, 2020). The camp is an ideal place for youth to connect to their culture and cultivate their ancestral relationship and roles with

respect to the lands and water. Camps offering more traditional ceremonies include the Brave Hearts Woman's Society in South Dakota. The Society organizes one moon camp per year as a symbolic way to honour the four-day *Isnati Awica Dowanpi* ceremony that happens after a young Sioux woman has her first moontime (Brave Heart Society, n.d.; National Public Radio, 2010). The *Isnati* is one of the seven sacred rites passed down from White Buffalo Calf Woman, and its purpose is to teach young women to respect their roles, their bodies and promote the development of a healthy tribal identity (Brave Heart Society, n.d.). These teachings are part of reconnecting to one's Indigeneity and the spiritual knowledge or "blood memory" that one possesses (Lavallee, 2009).

The types of teachings that Indigenous youth receive from their Elders, for example about healthy sexualities or healthy nutrition, reflects a different type of contemporary adaptation, one that works to address issues faced by youth including sexual abuse, suicide, and obesity. Reviving ceremonies and coming of age teachings is as much a way to prepare for the future, as it is a way to heal from the past. One of Brave Heart's leaders, Faith Spotted Eagle, tells us,

> In traditional Yankton Sioux culture, everyone had a niche, a role. One of the roles of the women who were part of the Brave Hearts was to retrieve the dead and wounded from the battlefield and help the families. In a way we are doing the same thing today with the modern day Brave Hearts - bringing back our people from emotional death (Brave Heart Society, n.d.).

Without support to establish strong, healthy adult Indigenous identities and the roles and responsibilities that this carries, there is a danger its absence might create a vacuum for unhealthy teachings that continue cycles of violence in communities. These resources might

include forms of education, discipline, and initiation that we see expressed in gang membership and drug use (Grof, 1996; Henderson et al., 1999; Sullwold, 1998).

Even if teachings are fragmented, or youth are not living in their ancestral territories, the experience of ritual and rites of passage to acknowledge and cope with life transitions is still effective (Richardson, 2012). As an alternative to a communal or camp style coming of age ceremony, Richardson (2012) shares how she tailored a personal coming of age ceremony based on her Métis heritage to promote her daughter's sense of connection to that heritage. She and her daughter, along with some female friends, went on a weekend pilgrimage where the young women performed culturally relevant tasks reflective of their Métis heritage, including receiving teachings, serving food, and lighting the fire, so that there could be witnesses to this significant milestone in her life (Richardson, 2012).

Reviving and practicing these cultural teachings in ways large and small, all contribute to cultural resurgence and work to reclaim place-based ways of knowing and doing. The shared child-rearing model of many Indigenous communities echoes the ways Indigenous child welfare agencies engage with the youth that come into their care. Through our work, we have learned about the ways that the urban community, the ancestral community, and the agency or legal guardians have rallied together to help guide and prioritize raising children and young people in a good way. Recognizing that communal child-rearing methods can be part of a culturally centred model of care for Indigenous youth may help to shift the narrative of foster care being labelled as an "adverse childhood experience" to experiences that can cultivate strength and resilience.

Conclusion

What we have shown is that when Indigenous youth receive traditional coming of age teachings, this becomes part of active cultural preservation and revitalization for the entire community. Revitalization is a larger movement that works to heal the wounds of colonialism by recovering traditional cultural practices, and undoing systems that cause harm to Indigenous peoples, land, and culture (Jacob, 2013, p. 12). The preservation of culture or cultural continuity is one of several factors that nurture the mind, body, and spirit, and is protective to health and wellness (Chandler et al., 2003; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; McIvor et al., 2009; Petrasek Macdonald et al., 2013). (Re)connecting to coming of age teachings aligns with what Risling Baldy (2018) calls "embodied decolonization" because it actively seeks to counter the ways that settler-colonialism has and continues to disrupt the passing of cultural knowledge to current and future generations of Indigenous youth.

This literature review has shown the central importance of coming of age teachings to the preservation and continuity of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, and how the continued revitalization of coming of age ceremonies will help communities and nations heal and move forward in a good way. The Breath of Life Theory helps to contrast Indigenous and Western worldviews and show how events in Canadian history have impacted Indigenous child welfare.

We can understand that at the heart of the child welfare crisis is an ontological difference between the value of and relationship to land. For Indigenous people, land or more appropriately, Mother Earth, is the original knowledge holder. She helps to sustain life through sharing her gifts and by teaching the value and importance of sustaining these gifts. This in turn, is honoured through stewardship, ceremony, and by passing these teachings on to future generations. For European settlers, Christian ideologies have shaped the belief that humans held dominion over

the land, and with this came an entitlement to its natural resources. This entitlement justified the exploitation of natural resources for economic advantage and the expansion of nations into overseas colonies for settlement. The paternalistic narratives, policies, and ensuing legislation that justified the dominion of Indigenous lands, and by default Indigenous peoples, led to the infrastructure that systematically disconnected Indigenous peoples from their lands, cultures, and teachings. These targeted efforts included racist education policies, housing, and forced settlement systems, whose effects are visible today in statistics related to health, child welfare, and poverty, among others.

The Breath of Life theory helps us to understand how the structural context of Canada's settler-colonial history, one that deliberately discriminated against Indigenous children and youth, has influenced the actions of the Canadian government over the years. However, it also provides insight into how collective action can bring about equitable change that can lead to healing soul wounds created by structural violence, and in turn, honour the rights of Indigenous people to raise their children. Celebrating resilience, for youth, and Nations by (re)connecting to adolescent rites of passage and coming of age ceremonies is a critical pathway to healing these wounds, ensuring the protection of young people and the continuity of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing for generations to come.

Chapter 3 Research Paradigm and Methodology

This project is rooted in an Indigenous research paradigm and a praxis of practicing critical allyship. An Indigenous research paradigm is rooted in the belief that we as humans are inextricably linked to our physical and social environments, including the material and immaterial elements of our surroundings (Cajete, 2000; Little Bear, 2014). This link between humans and the land is the foundation of the relational ontology that characterizes Indigenous research (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2001). A relational perspective of reality means that knowledge systems are built not on people, objects, or ideas alone, but on our relationships to those people, objects, and ideas (Wilson, 2001). Most simply put, "in the Indigenous world, knowledge is relationships" (Little Bear, 2009, p. 8).

Working in an Indigenous research paradigm means being guided by Indigenous ways of knowing and doing (Cochran et al., 2008; Flicker et al., 2015). Aligning with the *knowing* component, the epistemological component, means seeing the world in terms of the relationships that create our realities and recognizing that because we all have different relationships to our environments, we are going to navigate them differently (Meyer, 2001). Aligning with the *doing* component, the methodological component, means conducting ourselves and our research in ways that are accountable to those relationships (Cochran et al., 2008; Wilson, 2001).

Doing Research in a 'Good' Way

Historically, research related to Indigenous Peoples has been carried out by non-Indigenous researcher with little input, involvement, or benefit to the communities 'being researched' (Flicker et al., 2015). In some cases, the legacies left by 'research' have been harmful, extractive, and has led to a mis-representation of Indigenous people and their beliefs – often through deficit-based lenses (Smith, 1999). Therefore, in conducting research activities with Indigenous

communities, it is critical that care and attention is paid to redressing those legacies and ensuring that any research conducted is driven by community-identified needs, that it will benefit those communities, and that the research findings remain with the community after the work is completed (First Nations Information Governance Center, 2018; Schnarch, 2004).

In an Indigenous research paradigm, this type of research accountability to the communities we work with is often called doing research in a good way (Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Community-Based Research Collaborative Centre, 2018). Doing research in a good way means that *how* we conduct research is just as important as *what* the research produces (Cochran et al., 2008). "In a good way" is a an expression that is often used in Indigenous communities, and in research, it reflects a way of conducting ourselves that is respectful to community and participant protocols, beliefs, values, and cultural practices (Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Community-Based Research Collaborative Centre, 2018; Cochran et al., 2008; Sarah Flicker et al., 2015). In our project, this meant following Lekwungen territory protocols, including the way that we engaged with the community, how we acknowledged the Territory, how we hosted our events, and how our conversations were facilitated. In addition, we also needed to acknowledge the diversity of the urban Indigenous community who live in Lekwungen Territory. This was important on the one hand, to be respectful and honour the diverse group of knowledge holders who were supporting our work, and because the youth we were working with shared many of those diverse connections.

Working in a good way also meant that we needed to agree on how to bridge institutional and community research capacities to develop our own shared research framework. Specific to our project, this meant that Jennifer Chuckry, the Executive Director on behalf of SCCFS, identified the research objectives and we refined the research questions and methods together. This was

then put forward to community members including local knowledge holders and youth, for approval and refinement.

I prepared, with advisory support and input from my supervisors, the content for our grant and ethics applications, and Jennifer reviewed the applications and provided final approvals prior to submissions. Jennifer Chuckry, on behalf of SCCFS, is listed as a co-applicant on the grant applications (i.e., Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Capacity Grant, Island Health Collaborative Grant) and as a co-researcher on the ethics applications (i.e., University of Victoria and Island Health). As we progressed through the project, we co-designed the research events, all of which were held at SCCFS's offices. And following our research events, I transcribed the data, uploaded content to a shared drive, and completed a preliminary data analysis. This was done, with permission, to alleviate excessive time burdens on SCCFS whose engagement in this project was already in addition to their other work duties. Following the preliminary analyses, members of our research team (community [Jennifer, youth coordinator(s), Island Health partners] and university [myself, my supervisor]) held meetings to discuss the interpreted themes and refine the interpretations where needed.

Because Indigenous knowledge is primarily transmitted orally (Little Bear, 2000), it was important that we used appropriate language from the outset of the project. This helped us to follow culturally appropriate ways of engaging with knowledge and kept us mindful of the harmful legacies that research has had in Indigenous communities (Cochran et al., 2008). Some of the ways that we adjusted our project language was to steer away from more academic terms and use language that was both more accessible and culturally nuanced. This included using the word 'project' instead of 'research' in the event that the latter might trigger some distrust or feelings of intimidation with our participants. We also used 'knowledge sharing' instead of

‘knowledge translation’ because it better reflected the reciprocal relationship building that happens with knowledge co-creation and our equal input in creating that knowledge. And I was also cautious of how I used the word ‘data’, because, as one of our knowledge holders pointed out, we were actually working with ‘wisdoms.’

Indigenist Research Methodologies

To uphold the importance of relational accountability and interconnectivity, our project engaged with an Indigenist research methodology, a term coined by Australian Indigenous scholar, Lester-Irabina Rigney (Rigney, 1999). Indigenist methodologies fall under the larger umbrella of Indigenous methodologies – using Indigenous epistemologies to guide a learning process – but have a specific focus on bringing attention to the ways that Indigenous knowledge has been marginalized in the academy (Ray, 2012). This is reflected by the word “Indige*nist*” which pays homage to the insights and guiding principles of femi*nist* research, particularly the objective to advance emancipatory and liberation agendas (Rigney, 1999).

Similar to other emancipatory research agendas, Indigenist methodologies guide research in ways that help to mobilize a vision of Indigenous futures defined by Indigenous peoples and grounded in their lived and living experiences (Rigney, 1999; Wilson, 2013). This requires their active participation in the research process and their guidance and direction in how the research will be shared. For our project, using Indigenist methodologies meant that the methods we used to gather, interpret, and share data had to honour community relationships, honour Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, advocate for Indigenous knowledge in the academy, and be intentionally accessible so that our messaging about Indigenous coming of age could be taken up by the community.

Practicing Critical Allyship

Significant contributions have been made to ways that Indigenous research is conducted since Rigney outlined three key principles of Indigenist methodologies in 1999. This includes the development of specific Indigenous research ethics protocols such as the First Nations Principles of OCAP® (First Nations Information Governance Center, 2018) or the Tri-Council policy statement involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Tri-Council of Canada, 2018). However, it is the way he describes a grounded and directed approach to maintaining research accountability that resonated most with the objectives of this project and what we sought to achieve. These principles include:

1. *Research as emancipatory*: The purpose of the research is to support self-determination while recognizing intersecting contexts of history, trauma, and health, and makes space to protest the ongoing oppression of Indigenous people.

2. *Political integrity in research*: There must be a social link between research and political struggles of Indigenous people. Therefore, research agendas need to be set by Indigenous people to maintain accountability to the communities that are being served.

3. *Privileging Indigenous voices in research*: Indigenous voices better represent Indigenous communities and therefore, research should primarily be conducted by Indigenous people.

In recognizing my position as a non-Indigenous woman and researcher, I have aimed to address the third principle of Indigenist research by engaging with the praxis of *Practicing Critical Allyship*. Practicing Critical Allyship draws on anti-oppressive theories and asks us to engage in a reflexive process to reorient how we think about our own social location (Nixon,

2019). In doing so, this offers a way for scholars and researchers to move Indigenist agendas forward through personal and collective practices in ways that foreground service and equity (Nixon, 2019). Practicing critical allyship pushes us to acknowledge that *the way* we talk about diversity directs how we address issues of justice in society (Nixon, 2019).

Practicing critical allyship calls us to recognize how socially constructed norms have perpetuated inequities by invisibilizing the privilege of people who occupy those normative categories (e.g., being a "settler", identifying as cis-gendered, having white skin pigmentation, identifying as heterosexual; Nixon, 2019). Invisibilizing this privilege steers conversations away from the structures that place individuals who occupy normative categories in positions where they benefit socially, economically, and culturally, while others do not. To redress this, Stephanie Nixon outlines three key elements in practicing critical allyship: (1) recognizing our roles in upholding systems of inequity; (2) learning from historically marginalized groups in order to understand inequity and what actions of redress need to be taken; and (3) mobilizing collective action under the leadership of the real experts (Nixon, 2019, pp. 7-8). Within the context of our work, we understand the real experts to be the urban Indigenous youth community and their families, caregivers, and the broader Indigenous community that supports them.

There have been times that my engagement with this project has been challenged because of my own social location as a non-Indigenous person engaging in work with Indigenous communities, and as a researcher affiliated with a research institution. These are fair concerns considering the legacies of extractive research practices in Indigenous communities and perhaps more importantly, the differing ontological roots of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems. I feel that to move forward in this work, it is important for me to address how I sit-in-relation-to this research.

With respect to being a non-Indigenous person engaged in work with our primary community partner SCCFS, I reminded myself that I was invited to do this work and in doing so, I developed friendships and relationships that continue to guide me. In response to the contrasting knowledge systems, I find guidance in these words from Cree scholar Shawn Wilson:

> Just as you do not have to be a woman to be a feminist, you do not need to be Indigenous to do Indigenist research. You are doing Indigenist research if you share its beliefs and philosophical underpinnings and put them into action in the knowledge-building process (Wilson, 2013, p. 313).

Wilson concedes that non-Indigenous researchers will be challenged by understanding and navigating contrasting belief systems, particularly in the ways that knowledge is constructed (Wilson, 2013). Therefore, recognizing the distinction between an *Indigenist* and an *Indigenous* research framework is important; the former guides the way that we do the research, and the latter reflects a way of being (i.e., an ethnic and cultural identity). Because our team consisted of Indigenous and non-Indigenous members occupying both academic and community-based roles, we were aware that we would be bringing different perspectives to this project, and that Indigenist principles and practicing critical allyship could help guide our work in a good way.

Some ways that we worked to bridge our strengths included learning from the expertise of the youth, the urban Indigenous community, and SCCFS and having their knowledge guide the questions we asked, how we asked them, and how the responses might be shared. In gathering the wisdoms of the community into text-based knowledge sharing materials, we aimed to use accessible language, chose publications that have Indigenous-identified goals and priorities (e.g., the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* which is dedicated to interdisciplinary knowledge

honouring the voices and perspectives of Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous allies and supporters [First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, 2021]), and ensured journals were open-access and publicly available. In addition, wherever possible, we worked with University of Victoria support staff and Island Health research support services to share ways that we were incorporation research in a good way into our work including, but not limited to, reconsidering how we requested consent from participants, following Indigenous guidelines for protocol and payment, providing youth with cash honoraria that was equivalent to what we gave adult knowledge holders, and ensuring SCCFS were listed as partner on funding agreements.

At a more personal level, when non-Indigenous people asked about my experiences in working with Indigenous communities and may have challenged how I was either accepted or integrated into this project, I tried to view this as an opportunity for having conversations about collaborative research. It has been important for me to recognize the privilege I had to be engaged in a wonderful area of research that may be unfamiliar and, consequently, suspicious to some. I tried to engage in thoughtful discussions, without judgement, to focus on my responsibility of being engaged in a research praxis grounded in service (i.e., practicing critical allyship) and a research paradigm (i.e., Indigenist research) that means an ongoing journey of being the ‘learner.’

Authenticity and Credibility

Being guided by Indigenous methodologies means that how we gather, interpret, and share what we learned must be rooted in relationships, because ultimately, this is how the work must be evaluated. Shawn Wilson (2008) says that,

> Rather than the goals of validity and reliability, research from an Indigenous paradigm should aim to be authentic or credible. By that I mean that the research must accurately reflect and build upon the relationships between the ideas and participants. The analysis must be true to the voices of all the participants and reflect an understanding of the topic that is shared by research and participants alike. In other words, it has to hold to relational accountability.

Margaret Kovach (2009) has articulated the following three ways that researchers need to navigate and uphold relational accountability in institutional settings:

1) Ensuring that the research interests make sense to the Indigenous community

2) Articulating the research in ways that make sense to the non-Indigenous and academic community, and

3) Arriving at the outcomes/findings and the findings themselves in ways that resonate with Indigenous researchers who have both experience in Indigenous research methodologies and have an Indigenous worldview and are therefore in a position to judge this.

Following guidance from SCCFS, my supervisors, committee members, and mentors at the University of Victoria's Centre for Indigenous Research and Community Led Engagement (CIRCLE), each of these criteria was thoughtfully considered throughout the project planning,

wisdom gathering, interpretation, and knowledge sharing processes. While the analysis of wisdoms gathered at the project events was led by me, our team met routinely to collaborate on the analysis of themes, including revisions to ensure that what was shared was language appropriate, culturally appropriate and relevant, and was suited to sharing more broadly with the urban Indigenous community and the scholastic community. Our collaborative efforts also reflected and honoured each of our subjective experiences as participating co-researchers on the project, while also being an opportunity to ensure the quality and authenticity of the wisdoms gathered throughout the research process.

Because of the diverse positionalities within our research team, and the lead that I was taking in engaging firsthand with the content gathered from participants, it was important that I remain attentive to ways that Indigenous and Western research methods could be complementary, while being equally attentive to the historically dominant positioning of Western ways of knowing and doing in research. An ongoing challenge was aligning with Indigenist agendas of upholding Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in knowledge gathering methods (e.g., sharing circles, story, etc.) and working with methods of analysis that are historically subsumed under Western ways of knowing and doing (Kovach, 2009). In particular, I looked for ways to ensure the analytical processes that guided our data interpretation would align with Indigenous methodologies by paying special attention to how we would preserve the contextual nuance of what was shared.

Chapter 4 Study Design and Methods

Study Design

Using Indigenist methodologies in our research meant ensuring the community voices were foregrounded throughout the project. In *gathering* or collecting our data, this meant the active participation of the community in setting our research agenda and sharing knowledge in ways that were inherent to Indigenous ways of knowing and doing (Castleden et al., 2012; Cochran et al., 2008; Loppie, 2007). In *understanding* or analyzing our data, this meant the preservation of stories using approaches to narrative analyses that aligned with Indigenous relational epistemologies (Kovach, 2009; Lavallee, 2009; Wilson, 2008). And in *sharing* our data, we chose to use text-based and visual storytelling methods to translate our findings in ways that would connect with the community we were serving and align with Indigenous pedagogies (Christie, 2012; Little Bear, 2009; Simpson, 2014). SCCFS helped us to gather those voices, and during the more involved research processes, represented the community lens in our analysis of community wisdoms and in the co-creation of our knowledge sharing resources.

Three research events guided this project: a knowledge holder's dinner, and two youth workshops. Each research event was preceded by team brainstorming sessions where we reflected on what we learned at previous stages and what questions we would use to guide us forward. This iterative process allowed us to build on our findings and co-create knowledge sharing tools throughout the project including a visual or graphic depiction of the research event findings and co-developed manuscripts for publication. The following project pathway map details the journey we took, including the methods that we used, how each stage informed the next, and how, much like our research framework, no part of this project exists in isolation disconnected from the other parts.

Figure 4: Project pathway map.

Note: Dark red circles represent <u>research events</u>. Blue-outlined boxes indicate the knowledge gathering and analysis <u>methods</u> associated with an event. Yellow "KS" circles indicate the <u>knowledge sharing</u> intersection that resulted in text-based or graphic materials from a project phase (yellow-outlined boxes). The linkages between bubbles shows how each project phase informed a later phase and KS outcome.

Ethics Approval

I received permission from SCCFS's Executive Director, Jennifer Chuckry, to coordinate this project as part of my doctoral studies. In alignment with doing research in a good way, e co-developed a research agreement prior to beginning any project activities, which outlined the terms of our research relationship including SCCFS's entitlement to review, approve, and retain ownership of all project related content and knowledge sharing materials (Appendix A).

I led the writing of our two main research grants, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Indigenous Research Capacity and Reconciliation Connection Grant and an Island Health Collaborative Grant. Jennifer, representing SCCFS, was listed as a co-applicant on both grants. She reviewed the project description, proposed budgets, and provided SCCFS's biography. Salary supplements for Jennifer, Elders, and SCCFS's cultural continuity and youth workers were included in all grants. Provisions were made in the SSHRC Grant to support youth programming specific to receiving coming of age ceremonies and additional funds were allocated in the Island Health Grant to support a report back to the community at a feast to celebrate the project's completion[3]. We also agreed in advance that cash honorariums would be provided for all participants (adults and youth) and Elders instead of gifts. Funds were also set aside to compensate participants for any additional expenses incurred as a result of attending our workshops including mileage for those who travelled from outside of the Victoria area.

Ethics approval for the project was received from the University of Victoria's Research Ethics Board and Island Health's Research Ethics Board. The procedures for recruiting participants and

[3] At the time of writing, gatherings are restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, we will report back to the community and celebrate the project when it is safe to gather.

obtaining informed consent differed between the dinner and youth workshops and are detailed in the sections below.

Knowledge Holder's Dinner

Preparing to Gather

Our project kick-off meeting was held at SCCFS's offices on February 15, 2019. Eight of us gathered, myself and Denise (my co-supervisor), Areli Hermanson (our Island Health partner, and five SCCFS employees (Jennifer, Sarah, Brandi, Meaghan, and Alysha). After we introduced ourselves and Jennifer and I introduced the project, we began talking about how we needed to start with a dinner so that we could invite and hear from the community about how we would do this project in a good way. We began brainstorming to produce a list of individuals who would bring an understanding of the context of Indigenous coming of age, Indigenous child welfare, and reflected the diversity in nations, genders, and ages that is characteristic of the urban Indigenous community. Some of the suitability was gauged based on the following:

- Individual's relationships with youth: foster parents and guardians, new parents, parents, grandparents, etc.
- Individual's relationships with SCCFS: youth counsellors, social workers, Elders-in-Residence, etc.
- Being cultural knowledge holders recognized by the community including knowledge keepers, Elders, language speakers, etc.
- Individuals who were affiliated with support organizations including: First Nations Health Authority, University of Victoria, the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, etc.

Leading up to the dinner, our team liaised over e-mail to confirm who would be arriving and we reached out by phone and e-mail to the participants we each knew. In addition, I also contacted some friends and colleagues for some additional support with the event logistics including helping to distribute and gather consent forms, honorariums, and record notes at the event to cross-reference my own. This support team included Areli with Island Health (co-principal investigator on our Island Health grant), my friend and co-worker Madison Wells (student in the Public Health Program), and my mum, Connie Haselden, who understood the project and SCCFS's mandate from her professional capacity in public health management on Vancouver Island. We also had the privilege to have Stephanie Papik facilitate our dinner. Stephanie is an experienced event facilitator and brought an Inuit cultural lens to our discussions.

A preparatory meeting was held on April 23rd, 2019 to establish the themes and questions for the dinner (Table 1). We decided that there would be four discussion groups and we would ask the group to rotate between them after dinner.

Table 1: Knowledge holder dinner themes and sub-questions

Theme	Question	Sub-Question
SCCFS's Role and Responsibility	What rights and responsibilities do SCCFS have in ensuring youth in their care experience a culturally appropriate coming of age?	• How to play "catch-up" if some physical rites of passage have already occurred?
Home Community	How is the youths' home community involved in their coming of age?	• What claim does the community have to the youth? • What if the community doesn't claim them?
Urban Context	How does Indigenous coming of age look in an urban context?	• How can they experience coming of age on Lekwungen territory?

Theme	Question	Sub-Question
		• What if they are more connected to Victoria than their home territory? • What if they are several generations removed from their home territory?
Gender	How will/can/does the community support young people who identify as LGBTQ2S+?	• How will they feel honoured?

Knowledge Holder's Dinner

The knowledge holder's dinner was held on April 25th, 2019 in the SCCFS boardroom. While guests were arriving, consent forms were handed out along with honorariums for attending the dinner (Appendix B). Some participants provided verbal consent and a support team member witnessed the signing of their consent form. Reviewing the forms with the dinner attendees allowed the project team to share some history about the project and what we hoped to accomplish at the dinner. This was also an opportunity to ask participants if they would like to be engaged on an ongoing basis with the project and/or receive progress updates.

While participants were settling in, the food was laid out and people were sitting down and getting their food. Four young ladies, part of Jessica Sault's coming of age group, were there to help with preparing and serving the food. Their presence was an unexpected surprise, and their presence reinforced our objective for gathering. In addition to the four youth, there were 26 other attendees, including three Elders, and two infants. This intergenerational gathering gave our dinner a family quality and with so many familiar faces, it was an easy transition into our work.

Prior to beginning our meal, Bradley Dick, *Yuxwelupton Qwal'qaxala*, welcomed us to the Lekwungen territory*, Hay'sxw'qa gwns âne 'techul Lekwungen Tung'ex*^{w}. This was followed by

Elder May Sam's dinner blessing, and she sang this in Hul'q'umi'num. Following our meal, Stephanie invited everyone to introduce themselves across our round table. They were first invited to share their name, a word to describe how they were feeling, and their preferred pronouns (e.g., her, she, him, her, they). Some folks shared this in English and others shared in their own languages.

Prior to beginning our discussions, we established agreements, a traditional protocol in advance of group engagements to help guide our conversations in a good way. Our agreements included:

- Upholding confidentiality or the 'Vegas rule'
- To have fun
- To honour silence
- To honour the diversity of our strengths
- To honour where people are at on their journey
- Everyone's cultures and languages matter
- Belief in good intentions
- Listen with curiosity and compassion
- Courage to practice language
- Be present

- Kwulung[4]

Agreeing on our terms of engagement established our commitments to each other and to the project. Dinner attendees divided themselves into four groups, where a SCCFS team member facilitated discussions, and scribed short form notes on large post it notes for each group to see (see Figure 5 for an example). Connie, Areli, Madison, and I caught wisdoms in our notebooks.

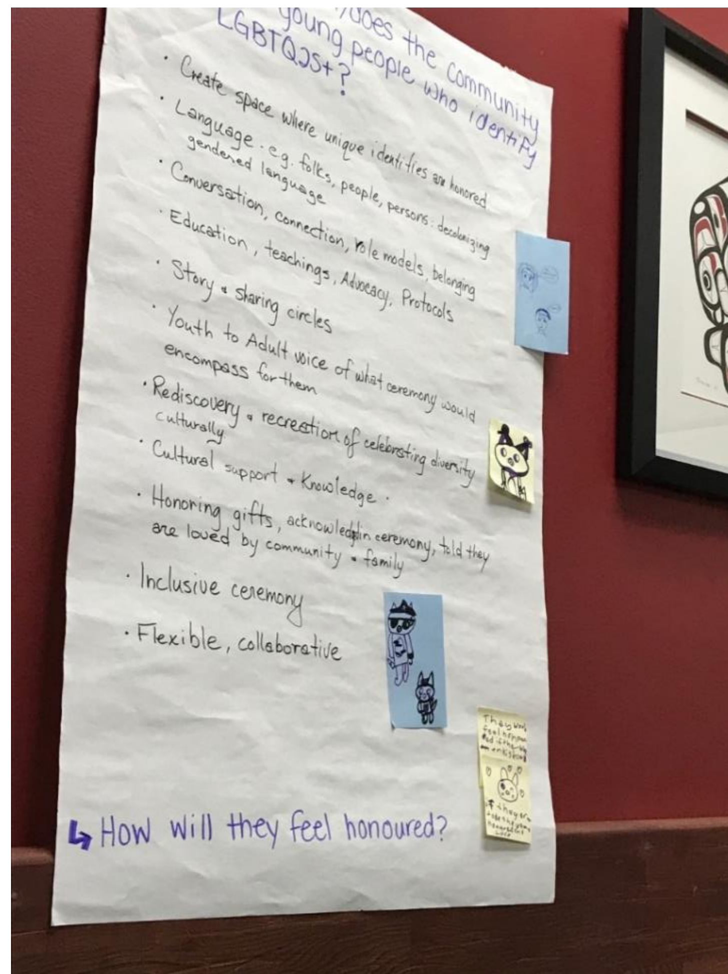

Figure 5: Question 4 discussion notes to share with the dinner guests

[4] Kwulung is a Coast Saalish custom that was translated for us to mean, “the imaginary hook that hangs at the door. Leave your ego on this hook, by coming together, we don’t need what hangs on the hook anymore”

After approximately one hour of discussion, each group returned to the round table and the facilitators reviewed the main points discussed at each of the four stations. The event ended with another round table, where each attendee shared a word to describe their feelings after having gone through the questions. The evening ended with a final blessing.

Following the dinner, consent forms were scanned for record keeping, and the original forms were mailed back to each participant with thank you cards sharing our appreciation for their attendance.

Data Analysis

Following the dinner, the wisdoms that were gathered on paper were transcribed fully. Four main analytical processes were used to identify the main themes from the discussions, and these included:

1) Coding and classifying the text to identify themes
2) Generating a word cloud to visualize word frequency
3) Developing a concept map to illustrate connections between themes
4) Writing up reflections to summarize the meaning associated with the research questions as interpreted during steps 1 through 3

The section below describes each of these steps and uses excerpts from Question 3 (urban community involvement) to illustrate each process.

Identifying Themes

As I read through the transcripts and began understanding the connections between the stories, I found that Wilson's analogy of the fishing net (described in greater detail in Chapter 5) resonated with how I hoped to preserve the integrity of the participant's voices while maintaining

some structure to my approach. The fishing net is used as a metaphor to describe the way that individual themes (‘knots’) connect to one another (‘strings’), and together, create an interconnected ‘whole’ system (Wilson, 2008). The process of identifying ‘knots’ and ‘strings’ aligns with Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis, including becoming familiar with the data, generating codes, identifying themes, and relating these back to our main topic, which helped me to bridge complementary, but distinct ways of relating to the wisdoms shared by participants. In this way, I felt more confident in explaining how this process, while congruent with qualitative research methodologies, was firmly planted in Indigenous research methodologies and did not simply “*[assume]* an Indigenous perspective on a non-Indigenous paradigm” (Wilson, 2001, p. 213).

I read through the transcripts several times before coding. Each transcript was divided into short sections that reflected a “self-standing passage” (Saldana, 2015, p. 8), a unique idea or concept in the context of the larger discussion. I used a process coding method consistent with Saldana (2014), that assigned a unique word or a phrase (i.e., process code) to describe the main messaging associated with that passage, for example, the passage *working with youth who don’t know how to pray* was assigned the phrase “start from the basics” and *not everyone is going to want to be a part of this* was assigned the phrase “respect people where they are at.” The process codes were reviewed to identify commonalities that could be grouped into descriptive codes. These descriptive codes were consolidated further into overarching themes including continuity, adapting protocols, and cross-territory teachings.

Word Clouds

I used word clouds as an objective, content analysis type of method to see what language was used, and what concepts were emphasized. This was also a way to identify what concepts I may

have overlooked in the coding process (Figure 6). Word clouds are useful to identify patterns and trends because the more frequently the word is used, the larger and bolder it is displayed, but are limited in that they do not connect to specific stories. To create a word cloud, I uploaded the transcript into www.wordcloud.com and prior to generating the cloud, the program removed pronouns (e.g., the, a, at, etc.) and I manually removed adverbs or conjunctions, as necessary.

Figure 6: Question 3: How does coming of age look in an urban context? word cloud.

Note: The frequently used verbs and nouns include come, age, culture, youth, talk, fish, and role.

Concept Mapping and Question Summaries

The concept map was used to visualize connections between the codes and themes that flowed from the conversations and to assist me in writing short summaries of the research question's interconnected themes (Figure 7). The overarching themes were arranged on a blank power point slide and then associated phrases and quotes were organized under those themes. Phrases that connected themes were placed between colour blocks with directional arrows to show their

relationship. This was done by asking, for example, *how* is the urban community connected to safe spaces?

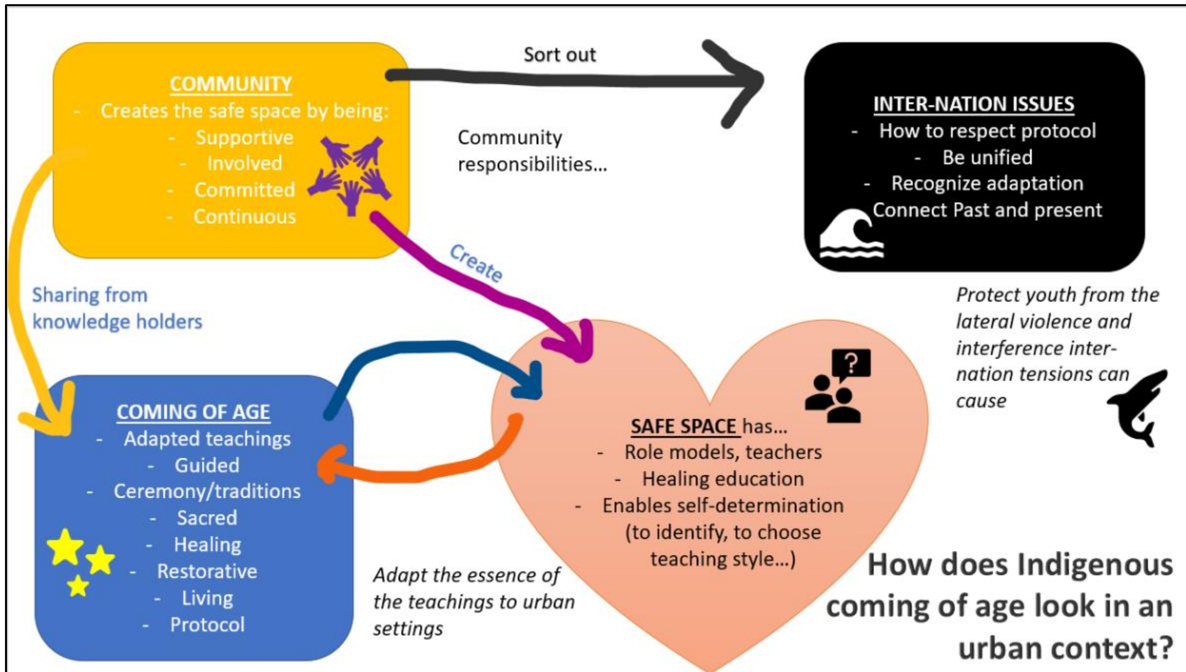

Figure 7: Question 3: How does coming of age look in an urban context? concept map

Note: The concept map is connecting the overarching themes Community, Coming of Age, Safe Space, and Inter-Nation Issues.

Graphic Recording

Following the completion of the analysis, the question summaries were consolidated into a single summary of learnings (Appendix C). This summary was reviewed by the team and we gathered to discuss if the interpretation I completed reflected our unique and collective experiences. The summary was shared with Wet'suwet'en illustrator, Michelle Bucholz, who specializes in visually expressing conversations. The illustration developed is a visual depiction of the themes identified during the analysis and centred on the overarching theme "Creating Safe Spaces for the Youth". This medium showed the breadth of the conversations in an accessible and engaging way and represented our first knowledge sharing tool developed for the project. An

in-depth discussion of the graphic and its association with the dinner themes can be found in Chapter 5.

Youth Workshops

Planning Workshop One

Guidance from the knowledge holders about how to move forward in the project was clear, “ask the youth what they want,” and “the youth’s choices and safety come first.” Therefore, the workshop was planned to address the overall objective of *understanding what coming of age means for the youth in SCCFS’s care.* Our team established four broad questions that we would discuss in sharing circles and these included:

1) How do coming of age ceremonies adapt to today? To cities?
2) What cultural activities have you been a part of?
3) What about peer supports? Mentors?
4) What questions would you ask a mentor or adult?

A poster was developed to inform those who visited SCCFS’s office that the workshop was taking place and provided an overview of the workshop activities. SCCFS’s youth leadership team identified participants and invited the youth.

A key learning from the knowledge holder’s dinner was how the ethics consent forms were not appropriate for this project. For some participants, the language and layout of the forms triggered feelings of distrust for ‘research’, which some Indigenous scholars would attribute to the harmful legacies that research has had in Indigenous communities (Smith, 1999). Therefore, I reconsidered how the forms could be used to present an engaging project that youth would want to be a part of. I decided on a small 5-inch by 5-inch booklet that used visuals to show what we

would be doing, present single ideas and concepts one page at a time and walk through the consent process in a step-by-step way (Appendix D). This provided us with the space to define what consent meant in the context of our project, while using language that was appropriate for the youth. Further, the booklets were meant to be more of a keepsake that could be kept by participants if they wished. The booklets contained the essential elements for providing informed consent and were approved by the University of Victoria and Island Health's ethics review boards.

Workshop One

The first workshop took place on September 28, 2019 and was held in the SCCFS's office boardroom. The workshop was attended by nine youth aged 11 to 17 (seven girls and two boys) and six research team members including three SCCFS staff members, two University of Victoria researchers (myself and Denise), and Areli with Island Health.

Workshop One began with an acknowledgement of Lekwungen Territory. Everyone was invited to introduce themselves and provide a word on how we were feeling at the beginning of the day. This was followed by a discussion of the project, what consent means in the context of a research project, and a review of the consent booklets. Prior to beginning our sharing circles and interviews, guidelines were established for the day to ensure that we engaged in respectful conversations with one another (Figure 8).

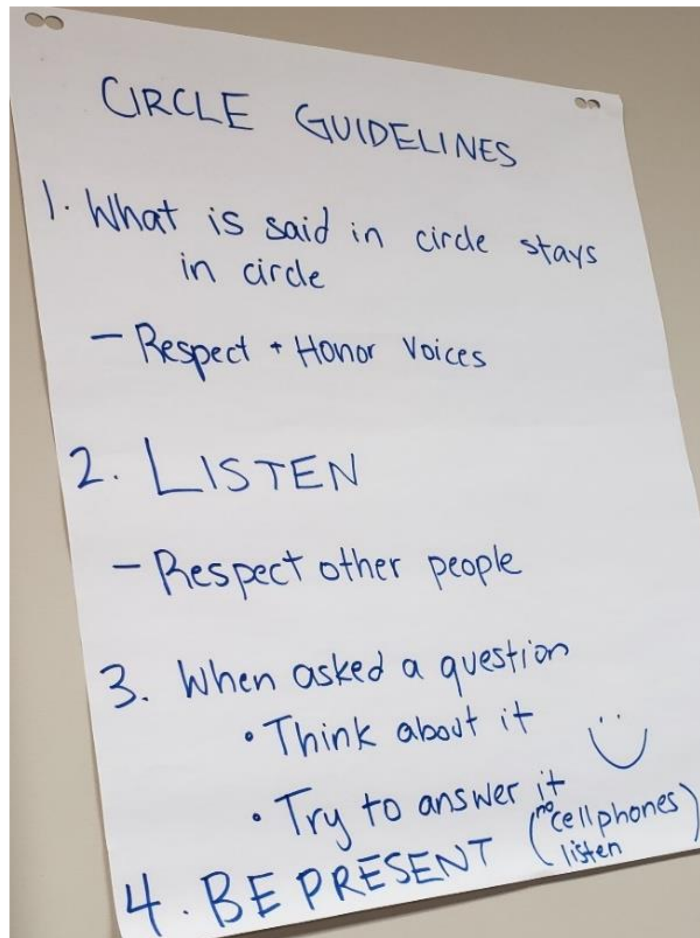

Figure 8: Youth workshop one, circle guidelines

To gather the wisdoms shared by the youth, we held a group sharing circle, had questions written on a whiteboard for youth to respond to in their own words, and had three one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The day was closed by gathering in a circle and sharing a word of reflection on the day. The youth were provided with cash honoraria for participating as recommended by SCCFS.

Planning Workshop Two

The team gathered following Workshop 1 to reflect on the workshop's successes and challenges. Some of our reflections included:

- Some youth were more open to sharing during one-on-one interviews compared to the group sharing circles.
- Additional Elder and knowledge holder guidance would have been beneficial to encourage and focus the youth[5].
- Male knowledge holders would be an asset to help facilitate a small, but separate young men's discussion group.
- Having a mix of arts-based and conversational activities was worthwhile.
- We should serve lunch first so that youth could use the time to settle in.

Workshop One was a good opportunity for the youth to learn about the project and for the team to understand how best to engage with the youth. We agreed that although we gathered some valuable insights from the youth about coming of age, overall, we did not have enough time to achieve our objective and needed to have a second workshop.

The learnings from Workshop One provided our team with a stronger understanding of what engagement and sharing styles would work for the youth. For example, many youths wanted their individual voices foregrounded and were less inclined to share without some clear direction in a group setting. Therefore, we organized the second workshop to have more focused questions, involve Elders and knowledge holders to guide conversations, and have increased time for hands-on activities and one-on-one interviews.

[5] Although there were plans for Elder participation, cancellations due to changing and busy schedules had to be accommodated.

Where Workshop One focused on coming of age as a life stage, Workshop Two focused on cultural activities and rites of passage or specific milestones in the coming of age life stage. For the workshop, we established more focused questions to guide group discussions:

- *What does coming of age mean to you?*
    - What rites of passage can you think of that happen during this time?
- *Do you know about rites of passage ceremonies?*
    - Have you had any? Attended any?
- *What does "culture" mean to you? What parts are important?*
    - Who has been a teacher for you?
- *What does it mean to have an identity?*
    - Do you identify in certain ways and are there ways you want to identify?

In addition, we hired graphic designer, Luyi Wang, to help facilitate art-based activities. Luyi is a strategic and multidisciplinary user experience designer, with an academic background in interactive arts and technologies, as well as arts and cultural studies. Luyi is experienced in leading vision boarding activities at youth workshops and was able to organize activities to gather visual data to support the development of a custom infographic and knowledge sharing material.

Workshop Two

Workshop Two was held on November 30, 2019 at SCCFS's office. The workshop was attended by thirteen youth, aged nine to 17 (ten girls and three boys), a female Elder (Jessica Sault), a male knowledge holder (Bradley Dick), the granddaughter of an SCCFS team member

(age six), and seven SCCFS, UVic, and Island Health research team members. Seven of the youth participants also participated in Workshop One.

Workshop Two began with the lunch. After lunch, Bradley shared a territorial welcome in Lekwung'athun, a teaching about coming of age and a traditional welcome song in Lekwung'athun. Similar to our other engagements, participants were invited to introduce themselves and provide a word on how they were feeling. We reviewed the project and consent booklets and youth who were not present at Workshop One provided their consent to participate. We established our project guidelines and youth decided whether they wanted to participate in sharing circles, vision boarding, or interviews. Bradley led the young men's sharing circle guided by the research questions, and Jessica, Jennifer, and Sarah led the young women's sharing circle. Discussions during the sharing circles were recorded by a circle participant on oversized post-it notes for the group to see while Denise and Areli were recording the wisdoms shared in notebooks. Luyi led three vision boarding activities (i.e., 'pick your favorite', 'draw an animal', 'spectrum exercises' and was assisted by our Madison. I interviewed six young ladies following conversational interview methods (Kovach, 2010), where I used open-ended, semi-structured interviewing to prompt conversations. In maintaining congruency with our research protocols surrounding Indigenous knowledge sharing, I approached the interview with the mindset that the youth would guide the interview and what we discussed because it was up to them as knowledge holders to decide what was important to share in that moment (Ray, 2012). The conversational threads were followed because we agreed that if youth were discussing specific issues (e.g., male/female relationships, adoption, etc.) these were important to them and aligned with the community's guidance to "ask the youth what they want". Interviews were recorded in handwritten notes and no digital audio recordings were taken. After approximately an hour and a

half, we gathered to close the circle and share some reflections on the day's activities. The youth, knowledge holders, and Elders were provided with cash honoraria for participating.

When photographs were taken, efforts were made to not show the faces of the youth as per SCCFS and ethics protocol. One participant decided at the end of the workshop that they did not want to consent, and we removed their contributions from the transcripts.

Following the workshop, copies of the signed ethics booklets from Workshops One and Two were made. Personal thank you cards were written to each of the youth and were mailed to SCCFS with the original ethics booklets.

Data Analysis

Following both workshops, the wisdoms that were gathered on paper and through the 12 interviews were transcribed fully. I completed a thematic analysis of the transcripts to understand the relationship between coming of age and the responses to our research questions from the perspectives of the youth participants and knowledge holders. As per our Indigenous research paradigm and Indigenist methodology, I approached the transcripts with the assumption that everything discussed was relevant because everything discussed was connected to coming of age. In order to preserve these relational connections, I did not separate the interview transcript into self-standing passages, rather I kept the interview transcription together as a single passage. Although this analytical process is different from that used for the knowledge holder's dinner transcripts, the responses to the workshop questions differed from those at the dinner, and I did not feel as though the earlier methods used to analyze those transcripts would be appropriate. For instance, at the workshops, the sharing circles were more conversational and largely led by one or two individuals who answered questions by telling stories about personal experiences,

whereas the discussion groups at the dinner were comprised of participants responding to each other's comments. And during the youth interviews, conversations deviated from the original questions early on and focused on topics of interest established by each individual young person. Interrupting the flow of the youth interviews or the stories shared during the circles at the workshop during the analysis process would be misaligned with our research paradigm.

The concern about decontextualizing participant voices or "tearing apart stories" (Lavallee, 2009, p. 34) through the process of coding and theming is a concern that has been raised in conducting research with Indigenous communities (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Specific to our project, if I had separated elements of the conversations from one another, it would risk breaking the relational threads that connected our participants' shared experiences to the coming of age research questions. Further, if I did not readapt our analytical processes to better suit the way that the stories were shared, I would be reinforcing the stereotype of the 'Western' researcher who takes control over how knowledge is created which would run counteractive to our research objective to uphold Indigenist methodologies in research.

To begin the analysis, I first read the transcript at least three times prior to cleaning the text in a first pass and generating point form summaries. Descriptive phrases were assigned to passages of the text that reflected single ideas, for example, *when I introduce myself, I want to say it in Gitxsan* was assigned the phrase "identity is tied to my culture". Phrases were not intended to decontextualize the voice of the interviewee or the circle, rather they were used to reflect a shared quality like "not a child anymore" or "everyone is different." The repetition of phrases or phrase topics reflected common experiences and those that were repeated were connected or combined where appropriate. Once the descriptive phrases had been assigned throughout all of the transcripts, the phrases were organized into categories that became an overarching theme. For

example, the narrative phrases *recognition, body awareness,* and *you feel different* were consolidated under the overarching theme of '*Self-Awareness'*. As a final step, a description of the theme was written to connect it back to Indigenous coming of age and I considered this to be a 'teaching' about coming of age that I took away from the workshop (e.g., Self Awareness: Coming of age ceremonies and teachings help to teach and guide you through the changes that happen to your body, mind, and spirit as you transition to adulthood).

Five key themes were identified: self-determination, self-awareness, empowerment, being a part of something bigger, and support networks. Each of the themes is described in Manuscript 2 (Chapter 6) and contextualized within the broader framework of cultural teachings being protective to Indigenous youth health and wellness.

Establishing the Visual Language

Luyi gathered the responses and illustrations from the vision boarding exercises and identified patterns and repetitions in the responses. Because Luyi was hired to complete these we did not request a methodological description of her process, however, her reflections on the exercises are included for reference to provide insight into the content that was gathered.

Pick your favorite: Older youth were generally better able to articulate the reasons for their choices than the younger youth, although sometimes general preference for the type of image was the main reason (e.g., "because I like the tiger", "I like bears"). A general pattern that emerged was that the majority of the images selected contained aspects of both realism and fantasy in specific ways. For example, there was a strong preference for realism in the animals, whereas all of the unchosen images of animals were more abstract and ephemeral. In addition,

most of the images chosen consisted of warm colour tones (reds, pinks, beige), whereas the unchosen images had cooler colour tones (greens, blues).

Draw an animal: This exercise was challenging in terms of control and timing and we were only able to accommodate 2-3 people at once due to the time and space. Further, I did not want to interrupt their flow of creation, especially when they were describing their illustrated stories (Figure 9). In addition, some youth who were less inclined to share verbally, seemed more comfortable sharing through illustrations. As an alternative to interviews, this was a very rich exercise, and a future consideration would be building on this process and increasing understanding of the most effective ways this specific exercise could add insights to the storytelling dimension of the coming of age experience.

Figure 9: Youth illustrations from 'draw an animal' exercise

Spectrum exercise: The votes on colour preferences during the spectrum exercises were skewed towards a preference for ’realism’ in the final graphic aligning with the image preferences selected in exercise one. Votes were evenly spread between preferences for ‘cute’ and ‘serious’. Votes for colour spectrum preferences established the colour palette preference for warm tones.

Research Storytelling

Research storytelling is a method where knowledge learned from collective lived experiences can be translated to a creative literary medium (Christensen, 2012). In doing so, contextual factors like culture, age, and geography, can be preserved in ways that respectfully share the wisdoms the youth and knowledge holders imparted to us. For our purposes, this story was part of the interpretive process that consolidated our findings in a way that could translate well into visual knowledge sharing tools, that would support our commitments to return the wisdoms that we learned back to the community in an accessible and engaging way.

After being immersed in the data analysis following the youth workshops, there were several images in my mind that I used to create the fictional story. These images tended to be specific references to animals, nature, and cultural activities like beading and drumming that recurred throughout the transcripts. I took these images and considered how they might be woven into the five themes that we had established from our workshop and developed a character named ‘Deer’, a young Indigenous girl who was living in away-from-home care in a city like Victoria. The first draft of the story *Becoming Wolf* drew on the messaging we wanted to convey about Indigenous coming of age, that youth can connect to their inherent gifts, even if they do not know that they possess them, and this can help them through challenging times. Our character, Deer, finds an inner power that she can access through her memories and her changing body. Her power takes her to her ancestral territory where she connects with the strength of her inner wolf. In telling the story, we also had the space to draw on our learnings from the dinner and embed these in our characters. I wrote the story to align with the stages of coming of age described by Turner (1994), preparation, separation, transformation, and (re)emergence, to illustrate the cultural dimension to a universal experience.

The story draft went through several reviews by the team and required adjustments to clarify certain character roles and animal imagery. Lekwungen knowledge holder Bradley Dick generously reviewed our story and provided additional comments and edits to better align our story with cultural values like strengthening Deer's inner wolf connection. He also provided insights into Indigenous beliefs around physical and spiritual transformations which are described in more detail in Chapter 7. A story reference guide was developed to show the connection between the story and research data for validation purposes (Appendix E). The Guide was, also shared this with graphic novelist, Ken Steacy, to provide him with enough context so he could take the story *Becoming Wolf* and adapt it to the project comic book.

Knowledge Translation

The story *Becoming Wolf* was used as the foundation for our two capstone knowledge translation tools, the watercolour infographic (Figure 10) and the graphic novel (Appendix F). We chose these styles of visual narrative because they share knowledge through an interdependence of images and words, rather than only using images to supplement words (Kelley, 2009).

Maintaining continuity with our workshop activities, Luyi led the creative process and development of the watercolour infographic. In addition to being a user experience designer, Luyi brought her own lens to the project, informed by her Chinese heritage (Luyi was born in Chengdu, China), and her artistic exploration of themes of cultural identity, time, East Asian mysticism, and the power of words. In fact, our relationship with Luyi began early on in our project when she developed a watermarked template for my research proposal in 2018. This was intended to set the tone for the project using imagery reflective of the West Coast landscape (e.g., cedar trees, tree rings, colour blending, etc.), and also to begin to explore different ways of

presenting traditional academic materials. SCCFS approved the use of this template and we have since adapted it to other research materials including consent forms (Appendix D), recruitment posters, and project summary updates and reports. These efforts helped us to provide a more culturally-appropriate and culturally-safe entry point into the project, considering the potential for research forms to trigger negative emotions. An outcome of these efforts was further decolonizing 'research' across all areas of engagement.

The graphic novel was coordinated by comic artist Ken Steacy, who similar to Luyi, became involved in our project in 2018 when I was preparing the research proposal and the SSHRC funding application. I learned of Ken's work when I came across a copy of *Mikomosis and the Wetiko* (Napoleon, 2013), a collaborative project with the University of Victoria's Indigenous Law Unit. When I learned that he was based in Victoria at the Camosun College campus, I contacted him to see what the possibility was of doing a similar collaborative piece. Much to our good fortune, he agreed and became more actively involved as a team member in 2020 once we began working on '*Becoming Wolf*'. Ken was born and raised in Victoria and has had a long and successful career, including early tutelage by the great Stan Lee, and recent collaborations with novelist Margaret Atwood. In joining our project, Ken was mindful of his position as the only non-Indigenous man on our team and at his request, this was discussed with our team and we agreed that his contributions as a storyteller would be incredible for our project and that this shone a light on our principle of inclusivity in knowledge sharing.

The story guide was provided to Luyi and Ken to review, and they each developed their own conceptualizations of how they would represent it from their artistic lenses. The following sections detail the collaborative way Luyi and Ken led us through these processes.

Watercolour Infographic

Luyi provided early sketches that drew on the literary signifiers presented in *Becoming Wolf* and the five key themes and their descriptions.

Using these sketches, Luyi facilitated a series of meetings via Zoom where the team brainstormed ways that we could use imagery like wolves, deer, the coast Saalish landscape and other cultural signifiers to reflect the project findings. This early process was an opportunity for our team to share ideas within the group in ways that were open, iterative, and flexible. Suggestions made included how to improve cultural relevance (e.g., have the eye travel in the Coast Saalish counter-clockwise direction), use more land-based imagery, and ensure that the language used would be for our audience.

To gather our ideas outside of meeting times, Luyi started a shared Pinterest board where we could contribute ideas based on images and illustrations that resonated with our team. This helped to consolidate our ideas and narrow our focus from "what is possible" to "what will work best." This stage drew on the vision boarding activities that took place at Workshop Two by using the colours and drawing styles that were selected by the youth during the exercises.

The second draft incorporated the design elements shared at earlier meetings and began connecting the research findings more literally with the graphic. This included illustrating a young fawn stepping out from the safety of childhood towards establishing their identity and independence. As the deer begins their journey, they maintain a connection to their community, traditions, and lands. This draft also began incorporating some of the teachings we learned in visual ways. For example, we purposely chose a watercolour medium to be a metaphor for the way that Indigenous coming of age teachings are not about imposing harsh directions or rigid

boundaries, but rather are shared through more gentle approaches like guidance and behavior modeling.

Luyi's ability to play with positive and negatives space helped to guide us through the watercolour infographic and create motion. She provided overlays during the process to show how the text might be arranged around the graphic and together, we agreed on words and word styles to provide anchors where a viewer could pause for reflection. However, the intention was not to be overly directive in *how* to experience the watercolour infographic, and we found this was successful in the way that our discussions showed that we all resonated with different graphic elements in personal ways. This was an important test in ensuring that our methods continued to align with our research paradigm, and in this case, it is reflected in the way that the viewer can experience the graphic wherever they feel most comfortable and will develop their own unique relationship to the graphic elements depending on their own experiences.

The final draft gathered our collective input and is presented in Figure 10.

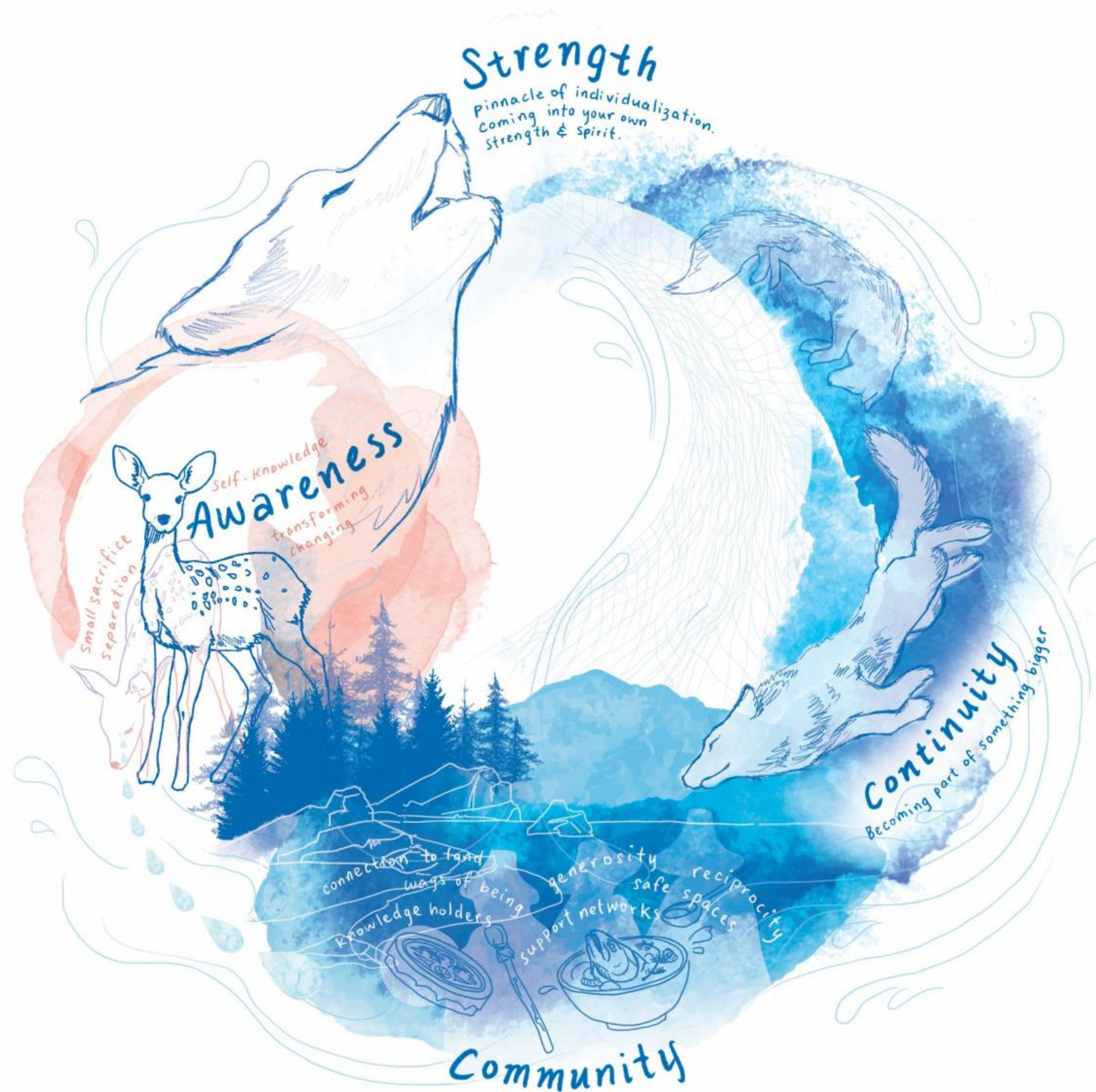

Figure 10: Coming of age watercolour infographic

Graphic Novel

Ken was provided with the story guide for *Becoming Wolf* (Appendix E) and following his review, he and I had an in-person meeting on February 24, 2020. During the meeting, we reviewed the story and established the process forward including approximate timelines and milestones[6]. Ken outlined his process of developing a graphic novel and this included:

1) Presenting a series of draft covers to establish the tone for the novel
2) Providing rough drawings with dialogue for our group to review and edit
3) Providing a black and white copy of the graphic novel for a final team review
4) Providing a final colour copy of the novel in print and digital format.

In addition to providing the story itself to Ken, the team was asked to provide content for the inside covers which included acknowledgements, credits, logos, and team biographies. This provided an opportunity to reach out to some of our wider net of collaborators and 'check-in' to let them know what our progress had been. We received permission from all the Elders to include their names in our credits and Bradley worked with us to provide a territory acknowledgement in Lekwung'athun and in English. He also gave us permission to use this acknowledgement in our manuscripts and reporting. In addition to crediting our community contributors, we also used this space to provide some information about urban Indigenous coming of age, establish our project's position on Indigenous coming of age, and foreground the leadership of SCCFS in this project:

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[6] Our original timeline for completion was April 2020, but this was changed due to COVID-19 to January 2021.

(Re)connecting to Indigenous coming of age teachings is part of Surrounded by Cedar's mission to connect youth to spirit and identity through familial, hereditary, and cultural linkages because these are protective factors that promote safety and well-being amongst Indigenous people. Coming of age teachings are grounded in wisdom held by Elders and knowledge holders, and are shared through songs, stories, ceremonies, and traditional rites of passage. (Re)connecting with these teachings supports community healing, wellness, and resilience, and helps to prepare young people for their roles in carrying this wisdom forward in a good way.

We recognize that there are many Indigenous nations across Turtle Island, and they have distinct languages, stories, beliefs, and traditions rooted in their unique territories. These nations unite in urban landscapes, and this diversity is reflected in Victoria's Indigenous youth community. This project brought together local youth, elders, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies, to discuss how Indigenous youth who are in foster care or living away from home can access culturally appropriate and relevant coming of age resources. Each person shared perspectives shaped by their worldviews and physical, social, emotional, and spiritual selves.

Ken provided four sample covers on June 6, 2020 (Figure 11), and rough drafts on October 10, 2020 (Figure 12 *[excerpt]*) and November 13, 2020. Our team reviewed each draft individually and then we gathered for a Zoom meeting with Ken to discuss areas for text or illustration revisions. Some revisions included more direct language around our character "Deer" beginning her moontime and the influence of this change on her emotions. Other updates included modifying the dynamic between the young male and female characters, specifically, the lack of awareness a young man might have about menstruation. We also updated the dialogue that

young people might use in certain situations, especially the fear and trepidation around going into a Big House or participating in ceremony for the first time.

Figure 11: Sample covers for 'Becoming Wolfdeer'.

Note: The title later changed to 'Becoming Wolf". The knowledge holder who reviewed our story indicated that using singular animal names to reflect personal identities was more consistent with cultural beliefs.

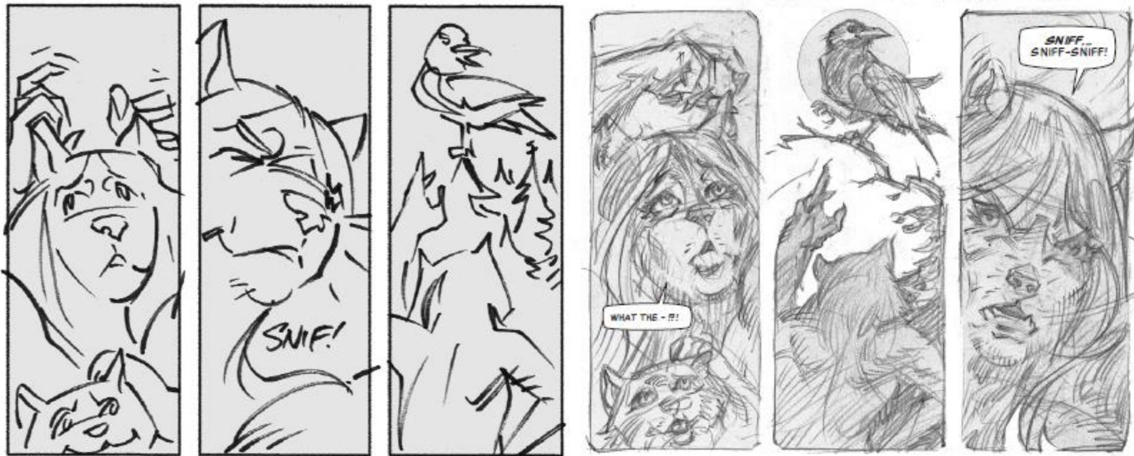

Figure 12: Rough draft excerpt of 'Becoming Wolf' graphic novel

Following the approval of the draft sketches, Ken worked collaboratively with his colleague, Hawaiian artist Steve Leialoha to complete the final inking and colouring. While the graphic novel has been completed as part of my doctoral project, it is also part of the larger ‘report-back-to-community’ commitments agreed to early on in the project that is independent of the research component of the project. The comic book will be circulated to all the knowledge holders who participated in the workshop prior to sharing the comic with the wider allied community (e.g., educators, health service providers, etc.). At the time of writing however, we continue to have restrictions on gathering due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore, the community feast will likely occur after the completion of my PhD. However, despite this, our team has discussed the possibility of adapting the graphic novel to a language training tool based on how the youth shared their desire to learn or deepen their knowledge of their own languages. For example, if the community provides their approval of this proposal, we would like to translate *Becoming Wolf* into Lekwung’athun and Nuu-chah-nulth.

Chapter 5 Manuscript 1: "Youth will feel Honoured if they are Reminded they are Loved": Supporting Coming of Age for Urban Indigenous Youth in Care

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Nick Claxton

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Abstract

This paper presents the first phase of a community engagement project that explores (re)connecting to coming of age teachings grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing for urban Indigenous youth in foster or away-from-home care. An intergenerational group of urban Indigenous knowledge holders in and around Victoria, British Columbia came together to discuss what a culturally appropriate "coming of age" could look like for urban Indigenous youth in care and how delegated Indigenous child and family service organizations could be involved. Four questions were discussed, and the conversations were recorded and subsequently themed. The event reflected the community's commitment to supporting youth in their coming of age journey. Delegated organizations, in addition to acting as legal guardians for the youth, are cultural resources for the community and help connect youth to culture in their ancestral/home and urban communities. Communities work to ensure that youth have access to safe spaces where they can self-determine their identities as they enter adulthood. (Re)connecting to coming of age teachings is important because the imposition of Euro-western child welfare legislation prevented the passing of cultural teachings. Our findings are consistent with literature that indicates culturally grounded, positive action initiatives like traditional coming of age rites of passage, help youth to cultivate resilience that can support the transition to adulthood. This aligns with evidence that demonstrates that intergenerational cultural continuity is protective for health and wellness among Indigenous youth.

Keywords: Community-based research, Self-determination, Health and wellness, Youth engagement, Elder engagement, Coming of age, Indigenous methodologies, Arts-based methodologies, Child welfare

Acknowledgements

Hay'sxw'qa si'em Lekwungen elth'tel'nexw, Hay'sxw'qa si'em Lekwungen tung'exw, hay'sxw'qa si'em Lekwungen xa'sa

Thank you Respected Place to Smoke Herring people, thank you Place to Smoke Herring people's lands, thank you Place to Smoke Herring people's sacred waters,

Thlaninulth hay'sxw'qa si'em a'nelth hali, chay, ye'yah'sung stay'tha en'sne i'ey'mut tung'exw, i'ey'mut xa'sa

We thank you Respected for allowing us to live, work, play on your beautiful lands, beautiful sacred waters.

We thank the youth, knowledge holders, and Elders who participated in the dinner and those who met with the research team before and after the dinner. Thank you to Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services who in addition to guiding this project, opened their doors to this event and hosted the dinner and all the planning meetings. Surrounded by Cedar raises its hands in gratitude to those who have supported the agency over the years, to those who envisioned this organization and were instrumental in its development, and to the children, youth, and families with whom we walk each day.

We extend a special thanks to one of our project's Lekwungen knowledge holders who shared the Lekwung'athun territory acknowledgement with us and gave us permission to share it here. Thank you to Michelle Bucholz and Drawing Change who supported the illustration.

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Introduction

For Indigenous youth, 'coming of age' can be described as the preparation and entrance into adulthood, when they learn about the responsibilities of providing for and sustaining their communities, and when they come into their own sources of spiritual power and learn how to respect the power of others. "Coming of age practices are embedded in broader belief systems of cosmological constructions, which include origin stories, explanations for the cyclical nature of creation and patterns of life, and the complex relationships between humans and the spiritual realm." (Markstrom, 2008, p. 1).

This project's community partner, Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services (SCCFS), advocates for (re)connecting to spirit and identity through familial, hereditary and cultural linkages because these are the strongest protective factors for promoting safety and well-being amongst Indigenous people (Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services, 2018). The importance of accessing cultural knowledge during adolescence was emphasized in a landmark study emphasizing that measures of cultural continuity, like the passing of intergenerational teachings, are protective against Indigenous youth suicides (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998). These protective factors buffer risks associated with intergenerational and colonial trauma and can be facilitated through activities including land-based learning, language programing, traditional arts and crafts, and specific to this project, coming of age teachings (e.g., Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Claxton, 2015; Flicker et al., 2014; McIvor et al., 2009).

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) first call to action is to reduce the number of Indigenous children in care, including keeping children in culturally appropriate environments (4iii; TRC, 2015b). While we work to achieve the goal of keeping children and youth in their home communities with the services that they need to support strong families,

culturally appropriate resources are needed to support children and youth through their transition towards adulthood. Evidence shows that when youth have the autonomy to share their voices, they have higher self-esteem and a greater commitment to friends, family, community, and themselves, reducing social isolation and stigma (e.g. Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2011; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Suleiman et al., 2006; SCCFS, personal communication, March 2019). Yet, "...systems that socialize our children are not attuned to their rich cultural heritage" (Brokenleg, 2012, p. 9), which limits ways in which qualities like personal resilience can be fostered day-to-day.

This paper presents the findings from the first phase of community engagement for the project: *Supporting Culturally Appropriate Coming of Age Resources for Urban Indigenous Youth in Care on Vancouver Island: (Re)Connecting with self-determined health and wellness*[7]. This project is a "positive-action initiative[8]" that works to embrace cultural practices as healing medicine during adolescence and the life stages that will follow. This project phase brought together urban Indigenous knowledge holders from diverse backgrounds and communities in and around Victoria, British Columbia to discuss what "coming of age" could look like for urban Indigenous youth in foster and away-from-home care (i.e., in care) and what the role of their legal guardians, delegated Indigenous child and family services organizations could be. Fifty-six percent of Indigenous people in Canada live in urban centres (Statistics Canada, 2011) and ensuring healing and protective teachings are accessible in urban spaces is essential to the

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[7] The study received ethical approval from the University of Victoria and Island Health Research Ethics Boards.

[8] "Positive-action initiative" is terminology created by Indigenous health activist Valerie Nicholson to highlight strength-based measures that will support positive health outcomes. This phrase displaces the word "intervention" which suggests the "patient" is less involved in the decisions made related to their living experience.

continuity of teachings. Further, recognizing and expressing the unique cultural narratives between Nations while finding unity in shared epistemologies of "oneness" draws upon a collective resilience that can emerge in places of diverse Indigenous identities.

Methods

Leroy Little Bear says that "in the Indigenous world, knowledge is relationships" (Little Bear, 2009, p. 8). These relationships are:

> ... predicated on the fact that all Indigenous tribes - their philosophies, cultural ways of life, customs, language, all aspects of their cultural being in one way or another - are ultimately tied to the relationships that they have established and applied during their history with regard to certain places and to the earth as a whole. (Cajete 2000, p. 4)

These connections, the aspects of one's cultural being, are the elements that coming of age teachings and rite of passage ceremonies seek to uphold. This project engages with complementary research methodologies that celebrate interconnectivity and relationality; Indigenous methodologies and community-based participatory research. Relationality is central to Indigenous ways of knowing and doing and is the essence of Indigenous methodologies (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Community-based research is "fundamentally driven by relationships" (de Leeuw et al., 2012, p. 188). Of critical importance to research relationships, it draws on the strengths and assets of the community, acknowledging the expertise community members have in their own living experience, supporting issues that are of importance to them (McIntyre et al., 2007; Mendenhall & Doherty, 2007).

Dinner Planning and Question Development

Our preliminary planning meeting included members of SCCFS's team, and allied university and Island health project co-leads. The team agreed that we needed to "call the circle in" so that the community could identify the areas of focus that would guide the project. We decided that the most appropriate way to do this was to host a knowledge holder's dinner that honoured Indigenous ways of knowledge sharing and learning. During the planning meeting, the team brainstormed a list of community members that would be able to contribute to the conversation in meaningful ways. We were intentional in ensuring we invited people from various Nations across Turtle Island, aligning with the diversity that exists amongst the children and youth that SCCFS provides services to. We discussed the types of established relationships community members had with the team including their involvement with SCCFS as care providers (e.g., foster parents), community-recognized knowledge holders (e.g., Elders), experience with Indigenous community-based research (e.g. Indigenous faculty from the University of Victoria), experience with Indigenous community-based health, (e.g., public health service providers), and other urban Indigenous community members (e.g., artists, mentors, etc.). We purposively identified individuals with established relationships to team members in order to manage the scale of engagement, though some participants were also welcomed based on recommendations by participants who had accepted our invitation (i.e., snowball sampling).

A second pre-event meeting established the four main research questions that would be asked during the dinner. The questions addressed four broad community relationships that youth may identify with: their guardians (i.e., SCCFS), the urban community, their home or ancestral community, and the LGBTQ2S+ community. Figure 13 present a schematic of how the questions were conceptualized.

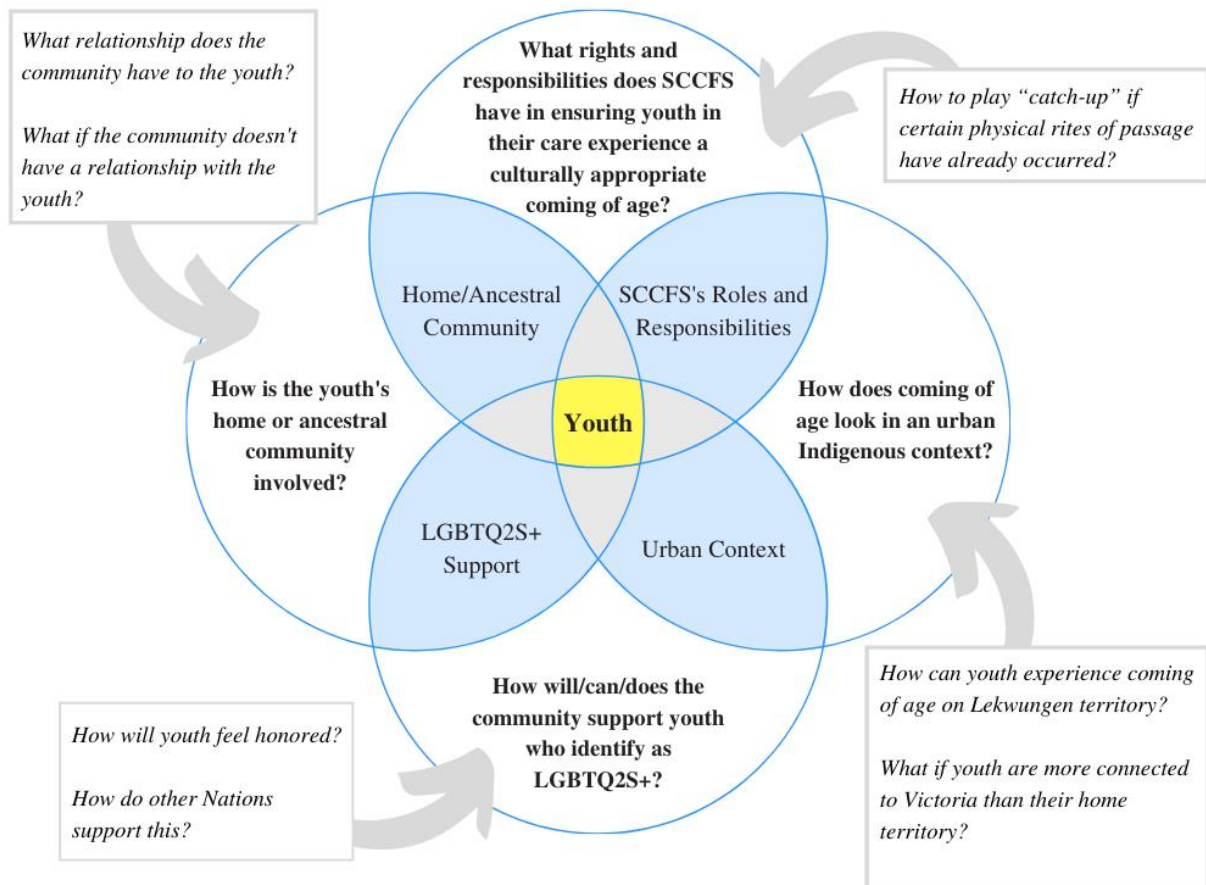

Figure 13: Knowledge holder's dinner discussion questions

Note: This schematic shows how the four community relationships of focus are centred around the youth. The interior questions represent the overarching areas addressed during our sharing circles, while the outside questions were specific areas of interest SCCFS wished to understand based on the Organization's experiences.

Wisdom Catching and Gathering

The dinner was held during Spring 2019 at SCCFS's offices and included an intergenerational mix of 30 individuals. This included three Elders, four youth, and two infants. Six of the participants were SCCFS team members. Indigenous participants identified with 20 different nations. Four of the dinner attendees identified as non-Indigenous and were present in a coordination capacity at the invitation of SCCFS and as co-researchers.

Prior to beginning our meal, we were welcomed in Lekwungen'athun to the Lekwungen Territory, *Hay'sxw'qa gwns âne 'techul Lekwungen Tung'ex*^{w} by a knowledge holder who has permission to share this responsibility. Our meal, the youth, and the evening were blessed in spoken word and in song in Hul'q'umi'num by an Elder in attendance whose lineage is tied to W̱SÁNÉC and Malahat nations. Following our semi-traditional meal of Indian tacos, our facilitator initiated evening discussions by inviting round table introductions, traveling in the direction of Coast Saalish Protocol. Everyone was invited to share their name, a word to describe how they were feeling and their preferred pronouns (e.g., her, she, him, her, they). Several participants shared this in their nations' languages indicating that English words would not be adequate to convey their feelings. A discussion of the evening's proposed process followed. Each of the four questions were discussed in different locations of the office and participants were invited to go to the "question station" of their choosing to start with and move through them at their leisure. Both a facilitator and a wisdom catcher[9] were present at each station. The facilitator was an SCCFS team member who was chosen to lead the question based on their role with the organization. Wisdom catchers were non-Indigenous team members who recorded conversations at their station but did not participate in them. Conversations on each question were approximately one hour each. All groups returned to the round table following discussions, and facilitators reviewed the main points that were captured at each station. To end the event, the facilitator invited attendees to share a word to describe their feelings now that we had gone through the questions. This was done in the opposite direction of our opening circle, to honour the protocols of other Nations present. A final blessing closed out the evening.

[9]At the request of a participant, the language of "note taking" was replaced with "wisdom catching" to decolonize the way we would describe recording conversations.

Dinner attendees provided either written or verbal consent and each participant was provided a cash gift to thank them for their time, recognize their travel, and demonstrate our appreciation for their contributions about their own experiences. Following the dinner, consent forms were scanned for record keeping and the originals were mailed back to each participant with thank you cards expressing our appreciation for their attendance.

Interpretation and Analysis

To maintain congruency with the relational Indigenist paradigm we were working with, it was necessary to use a data analysis method that could preserve the relationships between the ideas that were uncovered at each sharing circle but recognize that some themes emerged that were more dominant than others. The metaphor of the fishing net, presented by Shawn Wilson in his book *Research as Ceremony* (2008), became a framework for our analysis, whereby he stated:

> …the data and analysis are like a circular fishing net. You could try to examine each of the knots in the net to see what holds it together, but it's the strings between the knots that have to work in conjunction in order for the net to function. So any analysis must examine all of the relationships or strings between particular events or knots of data as a whole before it will make any sense (p. 120).

Each question was analyzed to establish themes (knots) in order to draw out the relationships between them (strings), that hold their "net" together. There is significance to this analogy because within the Coast Saalish territory where this project is taking place, the W̱SÁNÉC reef net or SX̱OLE, is an integral component of the territorial governance structure and relational worldview of the [P]eoples (Claxton, 2015, p. 70-71). This relational worldview maintains the

one-ness or unity between the relationships of the participants, the wisdoms that they shared, and a respect for the land and laws of the territory where we held the dinner.

The wisdoms caught on paper were divided into short sections that reflected a "self-standing passage" (Saldana 2015, p. 8), or a unique idea or concept in the context of the larger discussion. Descriptive phrases were assigned to these passages and were specific to the question being reviewed, emphasizing the focus on individual and community assets of this project such as "peer supports" or "unique capacities." Phrases were clustered into themes (knots) prior to interpreting the ways that they interrelate and influence one another (strings).

Narrative Interpretation

Themes are presented using a research storytelling method, which presents findings in ways that "make sense, that speak to and speak with the communities in which the research takes place" (Table 2; Christensen, 2012, p. 233). Storytelling was a way many participants shared their responses to the questions, which complements our methodology in that, "autobiographical narratives typically make reference to core cultural values as well as to particular [perceptions] of personal and historical time" (Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 85). Engaging with storytelling reflects the dialogues that took place at the dinner and more deeply, reflect the sociocultural framework within which Indigenous knowledge is shared (Little Bear, 2000, p. 81). The wisdoms caught during each of the conversations have been tied together to establish our narrative 'fishing net' (Table 2) as a foundation to catch the teachings from the youth as we move through this project.

Graphic Recording

The relationship between questions was summarized, reviewed by the team, and submitted to an illustrator who specializes in visually expressing conversations. The illustration developed is a

visual depiction of the themes uncovered during the dinner and is arranged similarly to the research questions (i.e., the youth being surrounding by their communities; Figure 13). The intention of this medium is to show the breadth of the conversations in an accessible way, that invites the viewer to engage with our findings, but in a way that is unique and personal to their own individuality. This is consistent with our project's engagement with Indigenous knowledge sharing, where the learner takes what that are able to in that moment in time as opposed to a teacher telling the learner what they should be seeing. The first draft was presented to the team where we discussed the symbology, feelings evoked from the images, and how certain images did or did not represent the tone of our conversations. Three iterations of the draft occurred before being finalized (see Figure 14). The original drawing will reside at SCCFS, but a digitized version was distributed to the participants.

Findings: Tying the Net

Each conversation revealed complexities that could be faced by each of the communities identified in the research questions. The narrative and illustration weave the themes revealed in our conversations and reflect the significance of centring the youth in our conversations, and how these conversations happen across diverse landscapes, histories, communities, and generations.

For example, SCCFS says that the youth are the fire of the community and it is the community's responsibility to keep the fire lit. This is illustrated near the centre of Figure 14 as youth sitting around the fire, and metaphorically, seeing themselves in or as the fire. They can safely engage with this concept, because the SCCFS community or "Cedar" has worked to cultivate a safe and protected space. This is woven into the story by saying "The Cedar has gathered the youth around the fire / the Cedar protects them" (Table 2). This reflect both

SCCFS's responsibility as legal guardians, but also their roles as aunties and uncles, vested in promoting the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples more broadly.

The story and the visual imagery reflect the contributions of the knowledge holders and are informed by many different visions of Indigeneity and coming of age unique to each person's living experience, but still united in a commitment to support the youth community. You, the reader, may wish to use the story in Table 2 as a guide through the illustration or alternatively, you may wish to develop your own narrative, one that reflects your understanding, positionality, and connection to Indigenous coming of age.

Table 2: Cedar's story: A narration of themes

Cedar Story	Theme
The Cedar has gathered the youth around the fire.	SCCFS is a cultural hub (Q1)
The Cedar protects them.	SCCFS creates safe spaces (Q1)
The Cedar teaches them to look in the fire.	
The youth see themselves; they are the fire.	
Cedar teaches the youth about the land,	SCCFS's coming of age responsibilities (Q2)
beyond the forest is the city of Victoria.	
But Victoria is a new place.	
This is Coast Saalish Territory and it is an old place.	Inter-nation relationships (Q3)
Old, since the beginning of time.	
Cedar teaches the youth,	
"We are in the home of the Lekwungen'athun speaking people;	Stronger Together (Q1)
we must honour that by respecting their ways, their protocols."	
Cedar tells them, "we are learning together how to do this in a good way."	Inter-nation relationships (Q3)
"You are coming of age," says Cedar,	Youth's journey (Q2)
"Every day you pass through time, just like your ancestors before you.	
And while your ancestors walk through this journey with you from the spirit world,	
your family walks through it with you too.	Coming of age teachings take a community (Q2)
Even if they are in different places than here; mountains, plains, lakes...	
You can see them by looking in the fire,	
We are all connected."	
Cedar says, "we have teachers too."	Coming of age teachings take a community (Q2)
We learn from our Elders, we learn from our ancestors, your families.	
We learn the most from you.	
We are learning how to give you a good coming of age,	

connected to teachings that will make you strong,
passed through ceremony that is right for you.

There are many teachings.
As many teachings as there are stars.
But just like you can see a sky of stars if you stand in one place,
From this city, beyond the forest, we can see so many teachings.

You are this fire.
We will work to keep it lit.
Because one day you will be the fire keeper.
When you are ready, when it is your time.
You carry these wisdoms within you.
As does your family.
And your community.
But we need to weave them together.
Because the fabric of the teachings frayed a little.

You will decide how to receive these teachings.
When you step out of the forest.
But we are all listening.
When you are ready to tell your story.

Adaptations/Accommodations (Q3)

Inter-nation relationships (Q3)

Coming of age takes a community (Q2)

We are stronger together (Q1)

Youth’s journey (Q2)

Figure 14: Illustrated graphic to depict the interpretation of themes derived from the knowledge holder's dinner (graphic by Michelle Bucholz)

Discussion: Reforming the Circle

Our team held the knowledge holder's dinner so that we could ask the urban Indigenous community for guidance in conducting our project *Supporting Culturally Appropriate Coming of Age* in a good way[10]. The wisdoms shared taught us about the complexities and possibilities involved in supporting urban Indigenous youth in foster or away from home care who are coming of age. The knowledge holders helped us to answer questions about respectfully engaging with the home/ancestral communities of the youth, how a culturally appropriate coming of age can happen in urban settings where youth may or may not have ancestral ties, what roles Indigenous child welfare organizations like SCCFS have in supporting coming of age ceremonies and rites of passage, and how youth who identify with LGBTQ2S+ identities can be supported in culturally-grounded and safe ways (Figure 14).

We learned that (re)connecting to Indigenous coming of age teachings strengthens relationships between Indigenous youth, families, and communities. This relationship help to connect what Nishnaabe Elder Edna Manitowabi refers to as *kobade;* "a link in a chain - a link between generations, between nations, between states of being, between individuals" (Simpson, 2016, para. 22). These links are strengthened by the passing of coming of age teachings, teachings that have evolved across generations to preserve the strength and resilience inherent in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

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[10] Ensuring that this project was done in a "good way" meant that we conducted the research respectfully by honouring Indigenous traditions and spirit, cultivated authentic and lasting relationships, and engaged in meaningful dialogue so that our work could benefit the Indigenous community as a whole (AHA Centre, 2018).

From the knowledge holders, we learned that to develop this strength and resilience youth need to have access to safe spaces where they can experience their adolescence in ways that are healing, loving, accepting, and empowering. This includes having the space to freely determine and come to know their own identities, learning what “being Indigenous” means to them in their own time, and having access to resources and teachers to become educated on LGBTQ2S+ identities if that is their path. These spaces include role models, knowledge holders, and Elders who can help youth with this journey, while at the same time, helping them to learn about their unique histories as Indigenous young people.

The illustration presented in Figure 14 reflects the wisdoms shared by knowledge holders and imagines what safe spaces could look like for the youth who are coming of age and communities our project is supporting. This includes specific teachings (e.g., hand work, language, etc.), rites of passage (e.g., hunting, ceremony), cultural protocols, and diverse social, physical, and natural landscapes. It also places the youth at the centre of the conversations, reflecting their role as the future fires of Indigenous Nations.

We learned that part of doing this work in a good way is taking direction from the youth, as one knowledge holder shared, “...maybe it’s asking them – ‘what does coming of age mean to you?’ Maybe it’s cooking, shopping, applying for jobs – a more contemporary version of coming of age.” When one of the youth spoke up about her thoughts on how to do this in a good way, her direction was clear, “In a ceremony, ... youth will feel honoured if they’re acknowledged and reminded they’re loved by their community, family, friends and told they always will be loved and supported.”

Colonization and its impacts on self-determination severely undermined the passing of coming of age teachings to successive generations. This is largely due to the disconnection of families and communities from their land and territories (Anderson, 2011; Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2011; Reading & Wien, 2009; Markstrom, 2008; Yee [Danforth], 2009). The knowledge holders shared that the communities and teachers who provide support to youth also need safe spaces to heal and (re)connect to their teachings. The reciprocity in this evident in words shared by a knowledge holder, "...these ceremonies have a big impact on healing."

(Re)connecting to coming of age teachings is a form of "embodied decolonization" (Risling Baldy, 2018, p. 21), a "returning to", which helps to dismantle the structural determinants that can interfere with the wellness and resilience of Indigenous youth (Markstrom, 2008; Reading, 2018). Indigenous agencies who work to reclaim Indigenous systems of caring for and protecting their children must contend with barriers such as the "imposition of Euro-western legislation, inadequate access to financial resources, and the continued marginalization of Indigenous knowledge within Euro-Western social work" (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005, p. 12). This was illustrated in a reflection from one of our knowledge holders:

> We worked with a gentleman from Alberta. He was Ojibway/Cree. Grandfather took him out to a lake. He thought 4 days. ... you have all these skills and tools we have given you – how are you going to use them? He thought no one knew where he was at. Grandpa came back 6 months later. He didn't know how to react. Here's how you survive. Can you imagine Ministry saying, "where's the child?"

Part of a shared commitment to support urban Indigenous youth in care is recognizing and honouring the diversity in ways of knowing and doing between Nations. Maintaining a focus on what coming of age teachings are working to achieve helps to avoid the interference that politicizing the process can have on Indigenous youth wellness. We do this partly by recognizing and honouring that we are doing this work on the territory of the Lekwungen Peoples. Showing respect for Coast Saalish protocols while still supporting the specific, culturally appropriate rites of passage unique to each youth in SCCFS's care, is part of how we are learning to do this work in a good way.

Limitations

This phase of the project purposefully worked with mainly adult knowledge holders from a diversity of Nations. The next phase of the project will focus on the wisdom of the youth knowledge holders. The wisdoms shared at this dinner reflect those of the participants and that of the territory where we gathered. We recognize that this work is relevant to many Indigenous communities, and therefore, we engaged with a project framework that would be relevant across different nations. The findings from our dinner may reflect shared values and beliefs, however it is not intended to speak for all Indigenous Peoples. Because we gathered on Lekwungen Territory we respected the protocols of engagement that have emerged across generations of Indigenous Peoples on these lands. We hope this is reflected in our narrative and illustration, for example with the cedar trees, the lifting of canoe paddles, and the unique land and water relationships. We recognize that each of the Territories we reside in influences our relationships to home, community, and coming of age, and will paint images and tell stories that are special to those places.

Conclusion

(Re)connecting Indigenous youth in care to culturally appropriate coming of age teachings has the potential to be protective for individual and community health and wellness while addressing structural inequities that have historically marginalized Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. We have also presented in our illustrated findings, ways that youth can be directly connected to teachings through practices, traditional protocol, and ceremony. The knowledge holder's dinner above all, taught us that the desire and drive to (re)connect youth to coming of age teachings is rooted in love for the youth, communities, and culture; "All youth have a right to these processes". This is a shared journey, navigating a collective resilience, linked through more than 500 generations of ancestors who have walked before.

Chapter 6 Manuscript 2: Becoming Self-in-Relation: Coming of Age as a Pathway Towards Wellness for Urban Indigenous Youth in Care

Authors: Andrea Mellor, Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services, Denise Cloutier

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Abstract

Two workshops were held with urban Indigenous youth who live in foster care on Lekwungen Territory on southern Vancouver Island. The workshops were informed by guidance from community knowledge holders and Elders and explored the meaning of Indigenous coming of age and adolescence with 15 youth through oral, visual, and text-based activities. Following a thematic analysis of the workshop transcripts, five themes emerged: self-continuity; self-awareness; empowerment; being part of something bigger; and support networks. These themes provide evidence that engaging with coming of age teachings and activities are protective for (or of) youth wellness and help youth to build strong foundations from which they can learn about their Indigenous ancestry and history in their own time. (Re)connecting to coming of age teachings is part of a broader discourse of (re)writing narratives that celebrate the strength, leadership, and independence of the urban Indigenous youth community. Although the voices shared reflect young community members living in and around southern Vancouver Island, the essence of our key messages are relevant to the broader Indigenous community and those practicing allyship through education, health care, social work, and other areas of influence.

Keywords: urban Indigenous, foster care, coming of age, community-based participatory research

Territory Acknowledgement

Hay'sxw'qa si'em Lekwungen elth'tel'nexw, Hay'sxw'qa si'em Lekwungen tung'exw, hay'sxw'qa si'em Lekwungen xa'sa

Thank you Respected Place to Smoke Herring people, thank you Place to Smoke Herring people's lands, thank you Place to Smoke Herring people's sacred waters,

Thlaninulth hay'sxw'qa si'em a'nelth hali, chay, ye'yah'sung stay'tha en'sne i'ey'mut tung'exw, i'ey'mut xa'sa

We thank you Respected for allowing us to live, work, play on your beautiful lands, beautiful sacred waters.

Project Acknowledgement

We wish to express our gratitude to the Youth whose voices guided this project. We raise our hands to the knowledge keepers, community members, and staff of Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services who took the time to be with us. The sharing at the dinner and the workshops helped to guide us in doing this project in a good way.

Surrounded by Cedar raises its hands in gratitude to those who have supported the agency over the years, to those who envisioned this organization and were instrumental in its development, and to the children, youth, and families with whom we walk each day.

We extend a special thanks to one of our project's Lekwungen knowledge holders who shared the Lekwung'athun territory acknowledgement with us and gave us permission to share it here.

Introduction

Indigenous traditions surrounding the coming of age transition from childhood to adulthood are celebrated through teachings and ceremonies that promote strength, resilience, and discipline in the face of obstacles that may be encountered in one's life. The rites of passage enacted during one's coming of age promote a sense of connection, belonging, and community (Richardson, 2012) and create a foundation that strengthens personal autonomy in a way that is socially supported and encouraged (Risling Baldy, 2018). Passing on coming of age teachings transcends "this life" by creating what Nishnaabe Elder Edna Manitowabi refers to as *kobade,* meaning "a link in a chain - a link between generations, between nations, between states of being, between individuals" (Simpson, 2016, para. 22).

This *kobade* was damaged through the intentional dismantling of community and family units, and by disconnecting Indigenous people from their territories, teachings, and ceremonies. The impacts of settler-colonialism have resulted in an intergenerational living history that is carried by Indigenous youth in foster care. These impacts are reflected in data from the province of British Columbia which reports that nearly half of all youth in care have Indigenous ancestry despite Indigenous populations representing only four percent of the overall population (Hughes, 2006). And, with more than one half of Indigenous people living in urban centres of greater than 30,000 people (McIvor, 2018), (re)connecting[11] urban Indigenous youth to traditional coming of age teachings

[11] The prefix "(re)" is an acknowledgement that the connection to ancestral teachings may have been broken, but it was never lost despite the efforts of colonial governments to disconnect Indigenous children and youth from their culture.

and ceremonies cannot be decontextualized from the social and political environment within which they reside.

Receiving traditional coming of age teachings is an active part of cultural preservation and revitalization for Indigenous youth. Revitalization is a larger movement that works to heal the wounds of colonialism by recovering traditional cultural practices and undoing systems that cause harm to Indigenous peoples, land, and culture (Jacob, 2013, p. 12). The preservation of culture or cultural continuity is one of several factors that nurtures the mind, body, and spirit, and is protective to health and wellness (Chandler et al., 2003; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Macdonald et al., 2013; McIvor et al., 2009). (Re)connecting to coming of age teachings aligns with what Risling Baldy (2018) calls "embodied decolonization" because it actively seeks to counter ways that settler-colonialism has and continues to disrupt the passing of cultural knowledge to current and future generations of Indigenous youth. This decolonization reflects participating in a future rooted in Indigenous epistemologies that resist narratives suggesting Indigenous teachings are relics of the past (Goeman, 2013; Jacob, 2013; Risling Baldy, 2018).

The project *"Supporting Culturally Appropriate Coming of Age Resources for Urban Indigenous Youth in Care on Vancouver Island: (Re)Connecting with Self-Determined Health and Wellness"* advocates for the importance of culturally appropriate coming of age ceremonies and teachings for urban Indigenous youth in care. This community-based participatory research project comprises a collaborative team of Indigenous child and family youth workers (Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services [SCCFS]), university-based researchers (University of Victoria), and health practitioners (Island

Health). Together, we worked with knowledge holders, Elders, and urban Indigenous youth to foreground the voices that are a part of the diverse urban Indigenous community in Victoria, British Columbia on the topic of youth coming of age.

All the authors, collaborators, and team members have unique histories and stories to tell. Our paths began converging when Andrea, an interdisciplinary doctoral student, and her supervisor, Denise, a health geographer at the University of Victoria, were introduced to SCCFS through a mutual connection at Island Health. Together, we collaborated to understand how we could support SCCFS as an organization to determine what is possible for Indigenous youth and Indigenous coming of age ceremonies while growing up in care and in an urban location. (Re)connecting to coming of age teachings, and Indigenous knowledge more broadly, is part of SCCFS' mission to connect youth to spirit and identity through familial, hereditary, and cultural linkages because these are protective factors that promote safety and well-being amongst Indigenous people.

This paper shares the voices and wisdoms of youth and knowledge holders that were gathered during two youth workshops designed to explore questions about what coming of age means and how it is celebrated. The findings that emerged from the workshops reflect five key themes that illuminate the importance of celebrating coming of age as a passage in one's life and recognizing its potential in supporting holistic wellness and its part in preserving cultural knowledge. This work contributes to the growing body of research focused on promoting the positive development of urban Indigenous youth.

Ensuring that this project was done in a "good way" meant that we conducted the research respectfully by honouring Indigenous traditions and spirit, cultivated authentic

and lasting relationships, and engaged in meaningful dialogue so that the research could benefit the Indigenous community as a whole (Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Community-Based Research Collaborative Centre [AHA Centre], 2018). During our first full team meeting, we began the project with the Anishnaabe song Wildflower, a call and response drum song about a mother calling her child, appropriate for this project as we are "calling the children in." We then began planning a knowledge holder's dinner which would provide the guidance to lead this project in a way that aligned with the community's wisdom and wishes. This paper begins with sharing what we learned at the dinner as the project background. Although it is not a conventional "background" in the sense that we are not integrating findings from previous published works (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003), it aligns with our research framework that honours the wisdom and expertise of Indigenous knowledge keepers and Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, setting the foundation for our community-based work. This paper uses the language and terminology held up by all our research partners and has cited direct quotes as accurately as possible.

Guidance from Knowledge Holders

The knowledge holder's dinner explored the ways that SCCFS, the LGBTQ2S+, urban, and home/ancestral communities are involved in the coming of age of Indigenous youth in care. Four sharing circles discussed the unique roles of each community, but also the interconnected roles that support youth coming of age. This includes a shared responsibility in cultivating safe spaces where youth can self-determine their identities and have access to role models, mentors, and teachers who help provide context and understanding on their place as Indigenous people. These spaces support physical,

emotional, and spiritual wellbeing and foster opportunities to experience healing, love, acceptance, empowerment, and curiosity.

As an organization, the community views SCCFS as having a role as a cultural hub that, in addition to having legal guardianship responsibilities, also facilitates access to culturally centred care to support holistic wellness. Wherever possible, birth families are involved in hosting coming of age ceremonies/processes, though in some cases, SCCFS may be able to assume the responsibility of safely delivering coming of age ceremonies for youth who may not be connected to their home communities or who are learning about their Indigenous identities. The urban community can help SCCFS identify cultural assets, teachers, and knowledge holders during these times. A youth's ancestral or home community can be supportive by sharing teachings, offering ceremony, or hosting youth in their territory. They may also be able to inform SCCFS in preparing youths' "coming of age" plans. However, individual circumstances must first be considered because not all youth have this connection to their home community.

The knowledge holders emphasized the ways that traditional coming of age teachings are intentionally healing and empowering, and teach life skills to prepare for future life stages. Adolescence is seen as part of a cultural continuum and receiving teachings is an important step in learning how to pass teachings on and keep culture alive. Knowledge holders shared that teachings may be grounded in tradition and protocol, but they can be adapted to urban environments and contemporary living situations.

Although there may be shared meanings in coming of age teachings between Nations, the protocols and ceremonies through which they are taught will differ. It is important not

to pan-Indigenize coming of age teachings and to respect both the Nation from which the youth is a member and the territory upon which ceremonies are happening. This requires consultation with knowledge holders and Elders. There will be differing opinions and points of view on how this should be undertaken and some of these politics might create tension between different groups. It is important that the welfare of the youth is the focus in all discussions and that the safe spaces created for them are not disrupted by lateral violence or tensions that may obscure the goal of connecting youth to culture, community, and their Indigenous strengths. Additional detail on the dinner can be found in Mellor et al. (2021).

Methodology

This project seeks to understand the meaning of coming of age from the perspective of the youth participating in two workshops. More broadly, the project aims to create a cohesive web of meanings woven from pieces of their unique living experiences and stories that they chose to share. This project aligns with the metaphor of hoop dancing detailed in Garrett et al. (2014), which suggests that youth must balance multiple identities, pressures, and expectations while constantly remaining in motion, much like they do when they are hoop dancing. These authors say that to better understand this dance we must "…hear and understand their voices, their stories, and their experiences" (p. 471).

To activate this metaphor, we engaged with Indigenous methodologies that honour relational meaning-making or inquiry that engages with shared physical, experiential, and sacred ways of coming to know (Hendry, 2010; Meyer, 2014). We recognize the diversity

in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing across Nations but also acknowledge that shared epistemological principles such as deriving meaning through relationships to place can bring communities together and shape the cultural, spiritual, emotional, physical, and social lives of individuals and communities (Wilson, 2003). This shared worldview grounds us in an Indigenous methodological framework, "...the theory and method of conducting research that flows from an Indigenous epistemology" (Kovach, 2009, p. 20).

In alignment with Indigenous methodologies, we engaged with Indigenous community-based participatory research (CBPR) because CBPR works to prioritize Indigenous community needs and the issues that are of interest to them (Brant Castellano, 2004; Schnarch, 2004), and has an "…underlying goal of collaboration, research equality, and community control" (Drawson et al., 2017, p. 6). We also recognized that Indigenous CBPR frameworks require additional considerations, some of which include but are not limited to: recognizing the legacy of research harms that have been experienced by Indigenous communities; ensuring that research materials are interpreted using an appropriate cultural context; and using Indigenous ways of knowing and doing to conduct research activities (de Leeuw et al., 2012; LaVeaux & Christopher, 2009). Honouring these considerations and CBPR principles more broadly ensured that our engagement activities were designed in ways that explored the cultural dimension of our work and created space for youth to "…take part in and influence processes, decisions, and activities that will affect their health and the community within which they live" (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2011, p. 89) if they wished to do so.

Storytelling is a primary vehicle for sharing knowledge and creating knowledge in an Indigenous research paradigm, because it creates a relationship between the teller and the listener (Wilson, 2001). Therefore, storytelling and narrative inquiry was an important way to understand the ‘coming of age’ according to each of our participants. In doing so, we were able to engage with the stories shared by our participants, listening and trusting that a unique, co-created meaning about urban Indigenous coming of age would emerge from our time spent together (Hendry, 2007). This meant listening to each story and acknowledging that each participant had a unique lived experience and relationship with adolescence. By approaching our data in this way, we hoped to counter methods of meaning-making that have historically disassembled and reassembled stories to “fit” a narrative of Indigenous youth that is deficit-based, and sometimes deviant and sadly fatalistic (Cameron, 2012; Goeman, 2013; de Leeuw et al., 2010).

To understand the way this meaning has evolved in a broader social and historical context and how we might help to rewrite these stories, we drew on Judith Butler’s theory of performativity (Butler, 2000). Using performativity helped us to convey how a culturally-centred coming of age grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing can be part of a larger space of strength and healing.

Our team worked collectively and individually to practice critical allyship, in part by doing our best to put the youths’ voices forward in this project. We worked to centre this project in the four “R’s” of research involving Indigenous people: *respecting* the plural worldviews and experiences of project participants; ensuring we engage with issues *relevant* to the participants; honouring the *reciprocity* in knowledge sharing, ensuring

those who share knowledge are compensated appropriately for their time and effort; and, upholding our *responsibility* to truthfully represent participant voices (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). This project engages the OCAP® principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2017) and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Chapter 9 (also known as TCPS 2) (Tri-Council of Canada, 2018). Ethics approval was granted by the University of Victoria and the Island Health research ethics boards.

Wisdom Catching

Youth Workshops

The workshops took place in September and November 2019 and were held at SCCFS's office. The workshops explored the meaning of coming of age, cultural traditions related to coming of age, and perspectives on living as urban Indigenous youth in Victoria, BC. The first workshop was an opportunity for youth to learn about the project, and for the team to understand how best to engage with the youth and ask general questions about coming of age. The second workshop focused on specific questions, involved community knowledge holders to guide conversations, and included time for more hands-on activities and one-on-one interviews. We primarily used oral methods to collect data including group sharing circles (Workshop 1), young women's and young men's sharing circles (Workshop 2), and one-on-one semi-structured interviews (Workshops 1 and 2).

The first workshop was attended by nine youth aged 11 to 17 (seven girls and two boys), and six research team members including three youth support staff with SCCFS,

two University of Victoria researchers, and one Island Health dietician. All attendees participated in the sharing circle, and two girls and one boy were interviewed separately. The second workshop was attended by thirteen youth, aged nine to 17 (ten girls and three boys), a female Elder, a male knowledge holder, the granddaughter of an SCCFS team member (age six), and seven research team members including two SCCFS leaders (also occupying roles as female knowledge holders), a graphic designer, and the University of Victoria and Island Health research team members. The young men's sharing circle was led by a knowledge holder and attended by three male youth participants. The young women's sharing circle was led by an Elder and the SCCFS team members and intermittently attended by all the female participants. Six young women were interviewed.

Workshop One began with an acknowledgement of Lekwungen Territory and workshop Two began with a territorial welcome from a Lekwungen knowledge holder. The latter included a teaching about coming of age and a welcome song in Lekwung'athun. The invitation was made to introduce oneself and provide a word on how we were feeling at the beginning of the day. This was followed by a discussion of the project, what it means to consent in the context of a research project, and a review of the consent forms. Prior to beginning our sharing circles and interviews, guidelines were established for the day to ensure that we engaged in respectful conversations with one another. Both workshops included a lunch; Workshop One was catered by the Island Health dietician who spoke about "food as medicine" and Workshop Two was catered by SCCFS's Elder in residence. The day was closed by gathering in a circle and sharing a word of reflection on the day.

Oral Methods

Sharing circles and semi-structured interviews during Workshop 1 were guided by the following broad questions: what do you know about coming of age? And, is coming of age important? If so, why? In addition, a whiteboard was used for youth to write their thoughts about the question, who is part of coming of age? And, how is it part of your life?

The first workshop helped the research team to understand what themes resonated with the youth, the best language to use to approach questions around coming of age, and how to organize group and individual activities that encourage sharing in safe ways. This led to the refinement of our guiding questions for Workshop 2:

1) What does coming of age mean to you?
   - What rites of passage can you think of that happen during this time?
2) Do you know about rites of passage ceremonies?
   - Have you had any? Attended any?
3) What does "culture" mean to you? What parts are important?
   - Who has been a teacher for you?
4) What does it mean to have an identity?
   - Do you identify in certain ways and are there ways you want to identify?

Although the workshop questions initiated the conversations, the youth guided the conversations to honour our overarching objective to understand what is meaningful for them. Discussion during the young women's and men's sharing circles were recorded by a circle participant on oversized post-it notes for the group to see. Research team

members who were not participating in the discussions were recording the wisdoms shared. Interviews were recorded by the interviewer in handwritten notes and no digital audio recordings were taken. When photographs were taken, efforts were made to not show the faces of the youth as per SCCFS and ethics review protocol. Interview notes, discussion notes, and the post-it notes were transcribed and transcript cleaning included replacing real names with initials or avatars which had been selected by each participant on their consent form.

Meaning Making

A thematic analysis of all of the transcripts was completed to understand the meaning of the responses to our research questions from the perspective of the youth participants and knowledge holders. There were four main steps in the data analysis: summarizing each transcript; generating narrative phrases; developing main themes; and detailing and verification. The thematic analysis was led by the first author and validation of meanings and interpretations were accomplished through several collaborative team meetings and e-communications.

In the first step, 12 transcripts were reviewed. Each transcript was read at least three times by the first author prior to cleaning the text in a first pass and from there generating point form summaries that paraphrased comments related to coming of age, culture, family, and self-reflection. Step two generated higher level narrative phrases that captured the essence of each summary point and was used to categorize statements for later analysis (Saldana, 2015). Phrases were not intended to decontextualize the voice of the interviewee or the circle, rather they were used to reflect a shared quality like “not a

child anymore" or "everyone is different." The repetition of phrases or phrase topics reflected common experiences and those that were repeated were connected or combined where appropriate. Step three organized narrative phrases across all of the transcripts (i.e., interviews, discussions, and post-it recordings) that had shared qualities into even more refined categories that became one of five overarching themes. The final step involved writing a summary for the theme within the context of our project and triangulating this summary with quotes from the raw data to complete an iterative analytical loop. The theme, narrative phrases, theme summary, and supporting quotes were tabulated for organizational purposes and an excerpt of this table is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Excerpt from the table of project themes

Overarching theme	Narrative phrases	Theme Summary	Supporting quotes
Self-awareness	*(Selected)* • Recognition • Body awareness • You feel different	Coming of age ceremonies and teachings help to teach and guide you through the changes that happen to your body, mind, and spirit as you transition to adulthood.	"[after my ceremony I felt] weird, I had this feeling, I don't know what it was. It felt like I wasn't a child anymore" (*TS, interview)*

Findings

The five overarching themes emerging from the youth workshops included self-continuity; self-awareness; empowerment; being a part of something bigger; and support networks. These are described in the following sections.

Self-Continuity

The first theme aligns with Chandler and Lalonde's (1998) definition of self-continuity, which relates to "a young [person's] belief about personal persistence" (p. 193). During our workshops, youth talked about ways that Indigenous coming of age teachings helped connect them to the past, present, and future and they spoke about how relationships with themselves, their families, and their communities were changing over time.

Youth saw themselves as playing an active role in carrying ancestral teachings into the future and reflected on how this was beneficial. For instance, one workshop participant said, "…it's always good to keep it with you so your culture doesn't die. If you say your language every single day, your ancestors will hear you and give you good things" (*RT, interview).* Learning and speaking one's language was raised on several occasions as a proactive way to connect to the past, present, and future. It connected youth to their own Indigenous identities, and to their families and communities: "…history, ancestors and keeping it alive, a naming ceremony, language… [I'm] going to be learning [my] language (Carrier and Dakelh) from a cousin who speaks it fluently. [I'm] looking forward to it a lot" (*RT, interview).* Youth also expressed personal accountability in carrying these language teachings to the future: "language is important ... so I can teach

my kids or grandkids" (*young men's sharing circle).* This also reflects seeing oneself *in* the future, as parents, knowledge holders, and teachers.

Many cultural values are embedded in Indigenous coming of age teachings and ceremonies, and reinforce the important role of being an individual in their community (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). In addition to helping develop one's identity as young Indigenous people, we also learned how coming of age ceremonies can help with, as one workshop participant put it, "…looking forward and being ready for obstacles," in other words, occupying spaces of resilience and building strength and coping skills.

Self-Awareness

Ways that youth expressed how they feel, how they see themselves, and how they want to be seen, was part of recognizing themselves in relation to their surroundings (i.e., self-in-relation). Coming of age ceremonies and teachings help youth to be reflexive about the changes taking place in one's body, mind, and spirit, for example, "[It was] different... you just feel different after…. Feel older, more mature. You just let the younger self in you out -the child" (*LC, interview).*

Youth need safe spaces to navigate the coming of age life stage, because experiences may occur that can be triggering for some. Knowledge holders in the young women's sharing circle acknowledged this as an area in need of further understanding, "…how [do we] recognize the old traumas that can resurface and draw strength from this, rather than being crushed by past memories and recollections." Cultural teachings can help youth to cope and manage their emotions during these challenging times. Activities like drumming, singing, and connecting to nature were discussed as ways to connect to

culture and stay personally grounded. For example, "[Beading] calms me down. It's like a healing thing. There's no point if you have bad energy or are in a bad mood... (*LC interview).*

On several occasions, youth shared ideas about ways that they wished to be recognized and seen as their own person, "...sometimes [I] tell people my story, and that's part of who I am. Personality makes up identity. Introducing ourselves... Nation, territory... [this is] also part of identity, and [I] enjoy doing introductions like that." The ways that youth discussed "who you are" was different from the views of the knowledge holders, particularly when it came to dualities. Youth talked about competing identities within themselves. When reflecting on an illustration of a bear with a flower crown on its head during a vision boarding exercise, one youth said,

> [The bear is] seen as a tough and strong, and sometimes a scary animal, but the flower crown made it less scary and showed how we have different sides to us, and how we can be strong and tough but also soft and pretty *(RT, interview)*.

On the other hand, knowledge holders shared more about self-in-relation to different societal communities. During the young men's sharing circle, a knowledge holder shared the teaching "…sometimes we have to walk in both worlds, colonization has impacted our language and culture." Female knowledge holders reflected during the young women's circle, on how it is a confusing time to be Indigenous, where an Indigenous person may know they are Indigenous, but there is identity confusion about this because there is a sprinkling of many different cultural practices arising from the reality of blended families with different origins.

Empowerment

Empowerment reflects youth finding the strength and power that resides within them. Empowerment also suggests that youth are active agents of change and that they can (re)write their own stories. Empowerment is cultivated through increased access to independence, recognition of Indigeneity, and confidence gained through self or culturally defined activities. Youth and knowledge holders expressed ways that these are activated through various Indigenous rites of passage and ceremonies (e.g., naming ceremonies, coming of age ceremonies, vision quests), but also shared ways that empowerment is accessed in their daily lives. For example, the young men in the sharing circle said,

> There is a component of trust with guardians... [like] being able to walk home, be home by myself, being trusted... Not doing what I'm not supposed to do ... [have the] knowledge that I can manage myself – makes me think of discipline (love and respect). (*composite of ideas from the young men's sharing circle*).

Becoming independent was understood as a reciprocal process of earning trust and cultivating self-discipline. Developing confidence in the independence one gains from trust is also a teaching on self-protection/preservation. Reflecting on teachings from his uncles during his coming of age, a knowledge holder shared, "…in your life you're going to be the only person around; [it's] up to you to hear, see and feel about that around you…" (*BD, young men's sharing circle).*

Having a name (both family names and receiving an Indigenous name) and speaking one's language was a source of empowerment shared by several youth. In one situation, a

young woman talked about how she gets frustrated that she must explain why she has two last names, and that after her adoption, "…my last name will change to … After it won't be confusing – at school, I'm under two names." This same young woman also shared how she is learning her language with her family and noted: "…when I introduce myself, I want to say it in Gitxsan. Then they'll know you speak your language." This reflects Lertzman's (2002) argument that "having a sense of place in the world and a community in which to experience it is an important foundation in one's life, especially for young people transitioning to adulthood" (p. 35).

Being Part of Something Bigger

Cultural activities were discussed as events that cultivate a sense of connection between individuals and their home, urban, and SCCFS communities. As one workshop participant explained, "Cultural activities like dancing, singing, and drumming help to connect me to my teachers. Speaking my language is a way to also get teachings, and for me (and others) to know who I am." A knowledge holder reinforced the important connection of these activities to lands, ancestors, and identities, and how they "offer our worldview."

The youth recognized the important role that SCCFS plays in facilitating cultural activities. However, some youth expressed a view that the connection to their family of origin is important and that coming of age ceremonies are the "home family's job" (*RT interview)* and that they should involve "either going home or having someone from the home community support the coming of age" (*young men's sharing circle)*. The relationships that these urban youth have with their home communities speaks to the

connection to place, identity, and land, even if they are not physically present. The efforts SCCFS and foster families place in helping to maintain connections where possible to home communities clearly resonates with youth, regardless of whether they are aware of these efforts. The 'blood memory' of a place that one may possess without being there is something carried by youth, and was articulated by a knowledge holder in the young women's circle "...just going there [*to her home place*] was about a connection to [my] ancestors...[I] started to cry just when being there."

Support Networks

Coming of age teachings come from knowledge holders, family members, and Elders. These are the people that youth identified as individuals they could go to for support. When asked what advice a participant would share with the granddaughter of one of our team members, she replied, "[I would tell her to] just be proud of herself. Let her know she has a bunch of support in difficult times... like to talk to, just be there" (*LC, interview).* Support for youth can come in different ways. Some ways they identified included being listened to, acknowledged, trusted, and recognized for the many sides of themselves. For instance, one participant said, "I need people to know there is more to me than just test scores and bubbly personalities. Sometimes I need space to do what I have to in order to keep myself calm" (*CT*, *interview).*

Support networks are important to connect the five themes in healthy and positive ways. Having guidance in these networks helps to gently teach about the confusion that might arise when youth are learning about the changes in their bodies. "[Coming of age is] a time of teaching about our roles and responsibilities as a woman or as young ladies,"

explained one of the knowledge holders during the young women's sharing circle. Cultivating a healthy sense of self and how one becomes self-in-relation with the world is supported by teachings that flow through support networks. Self-continuity, seeing oneself in the future, and surviving are all learned from these supports. One participant shared, "I learned how to bead a feather, make jam, make drums and cedar head bands... cook salmon heads, fire bread, seafood chowder, butter... So when we're older, we know how to prepare meals" (*RT, interview)*.

Discussion

Connecting to Wholistic Wellness

This paper began with the question, *what does coming of age mean for urban Indigenous youth in care?* to help us learn how to support (re)connecting to traditional teachings in ways that are meaningful, relevant, and culturally appropriate for the youth and the communities that support them. One of the most significant findings of this project is that coming of age for Indigenous youth in care reflects a site of convergence of overarching individual, family, and community relationships, each of which supports youth in different and connected ways. These interrelated relationships converge and weave like a three stranded braid. Like a braid, if one strand has too much tension, or another has too little, the balance in the braid becomes skewed or even lost. The interaction between these communities reflects the holistic model of health and wellness that is shared across Indigenous cultures, which operates with a fluidity between wellbeing of the body, mind, heart, and spirit (First Nations Health Authority, 2020).

In reflecting upon historical events that have compromised the ability for cultural teachings to be transmitted from knowledge holders (community) through kinship networks (family), and in turn, embodied at individual levels, we can understand how the entire structure of this "braid" has at times been compromised. And yet, the persistent plaiting of these tresses helps to see the temporal nature of teachings and that they are continuous and can regain balance over time.

Knowing our relations connects us to the past, helps us understand the present, and lays out our responsibility to the future (Wilson & Wilson, 2013, p. 33). The findings from the coming of age workshops suggest how Indigenous coming of age teachings transcend space and time to support youth in becoming part of an interconnected network of self, family, and community, each of which have special roles as protective factors for health and wellness. Protective factors as a determinant of health are defined as "…characteristics at the individual, family, or community level that are associated with a lower likelihood of a problem outcome" (O'Connell et al., 2009, p. 82). The risk of negative outcomes for Indigenous youth are heightened as a result of the social, economic, and political precarity that is associated with colonialism and might include risks related to feelings of anxiety and depression, substance use, and suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Garrett et al., 2014; Nelson & Wilson, 2017; Reading & Wien, 2009). Because of this, supporting and engaging with protective factors, such as those related to Indigenous child rearing, are crucial to counter risks rooted in colonialism (Anderson, 2011).

The five themes identified through our collective efforts connect in ways that indicate coming of age teachings facilitate protective pathways supporting healing, wellness, and resilience (Petrasek Macdonald et al., 2013). The themes "being part of something bigger" and "support networks" align with protective factors identified at multiple levels: individual; family; and community (O'Connell et al., 2009; Petrasek Macdonald et al., 2013). "Self-continuity," "self-awareness," and "empowerment" reflect pathways to wellness that are strengthened by having support networks and by belonging to a community, Nation, and family. Figure 15 is a schematic diagram that illustrates these nested relationships in the context of this research:

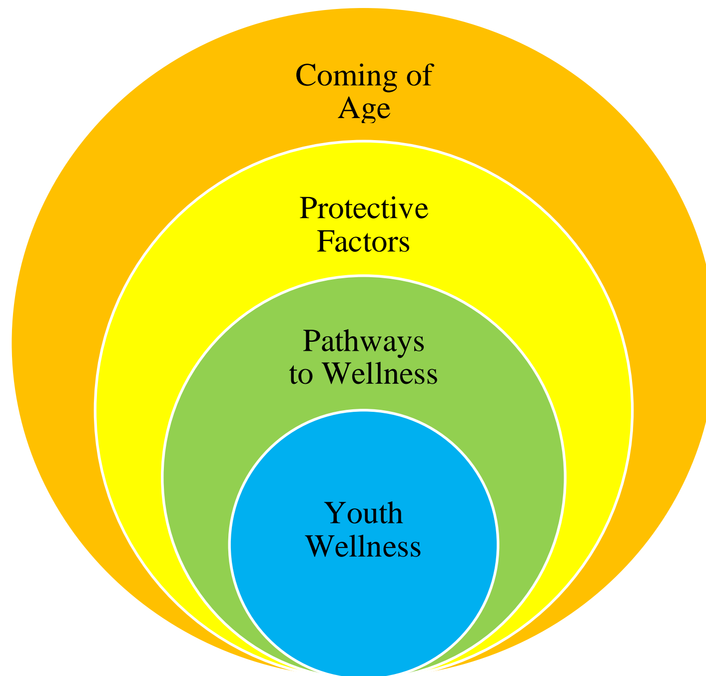

Figure 15: A conceptual model of interconnected protective mechanisms specific to Indigenous coming of age that support youth wellness.

Note: Pathways to youth wellness such as the embodiment of self-continuity, self-awareness, and empowerment, are nested within and facilitated by protective factors including support networks and being part of something bigger. These in turn, are nested and embedded more broadly within coming of age teachings.

In their systematic review of literature specific to Indigenous youth in the circumpolar north, Petrasek Macdonald et al., (2013), identified more than 40 protective factors related to enhanced mental health and linked them with causal pathways that directly protect and increase resiliency. Our findings support the position that Indigenous coming of age teachings for youth in urban environments present opportunities to enact culturally specific protective factors and in turn, cultivate pathways to wellness. This aligns with the literature on culturally-centred protective factors in that they contribute to supportive social environments, they enhance self-esteem and self-confidence, they foster self-reliance, and they enable individuals to participate in their culture (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; McIvor et al., 2009; Petrasek Macdonald et al., 2013).

Indigenous Coming of Age as Performative

To say that Indigenous coming of age is performative is to say that a cultural Indigenous adolescent identity is not fixed but constructed, dynamic, and evolves over time. Judith Butler describes performativity as relating to the way that actions (re)produce a series of effects (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). This differs from performing, which more simply, is the enactment of these actions (Big Think, 2011). Indigenous coming of age can be considered performative in that it consolidates an impression of *becoming,* and in turn *being* an Indigenous adult. (Re)connecting to coming of age teachings in this way suggests that "being Indigenous" is different from merely having Indigenous ancestry, much like the gender assignment of *being a* man or *being* a woman can be vastly different from one's assigned sex at birth. It is in the "doing" of coming of age that one aligns with Indigenous as a way of being.

Guidance through the “being” or “becoming” is a crucial function of coming of age rites of passages and ceremonies (Markstrom & Iborra 2003). An Indigenous coming of age is unique not only regarding the traditions specific to each Nation but is also a reminder that becoming an Indigenous adult reinforces *Indigenous* as it has been shaped over time. Celebrating the ways that traditional teachings adapt and evolve over time is a decolonial act that resists fatalistic narratives suggesting that “traditional” is synonymous with the past, and should therefore be relegated there (Goeman, 2008; Risling Baldy, 2018). To illustrate this, knowledge holders spoke of this specifically with the young people in mind, noting that it is the essence of the teachings that is crucial, not necessarily the mode of transmission. One knowledge keeper shared during the knowledge holder’s dinner the following reflection:

> Father would wake us at night to get berries from the juniper bush, in the dark… Can you duplicate that in an urban environment? It’s how you learn to navigate in the dark, [how you] trust your response in this.

The knowledge holders who carry the responsibility for passing teachings on thus hold a huge amount of power, because in asking young people to accept *these* teachings and *this* way of being, they are shaping the lineage of this knowledge. The importance of the right teacher or mentor was emphasized by one knowledge holder who shared:

> [There is the] ‘crabs in a bucket’ syndrome.... Some people are righteous about this... [the right way and the wrong way to do things]. ‘You aren’t doing it right’… [they criticize] rather than [give] gentle teachings about how to be Indigenous...” (*knowledge holder, young women’s sharing circle).*

Criticizing one's path risks policing a young person's coming of age journey through potentially harmful interventions like lateral violence, racism, or other oppressions that work against (re)connecting youth to their teachings. Offering teachings in gentle and culturally safe ways, like for example, the drumming, beading, and singing that youth identified as being important or meaningful, can help youth to build strong foundations from which they can learn about their Indigenous ancestry and history in empowering and gentle ways in their own time.

Returning to Risling Baldy's (2018) "embodied decolonization," we can understand how coming of age ceremonies and teachings resist colonial structures that seek to reinforce a deficit-based perspective on the "performance" of being an Indigenous youth. Instead, they work to (re)connect to celebrations that strengthen relationships within themselves, their families, and their communities. Indigenous coming of age teachings, as defined by knowledge holders, Elders, and the youth who receive them, thus become spaces to disrupt the harmful narratives that are situated in discourses of inequity, subjugation, oppression, racism, and marginalization. The resistance thus is to be strong, to be healthy, to have a voice, and to be alive. This is why we must advocate for a culturally-centred, safe, and appropriate coming of age for Indigenous youth: because the enactment of these rites of passage holds within it the power to (re)write and (re)right the narrative of adolescence for urban Indigenous youth in care.

Limitations

Throughout this project, we have worked to honour narratives from all the participants who speak from their own Indigenous identities, places of residence, and families of

origin. However, we recognize that the stories and conversations shared are specific to urban Indigenous youth in foster care in Victoria, BC, and are shaped by the landscape of Vancouver Island. Because coming of age teachings flow from relationships to the land, youth workshops in different territories and their subsequent findings, will be shaped by teachings informed by those landscapes and their unique histories.

In doing this work, we were also made aware that the coming of age experience for Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ youth is unique. We felt that our findings did not adequately represent their voices, but we are hopeful that future work in this area will involve honouring those voices specifically and ensuring that their narratives are held up high alongside others.

Conclusion

Much of the literature on Indigenous coming of age and coming of age more generally focuses on the multi-staged transition to adulthood and the cultivation of self-identity. Our findings from the youth workshops and the knowledge holder's dinner suggest a much deeper opportunity for coming of age to be a culturally appropriate positive action initiative (i.e., intervention) for Indigenous youth. Coming of age is a natural process that all youth will pass through in one way or another on their journey to adulthood, and the absence of guidance and wisdom can steer this initiation process towards harmful paths (Sullwold, 1998). This goes beyond a high-level understanding and appreciation for the fact that connecting to culture is protective for health and wellness (e.g., Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Reading & Wien, 2009; McIvor et al., 2009) and towards an understanding that the provision of culturally-centred coming of age ceremonies and rites of passage can nurture more complex and positive emotions such as those embedded in our findings. By celebrating and honouring youth coming of age, communities repair the *kobade,* the link in the chain that connects generations and Nations, creating healing pathways for communities across space and time.

Chapter 7 Manuscript 3: Becoming Wolf and Other Stories: Using Indigenist Arts-Based Methodologies to Explore Urban Indigenous Coming of Age

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Abstract

Arts-based methodologies are increasingly being used in community-based research to explore and communicate issues of importance to Indigenous communities. Situating research in an Indigenist framework ensures that relational accountability – foundational to Indigenous ways of knowing and doing – is threaded throughout all stages of a research project. In this paper, the authors describe how using Indigenist arts-based methodologies helped to develop critical knowledge sharing tools about urban Indigenous coming of age for youth living in foster care. The paper describes how wisdoms gathered at a knowledge holder's dinner and two youth workshops were used to develop the story *Becoming Wolf*, which was later adapted to a watercolour infographic and a graphic novel. We hope that this paper shows our support for socially transformative and allied research and contributes to discourses about knowledge co-creation and mobilization.

Keywords: Indigenous research, community-based participatory research, arts-based methodologies, research storytelling, social research

Introduction

This paper discusses the fictional story *Becoming Wolf* – a key knowledge outcome of the Indigenous community-based research project *Supporting Culturally Appropriate Coming of Age Resources for Urban Indigenous Youth in Care on Vancouver Island: (Re)Connecting with Self-Determined Health and Wellness.* This project took place on Lekwungen Territory in the City of Victoria on southern Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. Our community-based, university-based, and graphic research team co-developed the story *Becoming Wolf* based on wisdoms shared in 2019 by community knowledge holders, Elders, and youth during a knowledge holder's dinner and two youth workshops. Using a narrative analysis approach, we looked for overarching themes in our discussions, conversations, and interviews that helped us to understand "What does coming of age look like for urban Indigenous youth living in foster care?" Through our analysis, we identified patterns in how individual stories connected to larger, collective experiences and found that key signifiers kept being repeated. These signifiers (e.g., learning language, comfort of family pets, cultural activities like beading and drumming) helped create a narrative and cast of characters. *Becoming Wolf* emerged as a story that wove the research's conversational threads with underlying themes of Indigenous coming of age that are both unique to our project and shared across Turtle Island.

Becoming Wolf is a literary story that evolved into a graphic novel and a watercolour infographic. This paper presents the infographic and vignettes from the graphic novel to show that when images are used as representational metaphors, they can simultaneously convey the interconnectivity between social, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Our paper begins by discussing the universality of the adolescent coming of age experience

and then explores the specific context of Indigenous coming of age and the reasons youth may be disconnected from their teachings. Then, we show how we conducted our research in a 'good way' – an interdependent way that honoured community wisdoms, needs, protocols, and direction – using strength-based, participatory, and community-driven research methodologies. The paper describes the *way* that Indigenist arts-based methodologies shaped *how* we gathered visual and oral content and how this maintained the integrity of the stories shared in visual and text-based formats. In doing so, we upheld our community and participant commitments and engaged with research methods that included an adapted narrative analytical process, research storytelling, and our collaborative visual storytelling activities.

We hope that by showing how a topic like urban Indigenous coming of age can be represented in numerous creative and engaging ways, other topics of social weight and importance might be similarly conceptualized and designed. By demonstrating the shared interdependence of our engagement with the community and the youth, we are contributing to new discourses of knowledge creation and mobilization.

Cultural Dimensions of Indigenous Coming of Age

What is Coming of Age?

Coming of age is a lived experience marked by stages of separation, preparation, transition, and (re)emergence from one life stage to another (Delaney, 1995; Sullwold, 1998; van Gennep, 1960). In adolescence, the transitional stage has been called "betwixt and in between", where individuals are pushed out of the comforts of childhood into the precarity of developing their own identity (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003; Turner, 1994).

During these uncertain times, rites of passage connect young people to the world in ways that encourage positive and healthy identity formation, where they can learn the responsibilities that an adult life entails (Anderson, 2011; Sullwold, 1998). Personal growth during this time might involve reflecting on where one feels most like themselves, what their direction may be in life, how this connects to their previous self, and how their identities are affirmed among their peers and community as opposed to those outside of their communities (Erikson, 1994). The (re)emergence of a young person as an adult is an acknowledgement of the growth during their coming of age, and is reflected in how they embody and enact the teachings that have been passed to them.

What is Indigenous Coming of Age?

Indigenous coming of age refers to the cultural protocols, values, and beliefs that influence the transition from childhood to adulthood for Indigenous youth. This includes teachings, rites of passage, and ceremonies grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing (Anderson, 2011). Indigenous coming of age teachings flow from Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies - land-based ways of knowing and doing. While teachings across nations share this philosophical similarity, their unique stories, customs, and ceremonies reflect the diverse ecological surroundings from which they emerge (Wilson, 2013). For example, many female coming of age ceremonies involve embodying strong female archetypes, but the archetypes differ, for instance, Sky Woman for the Iroquois, Haudenosaunee, and Anishnaabe, Changing Woman for the Navajo, White Painted Woman for the Apache, or White Buffalo Calf Woman for the Lakota and Sioux (Donaldson, 2006; Markstrom, 2008; Risling Baldy, 2018; VICE Life, 2018). Although specific teachings and ceremonies are unique to each Nation, their shared goal is to

cultivate a sense of individualism, while teaching youth their responsibilities in relation to their communities (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003; Mckay-Riddell, 2006; Olynick et al., 2016).

Coming of age for Indigenous youth is a community affair, involving preparation, participation, and witnessing the transformation of young people from children to adults (Farrer, 1994; Markstrom, 2008). Ceremonies for young men might involve a commitment from the community whether it is through the organization of a hunt and the celebration of the first kill, or the completion of a vision quest or spiritual journey (Lertzman, 2002; Olynick et al., 2016; Thomas, 2015). For example, the 'Nlaka'pamux (Interior Salish) Vision Quest, a traditional rite of passage for young men, might involve months or years of training and preparation (Lertzman, 2002). Preparation consciously begins in childhood and was explained during our project by a knowledge holder who said, "...it's a process, like, you don't start by killing the fish. That is a really hard thing to do, you have to work up this, so you might start first by just coming along on the fishing trip"[12] (R. John, personal communication). David Lertzman shared part of his conversation with Nanaimo-Cowichan educator Bill White who spoke of the importance of Elders in guiding young people through this transition,

> The old people perceive the state of limbo to be the most vulnerable for young people...Sacred rules, sacred rites, words of advice, which in effect too are sacred,

[12] This quote has been paraphrased from the original conversation.

> are applied through childhood in order to prepare young people for states of transformation (Lertzman, 2002, p. 7).

The coming of age preparation helps to ensure that young people are in a good physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual position to take the gifts passed to them during their coming of age and carry them forward to future generations.

Disruptions to Indigenous Coming of Age

Joseph Geronimo said of his granddaughter's Sunrise Ceremony, "...it will keep her strong the rest of her life. And not only that, it will keep the Tribe strong" (VICE Life, 2018). The passage of knowledge maintains cohesion and solidarity between generations (Bengtson & Oyama, 2007). This solidarity was severely undermined by colonization and specific colonial policies that targeted the intergenerational passing down of Indigenous coming of age teachings (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2011; Claxton, 2015; Markstrom & Iborra, 2003).

Specific structures, systems and institutions unique to Canada's settler-colonial past have become woven into the living experiences of Indigenous youth, families, and communities (Reading & Wien, 2009). Government policies that worked to assimilate Indigenous people into settler society targeted the strength and bonds of the Indigenous family unit by disrupting the ability to pass on cultural teachings that maintained nationhood identities (Bennett et al., 2005). Consequently, other cultural teachings like those related to healthy interpersonal relationships including intimacy, child rearing, and role modeling were also disrupted (Brokenleg, 2012; Olynick et al., 2016).

The effects of settler-colonialism are complex and have impacted the body, mind, heart, and spirit of individuals. Indigenous psychologist Eduardo Duran, has called the historical trauma associated with colonialism ‘soul wounding,’ causing a collective suffering that has been carried forward to future generations (Duran, 2006; Duran & Duran, 2000). The impact of soul wounds during adolescence can be particularly dangerous because this period is so strongly associated with the identity formation that shapes the rest of a person’s life (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). Some impacts during adolescence might involve feelings of shame around one’s changing body, skewed perceptions about power and gender roles, or engaging in harmful forms of adulthood initiation (Clark, 2016; Lys & Reading, 2012; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Canada, 2019).

Leroy Little Bear argues that colonization created a fragmented worldview that was no longer Indigenous, and yet not European either (Little Bear, 2000). He tells us, that this ‘jagged worldview’ raises difficulties, particularly for young Indigenous people, in attaining harmony and balance in their daily lives (Little Bear, 2000). Coming of age celebrations have the potential to be “an antidote to the destruction of Indigenous family traditions” (Richardson, 2012, p. 74) by revitalizing and (re)connecting to teachings of strength and celebration that can help to restore physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual balance. The tools learned while preparing for and undergoing Indigenous coming of age are protective to youth, and ultimately enhance health and resilience (Petrasek Macdonald et al., 2013).

Doing Research in a Good Way

The Coming of Age Project worked to gather participant wisdoms shared at the knowledge holder's dinner and youth workshops and return them to the community in visual, imaginative ways. In doing so, we engaged with methods of storytelling that aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, while also adding to the growing basket of Indigenous community-based participatory research. Scholarship grounded in Indigenous research paradigms is growing, but it has historically been underrepresented, and perhaps more accurately, misrepresented in the academy (Hammond et al., 2018; Kovach, 2009; Schnarch, 2004). Because our team consisted of Indigenous and non-Indigenous members occupying both academic and community-based roles, we were aware that we would be bringing different perspectives to this project, and that we needed a grounding framework to guide us forward in a good way.

Doing research in a good way means that how we conduct research is just as important as what the research produces (Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Community-Based Research Collaborative Centre [AHA Centre], 2018). It means incorporating strengths of both Indigenous and western knowledge systems, learning what is meaningful for the communities we work with, understanding the protocols that we need to follow, and not extracting knowledge, but working together with what we co-create (AHA Centre, 2018). Our project was guided by Lekwungen territory protocol, and this involved following specific protocols in the way we hosted our events and how our conversations were facilitated. Being in an urban setting, we also needed to ensure that the diversity that exists in the youth community was well represented, and we did so by engaging a diverse group of knowledge holders including Elders, youth, and community leaders who could

support and advise us in how we should move forward. Ways that we bridged institutional and community research capacities included having research guidelines and agreements, collaborating on the writing and review of our funding and ethics applications, co-developing all knowledge sharing materials, reporting back to the community in advance of the academy, and identifying areas where we could modify language, events, and processes to better reflect cultural ways of knowing and doing.

Using Language in a Good Way

Indigenous knowledge is primarily transmitted through spoken language (Little Bear, 2000). Because of this, it was important that we used appropriate language to guide our engagement with knowledge in a good way. This also reminded us that research has left some harmful legacies in Indigenous communities as described in this frequently cited passage,

> 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. (Smith, 1999, p. 30)

To address the issue of *research,* one team member suggested that we simply use the word *project*, noting that the former might be intimidating for some youth who would be invited to participate. Language that was changed to better reflect cultural values of the work we were doing included using *knowledge sharing* to reflect the reciprocal relationship that is created when knowledge is passed from person to person; that is, allowing us to sit at the table as equals. A commitment to this process also emphasized

the importance of ***interdependence,*** our responsibility to each other, to our communities, and to Indigenous teachings more broadly. *Independence,* or not being reliant on or connected to each other's wisdoms is a social construct we did not align with. This contrasts with *knowledge translation* which can suggest a more unidirectional flow of knowledge that might create a hierarchical relationship between individuals. From an Indigenist methodological standpoint, sharing was also a more sensible choice as it represents creating networks between people and helps with the process of knowledge co-creation (IPHRC, 2005). A key moment was the request by one of our knowledge holders to move away from language like *note takers* and *data collection* and instead use the phrasing of *wisdom catchers* and *wisdom catching.*

The stories shared are wisdoms learned through the living experiences of the community around us and using this language was an effective way to breathe life into those words. In hindsight, not only did the words we use change how we shared our findings, but the words also changed our relationship to the project and more importantly, our responsibility to pass forward what we learned in a good way.

Engaging with Indigenist Arts-Based Methodologies

In this project, we aligned with an Indigenist methodology, meaning that the way we gathered and shared the knowledge occurred in a way that was accountable to our relationships with each other, and with Indigenous communities more broadly (Cajete, 2004; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). This is because "in Indigenist research, the unit of analysis is the relationship, not the individual" (Wilson, 2013, p. 314). Originally, the '*ist*' in Indigen*ist* methodologies was meant to pay homage to the emancipatory

principles of femi*nist* research (Rigney, 1999), and the overarching research agenda of Indigenist research continues to be focused on ensuring Indigenous epistemologies and relationality are centered in Indigenous research paradigms (Wilson, 2013).

By expanding this to incorporate arts-based methodologies, this means that our project's knowledge sharing methods (i.e., visual storytelling) are guided by an underlying philosophy that is rooted in a relational praxis that requires self-reflexivity and relational accountability (Christie, 2017). Indigenist art-based methodologies align with the emancipatory agendas of Indigenist methodologies because they guide work that challenges how we conceptualize knowledge sharing, how we work to challenge institutional norms of knowledge construction, and how we can honour and uphold Indigenous ways of knowing and doing as stand-alone research paradigms.

Finding our Themes

The individual stories that were shared during this project are all understood to be connected in some way, even if it was not apparent at first, because all stories are intrinsically connected to one another (Atleo, 2004). From this perspective, all the wisdoms shared are connected to broader conversations about Indigenous coming of age.

In our article "*Youth will feel Honoured if they are Reminded they are Loved": Supporting Coming of Age for Urban Indigenous Youth in Care* (Mellor et al., 2021), we used Shawn Wilson's metaphor of a fishing net to describe how we made this connection:

> …the data and analysis are like a circular fishing net. You could try to examine each of the knots in the net to see what holds it together, but it's the strings between the knots that have to work in conjunction in order for the net to

> function. So any analysis must examine all of the relationships or strings between particular events or knots of data as a whole before it will make any sense (Wilson, 2008, p. 120).

While we were careful not to dissect each individual's experiences into single boxes for examination, we still needed to develop some processes and protocols to review the transcripts in ways that would ensure that we could maintain rigour in our narrative inquiry. Leroy Little Bear says that "creation manifests in terms of cyclical patterns and repetitions" (Little Bear, 2000, p.81), and our task was to establish processes that would help us identify patterns that represented the key themes shared by the knowledge holders. The themes that emerged were broad enough to have multiple meanings depending on their individual contexts but were all linked through the 'net' of Indigenous coming of age.

Some of the patterns that emerged were tangible, reflecting specific experiences, entities, or activities, and others were intangible, reflecting more emotional or spiritual experiences. The intangible experiences conveyed the essence of what we learned and these became the five overarching themes of self-determination, self-awareness, empowerment, being part of something bigger, and having support networks (Mellor et al., 2020). However, it was the tangible descriptors - recurring phrases or images - that helped to shape the concrete images of our story. For instance, 'learning my language', 'having family pets', 'learning to bead', and 'singing together'. Those more tangible or lived signifiers connected the intangible feelings and were the springboard for visioning the story of *Becoming Wolf*.

Creating a Visual Language

During our second workshop, the graphic designer in our project led a series of illustration and qualitative exercises to establish a visual language with the youth. These exercises helped us understand what styles, imagery, and colours resonated with the youth and how we would represent this on our watercolour infographic. Three main exercises were established: pick your favorite image, draw an animal, and spectrum exercises.

'Pick your favorite' involved presenting a selection of different reference images, for example, images with different colour schemes, and images with more realistic or fantastical depictions of animals, etc.) Youth would select their favourite image and answer questions like, why did you pick that one? How does the image make you feel? What is the best part of the picture? Sometimes the responses were based on general preferences, for example, "because I like the tiger", "I like bears", other times, more in-depth responses were shared.

Two overall patterns emerged from this exercise. One was a preference for realistic animal images compared to more abstract or ephemeral animal images. And the other was a preference for images that had warm colour tones (reds, pinks, beiges) compared to images with cool colour tones (greens, blues).

In the 'draw an animal' exercise, youth were invited to draw animals that they connected with and felt like that day. These animals could be pets, fictional animals, fantastical animals - there were no restrictions on style or presentation. This exercise, while providing excellent creative content, was somewhat challenging to manage as we

did not want to interrupt the flow of creation or constrain the discussions about the drawings, especially when youth were describing their illustrated stories. This was an important teaching for us as some youth who were less inclined to share verbally, shared through illustrations, adding an unexpected richness to the storytelling dimension of the exercise.

The third exercise was the spectrum exercise. Youth were presented with spectrums like real --- fantasy, cute --- serious, colourful --- black/white, and were asked to place a dot where they envisioned the goal graphic to be. Votes skewed towards a preference for 'realism', consistent with the image preferences selected in the first exercise. Votes were spread evenly across 'cute' and 'serious'. Votes on the colour spectrum were generally centred between the two extremes, except for three votes placed on 'black and white', and one vote placed on 'colourful'.

Research Storytelling

One of the powers of storytelling, is its ability to make visible voices that may have historically been silenced. As a method to disseminate research, research storytelling is "particularly well suited … to present findings in ways that *make sense*, that *speak to* and *speak with* the communities in which the research takes place" (Christensen, 2012, p. 233). In drawing on the wisdoms shared by the youth and community, stories of personal experiences, conversations about day-to-day living, and our vision boarding activities, we had the tools to develop a narrative to take our new knowledge into the world.

Our graphic novelist prompted us to submit a one to two-page story which would be adapted to a visual narrative. Because arts-based research continues to be somewhat

exploratory in research practice (Barone, 2008; Boydell et al., 2012; Hammond et al., 2018), it was especially important to select literary signifiers that would translate our project findings in a visual way. In doing so, we would be better able to convey what we had learned about the social landscape of Indigenous youth living in foster care and coming of age in urban landscapes.

"Imagining respectfully" (Harold, 2003, p. 254) was an essential principle to uphold in writing *Becoming Wolf,* because we were trying to balance our commitments to the community using an academic research method. Doing this successfully meant carrying community wisdoms forward in a good way, while at the same time, contributing to responsible, strength-based scholarship that advocates for Indigenous youth coming of age. In honouring our commitment to take our direction from the community, we focused *Becoming Wolf* on the experiences shared that were uniquely colourful, insightful, loving, and hilarious, many of which involved drawing on strengths to overcome hardships. Our hope here is that the readers or viewers will understand that a project about (re)connecting to coming of age exists because there has been a disconnection to teachings. By not focusing on the disconnection, we were able to centre the voices of the youth and displace 'colonialism' as a central character. Although much of the academic discourse surrounding Indigenous youth centres on colonial narratives (de Leeuw et al., 2010), we found that 'colonialism' was not a repeating pattern in our discussions. The pattern that did repeat was 'ask the youth'.

The following section is the story *Becoming Wolf* in its text-based form, edited and reviewed by our research team and community knowledge holders.

Becoming Wolf

Deer was told one day that she was going to move to Victoria, BC. She was told that it was in her best interests. Even though she was going to stay with her Aunty Deer who had a big cat she liked, she was sad that she couldn't stay with her mum. She knew her mum had her moods, but she was funny and loving too.

One afternoon, Aunty was showing Deer how to make fry bread and fish heads... Aunty said, "...you need to learn this so you can take care of yourself and your family."

Her young cousin Bear plunks down at the table and teases, "what's for dinner, Cuz?!"

Uncle Bear laughs, "Ha! You ask, you make!"

Deer is so mad, she thinks they are making fun of her. She storms to her room in tears, FatCat in tow, and slams the door, "aaaaagggghhhh why won't people just leave me alone?!!"

Bear cousin looks confused. Aunty says without looking away from the stove, "Give her space, she is learning."

Deer looks down at the beading she is working on. She rests her hand on FatCat's soft back and exhales sadly. Her mother taught her to bead when she was little. Usually it calms her, but today she sees the beading and memories come flooding back and she starts to cry. Her tears won't stop. They spill onto her beading and start filling the room...

Water spills out the window and soon, her tears have filled the streets and she is paddling hard with FatCat to stay above a storm! She looks down and sees that she is paddling with wolf paws. Terrified, she sees that she has become a wolf.

Deer becomes wolf and sees the shore and paddles hard with the strength of a wolf. She collapses, exhausted. Loyally, FatCat sits by her side. When she wakes up, she sees her ocean of tears. It reminds her so much of her mum's home territory.

A raven has been watching Deer as she transformed to wolf from a tall cedar. The raven lifts up... She calls for it, "Wait! Yip, yip, yip!!!"

She starts to chase Raven, learning to run with her wolf paws. [FatCat is clinging to her fur]. But she is so focused on Raven, she doesn't see that she's running up a bluff. She stops just in time to not fall over the edge. She starts to cry again.

"Yip yip yip... I thought Raven was going to help me, but it tricked me... Yip yip yip... Ahwooooo."

She stops.... Ahwooo? She speaks wolf? She tries again... "Ahwoooooooo, yip."

She picks herself up, she tries again, but louder...

"Ahwooo ahwooo ahwoooooooo."

FatCat watches. Raven watches. They see Deer becoming her own wolf. Her nose reaches high as she discovers her gift of scent. Her ears grow tall as she discovers her gift of hearing. She sees from the top of the bluff, the life in her tear-ocean and starts to understand her strength.

She looks to Raven. Trickster teacher.

~Rustle, rustle, rustle~

"What's that?!" she feels her hackles.

~Rustle, rustle, rustle~

A deer peeks out of the woods.

"Yiiip!"she runs and hides. But she sees this is not an adult. But it is not a fawn either.

Sort of in-between like she is.

"I'm Fox. Your howls sure can carry! They sent me out to find you!"

"Who sent you? Wait, how are you a fox? You act like a deer!" Wolf asks.

"I'm both" Fox tells her," fox is just the way it shows. I hear the best and run the fastest.

My uncles told me during the change, that my deer gifts showed my spirit."

She, still confused," ...what change?!"

"Uhhhh.... Come on, we're late!" says Fox, kind of embarrassed.

They turn to run down the bluff and towards the beach. The closer they get, the more drumming and singing she hears. Fox leads her to the aunties. Something is familiar, Deer thinks to herself. "I've seen this before. At my cousins' coming of age." She

remembered how she looked up to them as they stood before the families, new life givers and protectors.

The aunties waste no time. They begin to straighten her tail, clean her paws, and all start talking at once. She sees this preparation happening with the other 'in-betweeners.'

At the end of the night, she was so sleepy having eaten, sang and danced with her kin. She cuddles up close to the others, closes her eyes and drifts off to sleep. FatCat curls into her furry tummy.

Deer reawakens. Her aunty heard her cry out in her sleep. She leaves her to wake up slowly because she knows about nightmares, she used to have them too.

Deer sees that Aunty is looking out the window at a raven sitting on a branch. Stroking FatCat's back, she tells Aunty about her dream, about how she was so scared and thought she was alone. She told her about Fox, the aunties, uncles, and all the cousins, and how they danced all night. Aunty just listened; this was one of her deer gifts.

Deer says, "Because I can transform from deer to wolf, I am strong and soft at the same time. I know that when I speak wolf, there will be others to hear me and they will help me find a good life."

They look out the window from their apartment in Victoria and see the wolf, the bear, the deer, the fox… all clans in the sky.

Aunty says, "you carry the strength of your ancestors and your ancestors carry that strength too."

Deer sleeps soundly through the rest of the night, FatCat tucked in close.

Deer wakes up and feels different. She isn't sure why, but there is a peace in her heart.

She sees her beading and sits down to work on it. Some of the sad memories come back. But she closes her eyes and sees her paws. She hears the drumming, sees Raven, and takes a deep breath. She takes out the rows that were messy from the sad thoughts before and keeps beading.

Bear knocks on the door, "...hey Cuz, you ok?"

Deer and FatCat look up from her beading, "Ya, I had this crazy dream I want to tell you about."

Visual (Re)storying

The diversity of our project team meant that we were accustomed to and entrenched in our individual traditions of storytelling, so it was invaluable to work with Lekwungen knowledge holders who advised us on the ways that *Becoming Wolf* could be culturally relevant. In the same way that cultural teachers are able to connect tradition to contemporary ways of living (Archibald, 2012), our teachers helped us place Indigenous teachings in an urban Indigenous community context. For example, the story was originally titled, *Becoming WolfDeer,* and the characters similarly had dual names to demonstrate their many ancestral connections. However, knowledge holder *Yuxwelupton Qwal'qaxala* suggested that instead we should,

[change] the animals into singular beings. By their diversity in representation, I feel it captures our diversity of ancestry. Mixed ancestry in not a term commonly used in any of our languages.

Yuxwelupton Qwal'qaxala's comment tuned us in to the dualities that were embedded in, subconsciously or otherwise, and it was clear that in writing *Becoming Wolf* some of the false dichotomies that tried to insert themselves into our project were being exposed. Using singular names was a way to show that binaries were not only incongruous with Indigenous beliefs of holism and interconnectivity, it showed how Indigenous definitions of identity and Western definitions of identity contrast, forcing Indigenous youth to 'walk in two worlds' (Little Bear, 2000; Olynick et al., 2016). We were cognizant that dualities we encountered in our research journey also presented challenges for our team. We agreed that we needed to acknowledge the lived realities of social constructs like male/female, wild/domestic, urban/remote, and Indigenous/non-Indigenous, but that we did not have to let not divisions 'muddy the waters' or distract us from supporting the youth where they were at in their own personal identity journeys.

Becoming Wolf is a tool to untangle ourselves from these identity constraints by having a character, Deer, who can embody multiple identities in a single interconnected world. We used this tool to develop our watercolour infographic – our project-specific visual representation of the data (Figure 16). The infographic interprets Deer as traveling through the stages of adolescence and coming into her wolf nature. We can see that, despite Deer's changing identity, she remains connected to her childhood, her territory,

and her community, regardless of the stage of her transformation or her physical distance from those elements.

Figure 16: The watercolour infographic (re)stories *Becoming Wolf* in a way that communicated our research themes using literary and visual signifiers. Deer is in the in-between space of adolescence, where she is leaving her childhood and is entering the adult phase of her life.

When we translated *Becoming Wolf* to the graphic novel, this provided us with even more latitude to represent the specific context of our project, including the way that

Indigenous teachings weave seamlessly with urban landscapes, showing Indigenous beliefs in having shared animal and human qualities (Figure 17) and the belief that teachings transcend physical and spiritual boundaries (Figure 18).

Figure 17: Deer's identity is unchanged regardless of where she is (main frame). Deer tells Aunty that in all different realms of existence, she is the same being (sub-frame).

Figure 18: Deer connects knowledge from her day-to-day experiences to her dream.

Using animal characters (e.g., wolves, deer) we were able to show how the gifts young people may possess are independent of the physical changes they experience during puberty. This contrasts with other belief systems that have focused on initiating specific gender roles at the onset of puberty, roles which may or may not align with individual identities (Butler, 2000). Showing Deer in the wilderness is often incompatible with more Eurocentric social constructs of what it means to be a young lady or woman (Craine & Gardner, 2016; Rose, 2016), but through our story, we not only contradict this construct of ’woman’, we see that Deer identifies some of her strengths outside of it (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Deer starts to identify her wolf strengths.

There are many events happening external to Deer including her move to the city and the day-to-day life with her family. However, we wanted to convey how changes associated with these types of events can be intensified by internal emotions that come with adolescence. In *Becoming Wolf,* it is through the power of Deer's moontime, her menstrual cycle, that she connects to her ancestral homeland, and in that space of inherent knowledge, gathers strength that she did not know she could access. In the graphic novel, we were able to use visual signifiers to show how Deer can use her senses to connect with her genetic memory or blood memory, including smelling the cedar, hearing the drumming, or seeing preparations in the Big House (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Deer recognizes her ancestral homelands.

Turning to our watercolour infographic, we were able to connect the themes of belonging, self-awareness, and empowerment using *Becoming Wolf* and drawing on the visual language developed by our graphic designer (Figure 16). We see our young fawn stepping out of the warm tones of home, beginning the separation from childhood. This is emphasized by the reds and pinks the youth selected as more comforting during the workshop exercises. As she experiences her transformation, her identity becomes clearer and more defined over time, even while travelling into the unknown future – which is emphasized by the blues, colours that were not associated with comfort or positivity in the exercises.

Deer's ability to create her own identity is a performative expression (Butler, 2000) that disrupts the normative social structures that have historically dictated and constrained Indigenous adolescent identity formation. de Leeuw et al. (2010) pinpoint ways that social discourses associated with Indigenous child welfare have *produced* deviant identities of Indigenous youth and their families, with long term adverse health outcomes. By presenting our character Deer in situations that reflect an embodied performativity, she is able to disrupt colonial discourses by being powerful, being strong,

and being a wolf. Deer's actions unsettle deficit-laden narratives of Indigenous youth by celebrating a 'becoming' of an alternate self-determined and fully embodied Indigenous identity (Butler, 2000, 2015). It is Deer's teachings, rooted in the land, that strengthen her connection to herself and her community, even at the height of her individuation. By presenting these concepts using a visual narrative, we, as the viewer, are able to experience this cycle of transformation in both visceral and intellectual ways and embody it ourselves.

Yuxwelupton Qwal'qaxala offered this cultural reflection of how the transformative experience of coming of age allows Deer to access the strength to fully embrace who she is and who she is becoming:

> Transformation is something shared by most if not all Indigenous communities. In fact, it is something universal. What we have captured here is a deer, finding a piece of herself in the traits of another being, which happens to be a wolf. I like the metaphor of the tears becoming the ocean as Deer dives into a deep sleep and finds peace and strength in transforming into Wolf. This is powerful and aligns with many of our stories that speak to journeying into a dream world and discovering the treasures in behavioural traits. It is this experience Deer has as she discovers components of herself that were perhaps dormant or asleep and awakens them through connecting and ceremony.

Applying Indigenist Arts-Based Methodologies to *Becoming Wolf*'s Social Landscape

Using Indigenist arts-based methodologies we drew on different types of storytelling, and in a traditional way, we tailored the story to different audiences while still honouring

the principle truths being conveyed (Atleo, 2004). In *Becoming Wolf,* the reader experiences Deer's transformation by witnessing her journey from living with her mother, to living in the city with extended family, to discovering parts of her identity in her ancestral homelands. We prompt the viewer to get to know Deer from a distance, and in doing so, Deer has the freedom and protection to have her own experience. These media are intentionally not directive because we are encouraging the reader to be open to their position relative to Indigenous youth coming of age. When we teach through storytelling, the "learner [is required] to analyze the information for meaning...[and then] the learner must then draw their own conclusions" (Little Bear, 2009, p. 13).

Deer is a young lady who occupies many identities that have been marginalized throughout history, her race, her sex, her gender, her age, and her experience of having to live away from her mother. By using different visual media to reconceptualize, (re)present, and (re)story that history, we can challenge those constructs by demonstrating that there are alternate narratives that involve strength, independence, freedom, and promise. From a critical standpoint, the watercolour infographic and graphic novel are sites for discursive practice because of the ways they create meaning through representations, texts, and visual engagement (Craine & Gardner, 2016; Rose, 2016). Our project shows how visual mediums can be developed and then employed to contribute to socially impactful research, bridging social research paradigms while respecting and upholding both institutional and community ethical protocols.

Limitations

Storytelling within a research context can be a celebration of both individual and collective voices (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2013), it can be "true to life without being true of life" (Hendry, 2010, p. 76). During our project planning, we planned to use methods of collective knowledge gathering and sharing. However, although this approach was suitable for our adult knowledge holders, we found that some youth were more comfortable sharing individually. Because of this, it will be important to connect with and evaluate whether and how the collective narrative format resonated with our youth participants.

While this work can contribute to decolonizing discourses, we wanted to focus on celebrating Indigenous youth, the community that supports them, and the cultural teachings that support them through their journeys. Our omission of an in-depth colonial contestation was not an oversight or a negation of the critical role and obstacle that it continues to play in connecting Indigenous youth to their teachings. The omission was an intentional and concerted effort to focus on the salience of youth and community voices in social research, as opposed to arguing for the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge systems.

Conclusion

This paper provides a compelling example of how bridging text-based, oral, and visual storytelling can be an active form of knowledge mobilization around issues with great social import and impact. Indigenist arts-based methodologies were well suited to this project as it aligned with our broader research goals to represent narratives of strength,

togetherness, and relationships in understanding experiences of coming of age. The paper highlights how an adapted narrative analysis method and research storytelling may be effectively used to discuss the complexity of Indigenous adolescent coming of age and adolescent identity construction for youth growing up in care. Through this process we found ways to preserve the stories of the youth about Indigenous coming of age, while building on the relevant and appropriate research methods like conversational interviews, discussion groups, sharing circles, and illustration exercises. In a traditional storytelling way, *Becoming Wolf* took many forms – conveyed in a graphic novel, a watercolour infographic, and through academic journal articles. By retelling stories in diverse ways, we are able to explore new avenues along which knowledge can be respectfully co-created and shared.

Chapter 8 Discussion and Implications for Future Research

This final chapter reflects on the relational engagement that led to the creation of and now completion of this phase of our coming of age project. Herein, I reflect on the early conversations that helped to develop this work, what we learned from the community and from the youth, and how I have come to understand the implications of (re)connecting to coming of age teachings with urban Indigenous youth in care on our social and health landscapes. There were many things we learned throughout this project, some of which included our own limitations related to time, capacity, and feasibility. I see this also as a celebration of learning and encouragement for more good work to come.

At the beginning of this project, in early conversations with Jennifer Chuckry, she said "we need culturally appropriate coming of age resources for our youth." As our conversations continued to evolve, she stressed that we needed to ask the community how to do this in a good way before we made too many plans. With the help of her team at SCCFS, we organized a community dinner to invite knowledge holders in and around the City of Victoria, to share their knowledge about urban Indigenous coming of age. There were some specific questions that SCCFS felt we needed guidance on, including: What does Indigenous coming of age look like in an urban centre like Victoria? How do we honour the youth's ancestry and follow territorial protocol at the same time? How can the youths' home or ancestral families be involved, and if they are not, can SCCFS be the ones to guide ceremonies?

The knowledge holders agreed that cultivating safe spaces for youth to experience their rites of passage was of paramount importance, and to do this, it was ok if this meant that

some teachings needed to be adapted to their specific social and physical environments. Above all, they shared the clear message that the youth should have a say in how they want to experience their culture. They said, “ask the youth what they want!” so when we began planning our workshops, we were sure to place the youth at the ‘centre of the circle.’ Being at the centre of the circle not only meant that our project focused on *their* health and wellbeing, but also underscored and emphasized that they would have a central role of being peer researchers and co-collaborators.

Admittedly, this challenged us in different ways. For instance, we had to adapt the methods we used to gather youth wisdoms in ways that made sense for them: having more one-on-one interviews instead of sharing circles, having guided arts-based activities, and working with more Elders and knowledge holders. By cultivating spaces of engagement that better suited the youth’s style of sharing, we hoped we were in a better position to explore the richness of their wisdoms. This flexibility was easily accommodated in our Indigenous research paradigm, because the emphasis was always on how we developed our relationships, accommodated them, and were accountable to our community responsibilities (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

What we found after we did an analysis of the wisdoms shared, was that not only do coming of age teachings resonate with youth, but that they were already adapting cultural teachings in their own personal ways. For example, one young lady talked about walking in the forest to calm her mind, another shared that she, her aunty and her cousins were learning Gitxsan together, and another talked about how they had gone with their Elders to drum and sing at the beach. We learned how each of these activities, all of which

cultivate strengths in their own ways, are examples of how coming of age teachings are embodied in the day-to-day lives of urban Indigenous youth living in care.

Our project findings showed that when the urban Indigenous community helps to cultivate *spaces of belonging* for youth living in foster or away-from-home care, youth know that *they are part of something bigger* which is a key element in cultivating spiritual strength – giving their lives meaning. Having this knowledge supports youth to face the obstacles and negative forces that they might encounter in their lives and persevere in spite of them (Brave Heart Society, n.d.; Brokenleg, 2012; Lertzman, 2002; Petrasek Macdonald et al., 2013).

We identified interconnected themes of strength that included *self-continuity*, *self-awareness*, and *empowerment.* Each of these are key to supporting the mental and emotional domain of wellness for Indigenous youth, elements which, according to Blackstock's Breath of Life Theory, contribute to attaining lasting balance and harmony (Blackstock, 2011; Cross, 1997). During adolescence, youth are cultivating a sense of self-awareness that helps them to see they are part of their community. As they grow, they develop a greater or further awareness of being 'self-in-relation,' which in turn, helps youth to consider their responsibilities to future generations. Seeing themselves in the future – self-continuity – creates a sense of purpose, empowering youth to take on the responsibility of an adult life (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; 2008).

Through our work, we showed that Indigenous coming of age is when young people develop their capacity for optimal lifelong wellness using cultural teachings rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Drawing on the Breath of Life Theory, we added

complexity to this definition by illustrating how Indigenous youth simultaneously navigate adolescence and specific historical, cultural, social, and environmental contexts that influence their day-to-day lives (Blackstock, 2009; 2011). At a structural level, those contexts have been disrupted by settler-colonial discourses in very specific ways. These include, but are not limited to, the legacy of government policies like the Indian Act and residential school policies (Bennett et al., 2005; de Leeuw et al., 2010; Reading & Wien, 2009; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a).

The imposition of those policies continues to affect the lived experience of Indigenous families, including its influence on the widening gap between the resources Indigenous youth receive compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005; Trocmé et al., 2004). This includes, but is not limited to, the funding disparities between groups and the ability for Indigenous families to access culturally appropriate and safe social support services (Bennett et al., 2005; Canadian Broadcasting Coorporation, 2016). The outcome of this resource disparity is reflected across all health determinants including access to safe drinking water, adequate housing, food security, and child welfare services (Bennett et al., 2005; Reading & Wien, 2009) and other dimensions of mental and spiritual wellness (Duran et al., 1998; Little Bear, 2000).

On Disrupting Social Discourse. According to the Breath of Life Theory, Indigenous youth need to experience balance across all health dimensions, because according to Indigenous relational worldviews, all dimensions are connected (Blackstock, 2009; Blackstock, 2011; Cross, 1997). Looking back on our work, I believe that considering Indigenous coming of age through a lens of Performativity (Butler, 2000; 2015) might

help to conceptualize how (re)connecting to coming of age can bring about this balance. If we apply Butler's Theory of Performativity to these layered and complex realities, we understand that these realities are social discourses that can be disrupted and destabilized (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). The Theory of Performativity provides a lens through which we can understand how Indigenous youth have been situated within a specific settler-colonial discourse that is repeated over and over again through different media. For example, consider how Indigenous child welfare policies maintain an Indigenous youth identity that is based on a subjective, settler-colonial definition of what it means to be Indigenous. However, the beauty of engaging with the Theory of Performativity, is that it tells us that by recognizing that these identities are subjective, we can reconstruct them and (re)story new ones (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

How...? We can recognize and identify the *linguistic performatives,* the words that cause people to do things, and the *bodily performatives*, the actions that embody ways of being (Butler, 2000; 2015), and replace them with words and actions that embody strength, optimism, and potential. Engaging in Indigenous rites of passage, coming of age teachings and Indigenous ceremonies is embodied performativity, that is, it is not about *acting Indigenous* it is about *embodying Indigenous*. Therefore, every enactment of these teachings – from a solo walk in the woods to the drums young people make with their Elders - is an Indigenous-determined performative that displaces a settler-colonial performative. The performative becomes Indigenous-determined and full of strength, curiosity, and ancestry. We illustrate this in our comic book, when Deer presents to us as a wolf, showing us how, "the body... concretises and embodies the narrative" (Lilja,

2017, p. 350). At a broader more political level, this is what Cutcha Risling-Baldy calls *embodied decolonization* (Risling Baldy, 2018)

On Agency. I am aware that viewing Indigenous coming of age from a theoretical perspective that embraces performativity implies that individual actions are not a result of personal agency, but rather, that individual actions are *effects* or reproductions of the social discourses that surround us (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). At first this may seem contradictory, suggesting that youth are powerless to self-determine their futures, but I see it as quite the opposite. By embodying Indigenous coming of age teachings and (re)storying Indigenous futures, it shows that Indigenous youth have the power to disrupt the social discourses that have historically limited what their future choices may be (Risling Baldy, 2018). Furthermore, when teachings are embodied in an Indigenous reality or ontological framework, the concept of individual agency is no longer necessary because individuality exists only in relation to our surroundings (Wilson, 2001).

On Resilience. Throughout this project we worked to foreground the inherent strengths of Indigenous youth and how coming of age teachings have protective qualities that will help to cultivate lasting and lifelong resilience (Brokenleg, 2012; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Petrasek Macdonald et al., 2013). However, if we do not allow resilience to be Indigenous defined, from an Indigenous perspective, there is a risk that the resilience celebrated by this project might be co-opted to align with ideologies that emphasize individuality, neoliberalism for example (Joseph, 2013). Why this is risky, is that neoliberal leaning governments could, on the one hand, applaud our celebration of youth

resilience, while on the other, use our work to justify an absolution of responsibility to redress the social inequities their programs and policies have created (Joseph, 2013).

But again, how does Indigenous coming of age counteract this? Martin Brokenleg (2012) says that "resiliency is being strong on the inside *[and]* having a courageous spirit. One cannot teach resiliency with words or posters. What we need are transformative experiences" (p. 12). The transformative experiences of coming of age happen in relation to one's physical, familial, and spiritual community. Even though youth will experience the 'betwixt and between' of adolescence (Turner, 1994), without the community connection and the connection to a shared ancestral knowledge, the experience of coming of age loses some of its meaning. Embodying ancestral knowledge is what gives Indigenous coming of age its performative power, that is, its ability to (re)write and (re)right what it means to be resilient. It is this culturally grounded resilience that will strengthen narratives of solidarity, narratives that will (re)story and resist government and other social discourses that constrain how Indigenous youth can live out their lives. This type of resilience has the power to change the narrative from government apathy to accountability, and restore earlier agreements of partnership, trust, and travelling together.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Areas of Research

This project contributes to decolonizing health and social research practices that support "doing research in a good way." We have shown that valuable research contributions can be made using Indigenist methodologies, community engagement, narrative methods, and arts-based knowledge sharing. By maintaining an alignment with

Indigenist research principles and upholding our research agreements, we followed proper ethical protocols in our work, including territorial, community, and institutional protocols. By presenting this work, I hope that we have provided a way forward for others to consider how they might conduct research in ways that can respond to community needs, while opening space for constructive dialogue around ways that research can help shift normative social discourses that optimize the health and wellness of Indigenous youth.

This work contributes to culturally appropriate paradigms of practice for service providers including, but not limited to, social workers, youth workers, educators, and health care professionals. When service providers know what resources are available, they are better equipped to guide and respond to youth and their families in ways that are culturally informed, trauma informed, and directed to the unique lived experiences of that individual. Within this paradigm of practice, service providers can better conceptualize the significance of, and lasting impact that culturally centred coming of age resources can have for urban Indigenous youth in care. We designed our graphic novel and our watercolor infographic to be intentionally accessible for allied service providers to help them learn about the cultural dimension of Indigenous coming of age. In doing so, we are contributing to a collective awareness that: (1) there are cultural supports available to Indigenous youth; and (2) culturally centred care contributes to an overall sense of wellbeing and belonging for Indigenous youth.

Our work was limited by certain constraints related to community capacity and what both feasible and respectful to ask for in contributions. The support from community

partners was in addition to their regular professional duties. Beyond regular day time meetings, their support also included helping to coordinate and deliver the 'wisdom catching' events on evenings and weekends. This was a generous donation of their time and SCCFS's organizational resources, regardless of funding arrangements made through our grants.

Because of scheduling constraints – including those related to youth programming, school, and extra curricular activities – our data does not represent a balance of ages and genders. Furthermore, each youth's unique personality and their comfort level with the team members, meant that how they shared – and the amount they shared – was different. How this is reflected in the data is that there are a greater number of female-identifying youth and female-identifying adult voices, compared to male-identifying youth or adult voices. For those men who did participate, more adults shared and participated compared to young men. A key discussion early on was that young Indigenous men are often left behind in strength-based conversations about coming of age, and therefore, future work supporting their needs, guided by male role models is needed.

Another group that we had hoped to provide support for was Indigenous youth who identify as LGBTQ2S+. SCCFS have numerous youth in their care who identify as LGBTQ2S+, but there is a gap in understanding about how to support coming of age in ways that are culturally appropriate for them. The question about supporting LGBTQ2S+ youth was presented at our dinner and our analysis of those responses suggested that we need a greater understanding informed by adult knowledge holders with this lived experience. During our work, we learned about the ways that social discourses rooted in

Indigenous ontologies are not congruent with Western discourses surrounding LGBTQ2S+ identities. But, because we lacked stronger guidance beyond this understanding, we decided that a project specific to those youth was needed to ensure that their experiences were honoured in ways that made sense for them. This is a key area for future work.

Finally, this work was qualitative in nature and focused on the stories shared by the community and lived experiences that each of them brought to the project. Future work that explores Indigenous coming of age from the perspective of the Breath of Life Theory, might explore the impact of intersecting historical, cultural, and social contexts and their epigenetic and neurobiological dimensions. This might include exploring the ways that (re)connecting to coming of age teachings can help to heal intergenerational trauma and collective soul wounds at cellular levels or exploring the effects of cultural resilience on teenage brains! Our hope is that this work will spark many new areas of study by providing evidence of the positive capacity (re)connecting to coming of age teaching has in supporting Indigenous youth futures.

Conclusions

To my knowledge, neither the Breath of Life Theory, nor the Theory of Performativity, or any other theory for that matter, has been applied to the study of Indigenous coming of age. In applying these perspectives, it is our hope that future work in this area will see the power of this experience to contribute to an active decolonizing praxis that can disrupt and dismantle the social inequities that have been disproportionately experienced by Indigenous youth.

Although the message of our work is applicable to many Indigenous communities, the context is unique to where we gathered the wisdoms, and from whom we gathered them. Many of our participants were invited based on our collective networks of resources, but we welcomed everyone who was able to join. A strength of our project was the ability to accommodate who could be available, and when, and knowing that our work would be impactful in whatever form our knowledge sharing outcomes materialized into. From the outset, we set out to develop culturally appropriate coming of age resources for urban Indigenous youth in care and service providers more broadly. Through our dinner and workshops, we learned from the Indigenous community, ways that coming of age teachings continue to adapt to urban landscapes and contemporary society. We gathered their wisdoms and developed a graphic novel, a watercolour infographic, and wrote papers to share our findings on the cultural dimensions of coming of age, advocating for Indigenous youth in care to have access to the ceremonies that are part of this life-stage transition.

During our project, we learned that the diversity of the urban Indigenous youth in care community in Victoria can be celebrated while still honouring Lekwungen Territory protocols. The unique perspectives that each youth and community member brought to our project - territorial teachings, the land, the language, the knowledge – all flowed in confluence in the same way that mountain tributaries all arrive at a river and travel together as one powerful force. Ensuring that culturally centred coming of age teachings continue to flow in that ancestral river of knowledge will help to maintain harmony in the body, heart, mind, and spirits of the urban Indigenous youth in care community.

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Appendices

Appendix A

RESEARCH AGREEMENT

Supporting Culturally Appropriate Coming of Age Resources for Urban Indigenous Youth in Care on South Vancouver Island: (Re)Connecting with Self-Determined Health and Wellness

Research Agreement

November 7, 2018

Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services (SCCFS) agree to conduct the named research project with the following understandings:

1. The **purpose of this research project**, as discussed with and understood in the community of _Victoria, British Columbia_, is: _to develop culturally appropriate coming-of-age resources for urban Indigenous youth in care on South Vancouver Island._
2. The **scope of this research project** (that is, what issue, events or activities are to be involved, and the degree of participation by community residents), as discussed with and understood in this community, is:
    - To consult with members of Victoria's urban Indigenous community, including knowledge holders and Elders, to determine how youth in care can experience a cultural appropriate coming of age;
    - To consult with youth who participate in SCCFS's youth leadership program to understand their needs during the coming-of-age time in their life; and,
    - To understand what resource service providers need to support Indigenous youth in this journey.
3. The **methods to be used**, as agreed by the researchers and the community, are: _community consultation, workshops, sharing circles, arts-based methods._

The development of this project is based on sincere communication between community members and researchers. All efforts will be made to incorporate and address local concerns and recommendations at each step of the project.

At the end of the project, the researchers will participate in community meetings to discuss the results of the analysis with community members.

4. **Information collected** is to be shared, distributed, and stored in these agreed ways:

The project will align with the principles of OCAP, which were developed in response to the need for First Nations communities to have more control over the research that is being conducted:

- _Ownership_: SCCFS, as the organization representing the participant community, will own the research data in the same way that individuals own their personal information;
- _Control_: SCCFS will control the research and information management processes by determining the benefits to the community, the scope of work, and the direction of engagement activities;
- _Access_: SCCFS will have access to the research data for the duration of the research agreement, after which all data will be turned over to SCCFS. In addition, SCCFS will manage and make decisions regarding the community's access to the data; and,

- Possession: Although the data may at times be in the possession of the UVic Research team, SCCFS remains the *owner* of the data.

Storage

Any hardcopy files with identifying information (e.g., names, contact information) such as consent forms and field notes will be held in a secure and lockable filing cabinet at either the University of Victoria or at SCCFS's offices. The key to the cabinet will be held by a member of the research team.

Computer files will be password protected. Any data stored on external devices (e.g., hard drives, USB sticks) with identifying information (e.g., names, contact information) such as consent forms and field notes, will be password protected. All other data or information that does not require participants to be identified will be anonymized. Files will be held on a personal computer but may be uploaded to a cloud server or web-sharing site for backing up and for ease of editing, sharing, and communication. For the latter case, these will be password protected and not have any identifiers for the participants such as names or contact information to ensure confidentially and identity protection. All correspondence related to the project will be filed and kept in a separate folder should an REB, funding body, or other agency request an audit of the materials.

Data may be kept indefinitely if the project is determined by the SCCFS and the participants to be beneficial to continue. This would be for instance if the workshop and knowledge sharing outcome become a methodology that is adaptable in other communities or academic settings.

The researcher team will be available to answer questions and assist community members should community members wish to use the data for different purposes.

Distribution

The community (i.e., SCCFS, steering committee, etc.) will approve all reports prior to finalizing any documents. This includes interim reporting if needed, manuscripts for publication, final reporting, and knowledge sharing information (e.g., graphic novel, education materials, etc.).

5. **Informed consent** of individual participants is to be obtained in these agreed ways:

An individual consent form will be provided to each participant (i.e., youth, adult, elder/knowledge holder). The consent form will be reviewed and read by the research team to the participant(s) at which point they will indicate if they wish to continue with the project. Consent may be given by signing a consent form or by witnessed verbal consent. Should a participant wish to give consent in a manner that reflects their own traditions, this will be accommodated by the research team.

A copy of the consent form or a record of the verbal consent process including the date, time, and place that consent was given, will be left with the respondent where the address of each researcher can be used at any time, should the respondent wish to contact the researcher(s) for additional information.

6. The **names of participants and of the community are to be protected** in these agreed ways:
   Documenting the names of participants is expected to be restricted to consent forms and project planning documents (e.g., invitation lists). Any documents with names or personal information will be stored and managed as indicated in Section 4 above. No names will be used in any of the knowledge sharing materials without expressed and documented consent of the participant.

7. As mentioned on the consent form, the interviews are confidential. In no instance will the name of a respondent be attached to a record.
   Before distribution of the final report, or any publication or contact with the media, the community will be consulted once again as to whether the community agrees to share this data in that particular way.

8. Should the UVic research team be approached by the the media and/or other parties (including funding agencies) to discuss the project and/or project outcomes, permission to speak on behalf of the project will be requested from SCCFS.

Funding, benefits and commitments

Funding

The researchers have applied for outside funding from organizations including:

- Tri-council funding agencies Social Science and Humanities Research Council
- Island Health

In-kind support has been provided by organizations including SCCFS, Island Health, First Nations Health Authority, and local community members.

Benefits

The main ways **researchers wish to use this research project** for their benefit include:

- Publishing the results of the project, or results of project phases in journal articles;
- Compiling the results of the project into a dissertation to fulfill the requirements of a PhD;
- Using the study results to develop knowledge sharing print-based materials for youth in care, service providers, youth guardianship teams, etc.; and
- Compilation of the study results into a final report for SCCFS.

The researchers will submit a final report to *SCCFS* in *2020*. Presentations in peer-reviewed publications and conferences will be made. The final report will be reviewed by community members prior to publication. Presentations will be made and articles published after discussions with SCCFS and the community leaders.

The benefits likely to be gained by the community through this research project are:

- Educational
- Informational
- Supportive of health and wellness
- Decolonial

Commitments

The **community's commitment** to the researchers is to:

- Recommend capable and reliable community members to collaborate or to be employed in this project; and
- Keep informed about the progress of the project and help in leading the project toward meaningful results.

The **researchers' main commitment** to the community is to:

- Inform the community about the progress of the project in a clear, specific, and timely manner;
- Act as a resource to the community on research-related questions; and
- Ensure that the research direction is consistent with the needs of SCCFS and Victoria's urban Indigenous community.

The researchers agree to interrupt the research project in the following circumstances:

- If community leaders decide to withdraw their participation; and
- If SCCFS believes that the project will no-longer benefit the community.

Signed by:

Date:

Date:
Community:

Appendix B

DINNER CONSENT FORMS

Knowledge Holder's Dinner Participant Consent Form

Supporting Culturally Appropriate Coming of Age Resources for Urban Indigenous Youth in Care on South Vancouver Island: (Re)Connecting with Self-Determined Health and Wellness

You are invited to participate in a project that is being conducted by the University of Victoria and Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services (SCCFS). This project is also being conducted with SCCFS because Jennifer Chuckry, Executive Director, indicated there was a need for more Indigenous-specific resources for young people to connect them to coming-of-age teachings.

Andrea Mellor is a student at the University of Victoria and is coordinating part of this project. You may contact her if you have further questions by e-mailing xxxxx. Alternatively, you can also contact Jennifer Chuckry at SCCFS at xxxxx.

This work is also being conducted under the co-supervision of Denise Cloutier and Nick Claxton at the University of Victoria. They can be contacted at xxxxx or xxxxx.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this work is to help connect young Indigenous people who live in Victoria to coming-of-age teachings. We will do this by:

(i) learning from local elders and knowledge holders about what teachings should be passed to young people from different Indigenous cultures;
(ii) hosting a youth and elder-led workshop to talk about the importance of culture and what you might want people to know about you; and
(iii) develop culturally appropriate coming-of-age resources for young people and service providers to support urban Indigenous youth in-care.

Importance of this Project

Traditionally, coming of age is when young people learned about their responsibilities to themselves and their communities; when they came into their own sources of spiritual power and learn how to respect the power of others. The passage of these teachings has been disrupted because of the effects of colonialism on lands, family, and communities. Reconnecting to these teachings in a way that makes sense for today can help bring a balance the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual changes during this time. This project is important because there are not enough resources that support young people from different nations who live in cities like Victoria. These resources are needed for young people, but also for their care team of teachers, health workers, and social workers so that they are aware of the diversity between cultural teachings from nation to nation.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are recognized to be a member of Victoria's urban Indigenous community who has a vested interest in ensuring youth stay connected to their culture and who may be a knowledge holder who can share teachings or insights about traditional coming of age and/or rites of passage.

What is involved
If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, this will include attending a dinner to discuss the urban Indigenous community's capacity to support youth coming of age, share some of your knowledge about traditional coming of age teachings and rites of passage, and talk about how we can ensure cultural continuity is available for Indigenous youth in care. We hope to have these discussions after dinner and share stories, teachings, and recommendations in circle so that everyone can introduce themselves and participate in the discussions.

We will be taking notes during the discussion to establish key themes and messages that will prepare for the youth workshops and inform the project about how the away-from-home and urban Indigenous youth population can pass through a traditional coming of age. We will compile these notes and work with a graphic artist who will represent the themes visually in a series of drawings. These will be made available to all of the dinner participants following their development.

Inconvenience
Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including travelling to and attending the dinner on a weeknight.

Risks
There may be issues that come up during the dinner that could trigger different emotions or memories. Although we are drawing on cultural teachings as tools for both strength and healing, we recognize that the reason we are repairing these connections is rooted in a dark history.

If you agree to participate in the project, we will provide you with a “safety toolkit” that has resources to support preparing for our discussions. After the dinner is opened by our Elder, we will take a moment to discuss the toolkit and prepare ourselves for our discussions.

Benefits
The potential benefits to participating in this research might include:

- Engaging youth with coming of age teachings that are appropriate for their own self-defined identity and help to support the cultural continuity that can be less accessible in urban settings
- Raising up the youth community who will be the future leaders and decision makers by sharing teachings about how to enter adulthood connected to your spiritual power and knowing your responsibilities.
- Help youth who are not involved with SCCFS by developing tools for care teams so that they can respect the diversity of cultural teachings for Indigenous youth;
- Be part of a project that will help us understand how youth from diverse backgrounds can access cultural teachings in the city or by connecting with their home communities; and
- Be a mentor to a young person to support their own coming-of-age ceremony.

Compensation
To compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be paid an honorarium of $50 for your contribution and will be provided with dinner. We can arrange for transportation as needed or reimburse the cost of taxis or bus fare.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the project, any quotes or contributions that could be directly tied to you will not be included in any of the reporting or final research product.

Relationships with Participants
The project team may have a relationship to potential participants as friends, family members, or colleagues. Your participation in the project is voluntary and there is no expectation that you participate. There will be no consequences if you decide not to participate, or, if you want to participate but decide later that you do not want to continue, we will respect your decision.

On-going Consent
To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, this consent form will be reviewed with you at each new phase of the project.

Anonymity
We will discuss options for self-representation at the beginning of the discussions. This might include using an alias in any knowledge sharing materials to remain anonymous in any direct quotes or comments (e.g., Participant 1).

Confidentiality
Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by ensuring that any physical data tying you to the project is stored in a locked cabinet, accessible only by SCCFS or the research team for the duration of the project, OR any digital data is password protected and accessible only by SCCFS or the research team.

Dissemination of Results
It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in a creative medium like a graphic novel or other form that the workshop groups decide together. The graphic novel and a more formal report will also be compiled for SCCFS and other service providers to act as a teaching tool about culturally appropriate coming of age. A copy of the graphic novel (or other medium) will be available to any of the participants including the knowledge holders, youth, and Elders. Additional copies will be made for youth who were not able to be part of our workshop but might like some information.

The outcome of the project may also be used to publish articles and give presentations that help “fill the gap” about connecting young Indigenous people to their culture, from the eyes of the young people. These will also support Andrea’s dissertation. You will be considered a co-researcher on this project because we are developing the tools together.

All the printed and published materials will be approved by SCCFS and community members to ensure that the messaging is consistent with the community’s interests. All the materials can be made available upon request to any of the research participants.

Commercial Use of Results
It is possible that if we develop a graphic novel as an outcome of this research, that it could be printed and available for purchase with funds going to SCCFS’s youth programming or in a capacity that is appropriate for them.

Disposal of Data
The original data (e.g., field notes, interviews, consent forms, etc.) will remain password protected, with the password being available only to SCCFS and the research team. The PhD dissertation will be archived by the University of Victoria.

Contacts
Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include those indicated at the beginning of this form.

In addition, 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).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

______________________________	______________________________	________________
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

Visually Recorded Images/Data Participant or parent/guardian to provide initials, *only if you consent*:

- Photos may be taken of me for: Analysis _______ Dissemination* ________
- Videos may be taken of me for: Analysis _______ Dissemination* _________

*Even if no names are used, you may be recognizable if visual images are shown in the results.

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: ______________ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: ______________ (Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: ______________ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: ______________ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: ______________ (Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix C

SUMMARY OF KNOWLEDGE HOLDER'S DINNER DISCUSSIONS

How does coming of age look for urban Indigenous youth in care in Victoria and southern Vancouver Island?

In a ceremony, LGBTQ2S+ youth will feel honoured if they're acknowledged and reminded they're loved by their community, family, friends and told they always will be loved and supported. (Youth Participant)

There are three communities; Surrounded by Cedar (SCCFS), the urban community, and the home community. SCCFS has a community role as a cultural hub and advocate for culturally centered care. They hold the responsibility of being legal guardians to the youth in their care and facilitating the resources to ensure they have the security of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritually safe spaces.

All three communities can support these spaces by being supportive, involved, committed, and continuous. Qualities of these safe spaces include the youth being free to self-determine their identities, having access to role models/teachers, having resources to become educated on LGBTQ2S+ identities, provide context on social locations as Indigenous youth, and as places to experience healing, love, acceptance, empowerment, and curiosity. The community needs to be educated on these issues so they can provide support to the youth when they ask questions. Identifying assets, resources, and strengths in the urban community – like from "those who have come before" – will help SCCFS grow as a community knowledge holder at large.

Teachings that are part of a "traditional coming of age" also help cultivate these safe spaces. These teachings are intentionally healing and empowering and can teach life skills to prepare for future coming of ages that will continue throughout ones' life. This recognizes that coming of age and the associated teachings are a process, which reinforces the importance of continuity in the passing of teachings. Ceremonies to mark these milestones and connect youth to ancestral teachings and spiritual dimensions are connected to these, but are not the same. Although teachings are steeped in protocol, they will require adaptation to urban environments and contemporary times. The length of time, preparation, and specific ways of passing knowledge may not be feasible or reproducible, but the essence of the teachings can be passed, like "finding your way in the dark" or "having healthy relationships."

Coming of age teachings cannot be pan-Indigenized even though some teachings share underlying meanings. Because of this, home communities can support youth by sharing teachings, offering ceremony, or hosting youth. These can inform SCCFS in preparing their "coming of age" care plans, or more directly should it be deemed appropriate by both the youth and the organization, taught directly to the youth. Alternatively, for those youth who are not connected to home communities or who do not fully understand their identities as Indigenous people, SCCFS can take on the responsibility of coming of age ceremonies in the same way they support "Nest to Wings" ceremonies.

Coming of age protocols, teachings and ceremonies need to be adapted to urban contexts and respectful of the territory upon which the practices are taking place. Consultation with knowledge holders in that territory need to occur. It is recognized that

there will be differing opinions and points of view on how this should be undertaken, but it is important that these politics do not interfere with the safe space created for the youth. Some of the politics evolve to tensions between communities and prevent forward progression for the youth. Everybody agrees that they don't want that.

I imagined home community and urban/SCCFS community relationships each being situated on an island. The land bases are connected, but the depressions are covered by water (e.g., Salish Sea) and navigation between islands may be needed. What's under the water cannot be seen like history, inter-tribal tensions, but also the strong relationships that colonialism may have damaged but are still present.

Appendix D

CONSENT BOOKLETS

Connecting with coming-of-age teachings in Victoria

What does this look like?

WSIKEM ("place of clay"). Photo Courtesy of Rollie Haselden

Territory Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the territory of the Lkwengun peoples, today known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, whose relationships to this place have existed since time immemorial and continue to this day.

Welcome!

We want to know what you think coming of age means for urban Indigenous youth in care today.

Traditionally, coming of age is when young people:

- Learned about responsibilities to themselves and their communities;
- When they came into their own sources of spiritual power; and
- Learn how to respect the power of others.

The passing of these teachings has been interrupted, but reconnecting to them can help balance changes that happen during this time and help prepare for the future.

This means:

(i) Learning from knowledge holders and hearing from you!

(ii) Asking about how to honor different nations while respecting Lkwengun Territory protocol

(iii) Gathering this information together and sharing it

Knowledge Holder's Dinner

We had a dinner with community members on April 25, 2019. We asked them four questions:

1. What roles/responsibilities does Surrounded by Cedar have to make sure youth have a cultural coming of age?
2. How is the youth's home community involved?
3. How does this look in the urban context/city of Victoria?
4. How can the community support LGBTQ2S+ youth?

They have their ideas… but they also said :

ASK THE YOUTH WHAT THEY THINK!

The urban community can provide support and guidance through this time. They are your family too and because of this want to support your journey to adulthood and help other young people through this when they are ready.

"The youth's safety and choices come first"

Here are some of the words they shared about how they felt at our dinner:

What are your words?

Youth Workshops

You are invited to come to an "arts workshop" where we will ask you these same things. We will discuss "coming of age," different nation-specific teachings, and how teachings might have meaning for you.

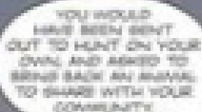
The workshop will start around 10 o'clock on either a Saturday or Sunday (depending on your gender) in early July and will include lunch.

We might talk about things like:

- How do coming of age ceremonies adapt to today? To cities?
- What cultural activities have you been part of?
- What about peer supports? Mentors?
- What questions would you ask a mentor or adult?

Live Graphic Recording

An artist will help record our conversations by drawing on a storyboard. The storyboards might be recorded in images like the ones on this page.



Sharing our stories outside the circle

We are going to work together to write a story. Part of this is getting it into a form to share with people around us so they know what you have to say. We might do this in a few different ways:

- Sharing some of the drawings from our sharing cicles
- Work on a story for a comic book
- Weave a peace banner together
- Write a report for Surrounded by Cedar, the University, and Island Health.

Just in case…

If at any time you feel anxious or certain emotions come up, Surrounded by Cedar leaders, Elders, and friends will be there for counsel. We will also be doing things like weaving a peace banner together, drawing, and other crafts that will help share in different ways and balance the talking.

Have fun!

These workshops will be fun, a place to learn, share, and create.
This work is going to help other youth coming up, your care team, and let the community know how you want to walk in the world.

STEPS TO PARTICIPATE

What is Free, Prior and Informed Consent?

- **Consent** here means that you are agreeing to be a part of this project
- You are **free** to decide if you want to join
- We will tell you what is happening **before** we start
- You let us know if you have enough **inform**ation to decide and in a way that makes sense to you - ask anything!!

We would like to "catch wisdoms" in words, in pictures, and in drawings.

Do you **consent** to let us include your voice this way? **Y / N**

Anything that we develop together will be shared with you and you can ask for it from Surrounded by Cedar or from Andrea.

What does voluntary participation mean?

- **It is up to you** if you want to be part of this project

- **You can say no** if you don't want to…

- If you say yes at first, and then decide later that you don't want to, that's ok too and **you don't have to explain**

If you share some of your ideas, they might be captured in our group drawings. If you decide part way through that you don't want to be part of the project we might not be able to take your ideas out of the drawings, but if they stay in, we won't tie your name or information to it.

Does that make sense? Y / N

Relationships

You will probably know other people who are working on the project including the Surrounded by Cedar team. Even if they ask you, remember, **you can say no if this isn't right for you**.

On-Going Consent

We will check in with you at different times to make sure you still want to be a part of the project.

Saying thank you

We are asking you to come on a weekend and share some of your stories and energy. We are providing everyone lunch and a snack for coming and **a gift of $100** as a way of offering thanks.

If you want to back out after you receive your gift (after the workshop), we will respect this and you don't have to give the gift back.

What about using my name?

If there are specific things you say or draw or share, do you want to use your name?

Y / N

Would you rather use another name? An animal? An avatar?

What name? ______________

Confidentiality?

Anything that is recorded will be protected by locking it up with Surrounded by Cedar and some of the project team.

What will happen to all the materials?

- Everything we gather will be kept with Surrounded by Cedar or the project team
- A copy of anything we put together will be given to you OR you will know how to find it
- The weaving will be donated to Surrounded by Cedar as a gift
- This project is supporting a university project and they will archive the material too

Who to contact with questions?

You can contact the following people with questions at any time:

Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services

- Jennifer Chuckry
- Sarah Underdown

University of Victoria

- Andrea Mellor

If you sign below, this tells us you understand what we have talked about, that your questions have been answered, and that you consent to be a part of this.

If you want to join, but don't want to sign… this is ok, ask about **"implied consent".**

______________________	______________________	__________
Your Name	Signature	Date

ONLY If you agree:

Yes, I am ok if you take pictures and videos during the workshop to include in knowledge sharing materials:

__________ (initials)

*Even if we don't use names, you might be recognized is we use pictures. Are you still ok with this?

ONLY if you agree:

I agree to having my name be used in this project:

__________ (initials)

I agree to my "quotes" being connected to my name:

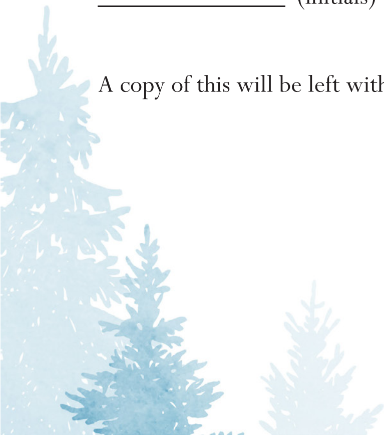
__________ (initials)

ONLY if you agree:

I agree that my work on this can be used in future projects: __________________ (initials)

I agree to be contacted in the future if someone wants to use my work: __________________ (initials)

A copy of this will be left with you and a copy will be kept with the team.



QELENSEN 'Bald Eagle'. BOKEĆEN, WSÁNEĆ Territory. Photo courtesy of Rollie Haselden

Mussi Cho

Sechanalyagh

Gayaxsixa

Thank you

Kʷukʷstéyp

Snachailya

Kleco Kleco

kw'as ho:y

Haa’wa

T'oyaxsim nisim

Gila’kasla

Tooyksim niin

HÍSW̱ ḴE

Kukwstsétsemc

Huy tseep q’u

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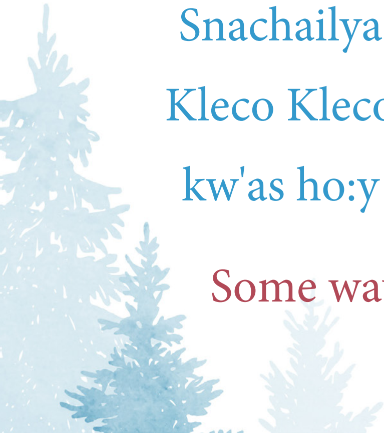

Some ways to say thank you

Kaska Dena

Tsilhqot'in

Heiltsuk

English

Nlaka'pamux

Carrier

Nuu-Chah-Nulth

Halq'eméyiem

Haida

Nisga'a

Kwakwaka'wakw

Gitxsan

Lkwungen

Secwepemc

Stz'uminus

Ayajuthem

...and their language group

Appendix E

BECOMING WOLFDEER: STORY GUIDE

Section No.	STORY	THEME	"QUOTE" OR *DESCRIPTION*	CoA Stage[13]
	Introduction			
1	Deer was told one day that she was going to move to Victoria, BC. She was told that it was in her best interest. Even though she was going to stay with her Auntie Deer who had a big cat she liked, she was sad that she couldn't stay with her mum. She knew she had her moods, but she was funny and loving too.	Support Networks	*The setting aligns with the landscape of Vancouver Island and the ancestry of many of the youth in SCCFS's care. This speaks to youth having to relocate and starting one of their journeys of walking in two worlds; reserve, urban.* "I lived in Vancouver before, then I got taken away." [TS, youth] *The two-world theme is experienced in many ways, so this quote is relevant throughout* "Sometimes we have to walk in both worlds. Colonization has impacted language and culture." *BD Boys sharing circle* *The foregrounding of FatCat reflects how the youth talked a lot about their pets and how they made them happy.*	
2	One afternoon, Auntie was showing Deer how to make fry bread and fish heads... Auntie said, "...you need to learn this so you can take care of yourself and your family."		"I learned how to bead a feather, make jam, make drums, cedar head bands... cook – salmon heads, fire bread, seafood chowder, butter... So when we're older, we know how to prepare meals." (RT[14], youth)	*Preparation*

[13] Coming of age stages identified by van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1967 and 80s, *Betwixt and in Between*); Preparation, Separation, Transition, Re-emergence

[14] Some youth were clear that they wanted to be identified by name. If we did not, that seemed like we are disregarding their consent, so we agreed to use their initials.

	Her young cousin Bear plunks down at the table and teases, “what’s for dinner, Cuz?!” Uncle Bear laughs, “Ha! You ask, you make!”		“CoA is also the daily stuff. Responsibilities like chores, cleaning, cooking, part-time work... [when I was 13] I made the mistake of asking what was for dinner – “whatever you’re making!” [and I] made spaghetti.” (Men’s sharing circle)	
3	Deer is so mad, she thinks they are making fun of her. She storms to her room in tears, FatCat in toe, and slams the door, “aaaaagggghhhh why won’t people just leave me alone?!!”	Support networks/safe spaces	*Some youth expressed feelings of being misunderstood, of having adults or others perceive them one way, but they feel another way. For example, CT shared that she is perceived as being extroverted but sometimes needs space to stay grounded. In her case, she connects with things that remind her of family or walks in the forest.*	
4	Bear looks confused. Auntie says without looking away from the stove, “Give her space, she is learning.”		*Adolescence can be an emotional time and there can be many different experiences happening at once. Auntie recognizes that she is passing through this life stage, but she is also coping with many different things... this can reflect a “trauma-informed” way of supporting young people that is also cultural.* “...changes are different for everyone. Happens at different ages, transitions and transformations.” (female, adult)	
	WolfDeer starts to Despair			
5	Deer looks down at the beading she is working on. She rests her hand on FatCat’s soft back and exhales sadly. Her mother taught her to bead when she was little. Usually it calms her, but today she sees the beading and memories come flooding back and she starts to cry. Her tears won’t stop. They spill onto her beading and start filling the room... Water spills out the window and soon, her tears have filled the streets and she is paddling hard with FatCat to stay above a storm!	Self-awareness	*Deer turns to an activity that she uses to calm down; it may be viewed as a “coping mechanism”. In this case, it is a cultural activity, beading, that is often taught or passed down through generations. Today the memory of receiving the teachings from her mother triggers her physically and emotionally and she isn’t able to recover. The intensity of these emotions is reflected in the volume of her tears, crying an ocean.* *This transitions the story to her dream. The seamlessness is important because dreams are important teachers and have a fluidity with everyday living.*	*Separation*
6	She looks down and sees that she is paddling with wolf paws. Terrified, she sees that she has become a wolf. Deer becomes wolf and sees the shore	Self-awareness	*Deer is becoming aware of her physical and cultural identity, but this can be confusing and scary. One of her cultural identities, being wolf clan, is showing itself literally; but*	

	and paddles hard with the strength of a wolf She collapses, exhausted. FatCat, loyally, sits by her side.		*her name reveals that she is also Deer clan. What is expressed depends on each person. Physically, her identity is transforming from child to adult.* "It is a really confusing time to be an Indigenous person." (*Adult)*	*Transition 1... confusion*
7	When she wakes up, she sees her ocean of tears. It reminds her so much of her mum's home territory.	Self-awareness	*Another piece of her identity, her connection to place and family, is being revealed and this remembrance expresses the importance of genetic or blood memory.*	
	WolfDeer finds her voice			
8	A raven has been watching Deer from a tall cedar. The raven lifts... She tries to call for it, "Wait! Yip, yip, yip!!!" She starts to chase Raven, learning to run with her wolf paws. [FatCat is clinging to her fur]. But she is so focused on Raven, she doesn't see that she's running up a bluff. She stops just in time to not fall over the edge. She starts to cry again. "Yip yip yip... I thought Raven was going to help me, but it tricked me... Yip yip yip... Ahwooooo."	Empowerment Self-awareness	*Deer is gaining strength from her identity – she is finding her "wolf gifts" like speed to chase... but her paws are growing so fast she might trip a bit; her voice is developing... but she is still a puppy, so it is a yip instead of a howl. By chasing Raven, she is learning by doing and learning through connecting to the land (i.e., navigating the forest, chasing the animals, etc.).* *One of the teachers shared about his CoA experience:* "As the uncles spoke, in your life you're going to be the only person around; [*it's*] up to you to hear, see and feel about that around you" (BD *adult)*	
9	WolfDeer stops.... Ahwooo? She can speak wolf? She tries again... "Ahwoooooooo, yip." WolfDeer picks herself up, she tries again, but louder... "Ahwooo ahwooo ahwoooooooo." FatCat watches. Raven watches. They see Deer becoming her own wolf. Her nose reaches high as she discovers her gift of scent. Her ears grow tall as	Self-awareness Empowerment	*Two references here, (1) connecting to and learning language; it is in you, but you need to practice; (2) becoming physically mature.* "A lot of our teaching come from language and offers our worldview... speak the language in any amount you know" (BD, adult) *Watching Deer find her voice speaks to letting youth find their own way and trusting this.*	*Transition 2... Acceptance*

	she discovers her gift of hearing. She sees from the top of the bluff, the life in her tear-ocean and starts to understand her strength. Deer looks to Raven. Trickster teacher.		"...I don't mean to be mean to my mom, but she doesn't understand that we have a brain and can think for ourselves. We can do more than what our IEPs *(independent education plans)* can show" (CT, youth) *And yet, when individuals are alone, gifts lose meaning and cannot become stronger. This leads to the importance of the community coming together to support young people.* *At first, Deer could not see that Raven was helping her find her strength by relying on her senses to connect with her inner strengths. Raven helped by bringing her to a place where she could learn to use her gifts.* *"*Learning your culture keeps you alive." (female, adult)	
WolfDeer finds an unlikely mentor				
10	*~Rustle, rustle, rustle~* "What's that?!" WolfDeer feels her hackles. *~Rustle, rustle, rustle~* A deer peeks out of the woods. "Yiiip!", she runs and hides. But she sees this is not an adult. But it is not a fawn either. Sort of in-between like she is.		*Fox is a relatable character; she sees a quality – his youth – that she can relate which helps to assuage some fears.*	
11	"I'm Fox. Your howls sure can carry! They sent me out to find you!"	Belonging Support Networks	*Deer was not aware that anyone could hear her, she was focused on finding her voice. A finding has been a focus on self. However, introducing Fox both brings in a male character, but also draws her out of herself. She realizes that others can hear her voice:*	

	“Who sent you? Wait, how are you a fox? You act like a deer!” WolfDeer asks. My uncles told me during the change, that my deer gifts showed my spirit.” Deer, still confused,” ...what change?!” “Hey, I’m just the messenger!! Come on, we’re late!” says Fox, kind of embarrassed.	Self-awareness Self-continuity	“If you say your language every single day, your ancestors will hear you and give you good things” (RT, Interview) “When I introduce myself, I want to say it in Gitxsan. Then they’ll know you speak your language.” (TS, youth) “Sitting in silence, just me in that space; knowing that not far, around me there was friends and family... it’s powerful in that sense ... be able to walk with a good heart.” (BD *adult)* *Deer is challenged in her perceptions of outward appearances which can contribute to confusion in recognizing your true self. This also speaks to diversity amoung peers, yet shared journeys and perhaps shared ancestry: “*[There is the] ‘crabs in a bucket’ syndrome. The ultra-Indian. Some people are righteous about this.... ‘You aren’t doing it right’ [they criticize] rather than [give] gentle teachings about how to be Indigenous...” (adult female) *Speaking to the importance of honouring your gifts:* "Be proud of who you are. It's an important thing. Just be yourself" (LC, youth) *Deer is reminded about the physicality of coming of age, what it can mean, and responsibilities that may come from this: “*It means that you’re growing up. Becoming a young woman or man. When you get your period, moontime, cleansing the body for a baby, getting ready.” (TS, Interview) *Although Fox is there to support Deer, he is still a young male and gets embarrassed talking about women’s topics with Deer. He passes this off to the aunties.*	
	WolfDeer Belongs			
13	They turn to run down the bluff and towards the beach. The closer they get, the more drumming and singing she hears. Fox leads her to the aunties. Something is familiar, Deer thinks to herself. “I’ve seen this before.	Belonging	*Fox is leading her to the coming of age ceremony. This is an intergenerational community event where she will stand strongly with her peers. Deer is remembering*	*Re-emergence 1... coming*

	At my cousins' coming of age." She remembered how she looked up to them as they stood before the families, new life givers and protectors. The aunties waste no time. They begin to straighten her tail, clean her paws, and all start talking at once. She sees this preparation happening with other in-betweeners. At the end of the night, she was so sleepy having eaten and sung and danced with her kin. She cuddles up close to the others, closes her eyes and drifts off to sleep. FatCat curls into her furry tummy.	Empowerment	*again, this time a ceremony she attended as a little girl. This can be a reflection on her new phase of life, the moving forward.* [AM]: Do you see coming of age as looking forward? [LC]: Looking forward and being ready for obstacles *For young women, the aunties support the preparation and for young men, the uncles. This may be in different types of teachings, ceremonies, rites of passage, etc. During the workshop, we asked some young women what advice they would give to the young six-year old who was with us:* a. "[Having a good relationship means that] he needs to respect me. I want to trust him. He's kind, honest, but not too honest that it hurts my feelings" (MC, youth) *b.* "You need to take care of yourself. Don't let people treat you badly. Be a strong woman. And speak your mind." (TS, youth) *c.* "There is a component of trust with guardians...[like] being able to walk home, be home by myself, being trusted... Not doing what I'm not supposed to do...[have the] knowledge that I can manage myself – makes me think of discipline (love and respect)" *Boys sharing circle*	*through transition*
	WolfDeer (Re)Awakens			
14	Deer reawakens. Her auntie heard her cry out in her sleep. She leaves her to wake up slowly because she knows about nightmares, she used to have them too. Deer sees that Auntie is looking out the window at a raven sitting on a branch. Stroking FatCat's back, she tells Auntie about her dream, about how she was so scared and thought she was alone. She told her about Fox,	Cultivating Safe Spaces	*The raven on the branch represents a connection with the spirit world.* *Auntie knows what Deer is going through and does not want to scare Deer by shaking her awake. She understands that Deer carries a history with her and that she needs to understand it in her way, in her time. The way she is nurturing reflects culturally centered trauma-informed care. Reflecting that Auntie has deer ancestry tells of her*	

	the aunties, uncles, and all the cousins, and how they danced all night. Aunty just listened; this was one of her deer gifts.		*blood connection to Deer, but that it isn't only that which makes them family. I think deer must be good listeners.* "Let her know she has a bunch of support in difficult times" (LC, youth)	
15	Deer says, "Because I can transform from deer to wolf, I am strong and soft at the same time. I know that when I speak wolf, there will be others to hear me and they will help me find a good life."	Belonging Self-continuity	*Dualities with the self – strong, soft, loud, quiet...* "The bear with flower crown resonated a lot... talk of how its seen as a tough and strong and sometimes scary animal, but the flower crown made it less scary and showed how we have different sides to us and how we can be strong and tough but soft and pretty." (RT, youth)	
16	They look out the window from their apartment in Victoria and see the wolf, the bear, the deer, the eagle; all clans in the sky. Auntie says, "you carry the strength of your ancestors and your ancestors will carry that strength too. You carry this in your name too, WolfDeer" Deer sleeps soundly through the rest of the night, FatCat tucked in close.	Belonging Support Networks	*You can connect with your ancestors in the city too. Seeing many clans in the sky helps to remind that there are connections in diversity too.* "Teachings involve helping to cope in an urban setting... need to learn and honour many cultures, but teachings also have general elements... grandfather sun, grandmother moon" (female, adult)	
	WolfDeer Becomes Teacher			
17	When she wakes up, she feels different. She isn't sure why, but there is a peace in her heart.	Self-continuity	"You just feel different after. Feel older, more mature. You just let the younger self in you out; the child" (LC, youth) [AM]: Do you feel different? [*after your CoA ceremony]* [TS]: Weird, I had this feeling, I don't know what it was. It felt like I wasn't a child anymore	
18	She sees her beading and sits down to work on it. Some of the sad memories come back. But she closes her eyes and sees her paws. She hears	Self-awareness	*Deer is almost triggered by the memory stored in her beading, but she uses the teachings she learned in the dream to work through it. This speaks to culturally informed ways to cope and self-regulate emotions.*	*Re-emergence 2...*

	the drumming, sees Raven, and takes a deep breath. She takes out the rows that were messy from the sad thoughts before and keeps beading.		"What to do when [something] triggers traumas from youth? How to recognize the old traumas that can resurface and to draw strength from this." (Female, adult) *Conversation with youth about how cultural activities help to face obstacles:* [AM]: How does beading help strengthen? [LC]: It calms me down. It's like a healing thing. There's no point if you have bad energy or are in a bad mood. [AM]: What happens? [LC]: Your finished product doesn't come out how you want it to be.	*becoming a teacher*
19	Bear knocks on the door, "...hey cuz, you ok?" Deer and FatCat look up from her beading, "Ya, I had this crazy dream I want to tell you about."	Self-continuity	*Deer has now emerged through her coming of age to a place where she may begin to mentor the younger ones.*	

Appendix F

GRAPHIC NOVEL

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

HAY'SXW'QA SI'EM LEKWUNGEN ELTH'TEL'NEXW, HAY'SXW'QA SI'EM LEKWUNGEN TUNG'EXW, HAY'SXW'QA SI'EM LEKWUNGEN XA'SA
THANK YOU RESPECTED PLACE TO SMOKE HERRING PEOPLE, THANK YOU PLACE TO SMOKE HERRING PEOPLE'S LANDS, THANK YOU PLACE TO SMOKE HERRING PEOPLE'S SACRED WATERS,
THLANINULTH HAY'SXW'QA SI'EM A'NELTH HALI, CHAY, YE'YAH'SUNG STAY'THA EN'SNE I'EY'MUT TUNG'EXW, I'EY'MUT XA'SA
WE THANK YOU RESPECTED FOR ALLOWING US TO LIVE, WORK, PLAY ON YOUR BEAUTIFUL LANDS, BEAUTIFUL SACRED WATERS.

PROJECT AND COMMUNITY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WE WISH TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO THE YOUTH WHOSE VOICES GUIDED THIS PROJECT. WE RAISE OUR HANDS TO THE KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS, AND STAFF OF SURROUNDED BY CEDAR CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES WHO TOOK THE TIME TO BE WITH US. THE SHARING AT THE DINNER AND THE WORKSHOPS HELPED TO GUIDE US IN DOING THIS PROJECT IN A GOOD WAY.
SURROUNDED BY CEDAR RAISES ITS HANDS IN GRATITUDE TO THOSE WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THE AGENCY OVER THE YEARS, TO THOSE WHO ENVISIONED THIS ORGANIZATION AND WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN ITS DEVELOPMENT, AND TO THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES WE WALK WITH EACH DAY.

CREDITS

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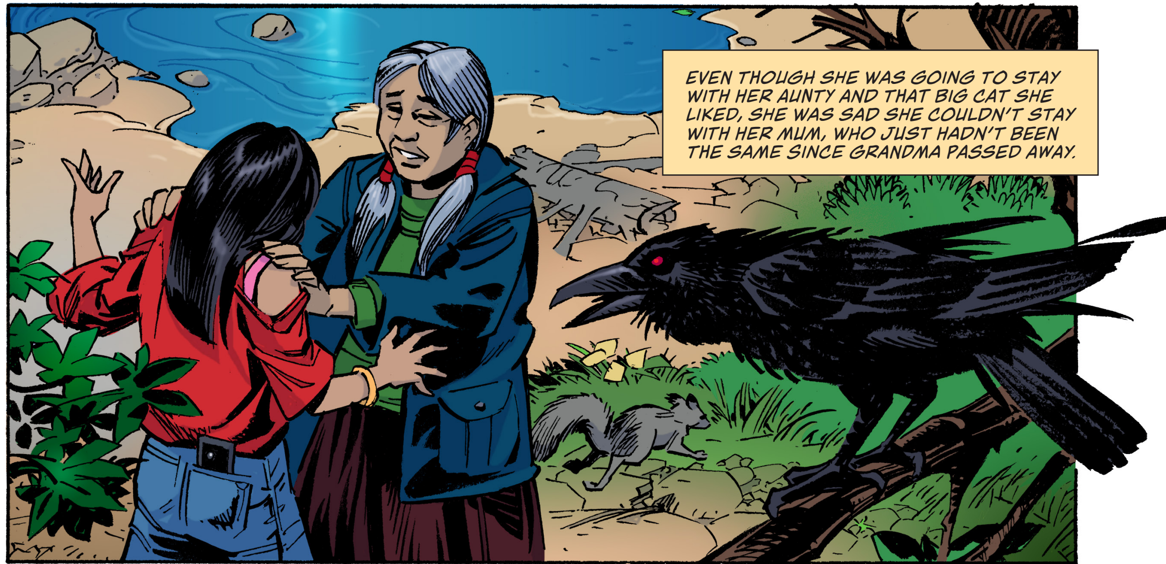
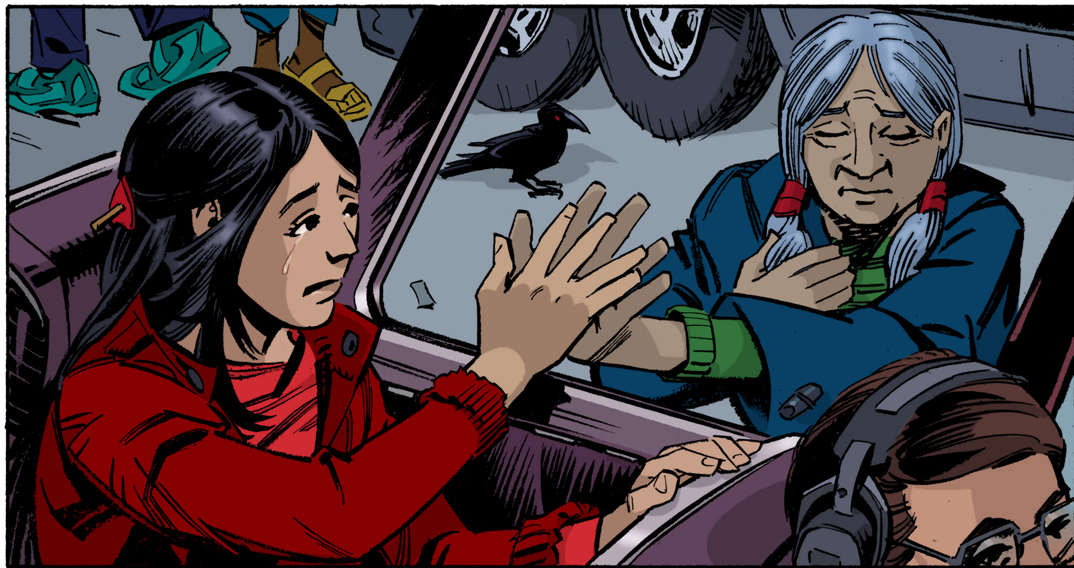
BECOMING WOLF!

STEACY-LEIALOHA


EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS GOING TO STAY WITH HER AUNTY AND THAT BIG CAT SHE LIKED, SHE WAS SAD SHE COULDN'T STAY WITH HER MUM, WHO JUST HADN'T BEEN THE SAME SINCE GRANDMA PASSED AWAY.



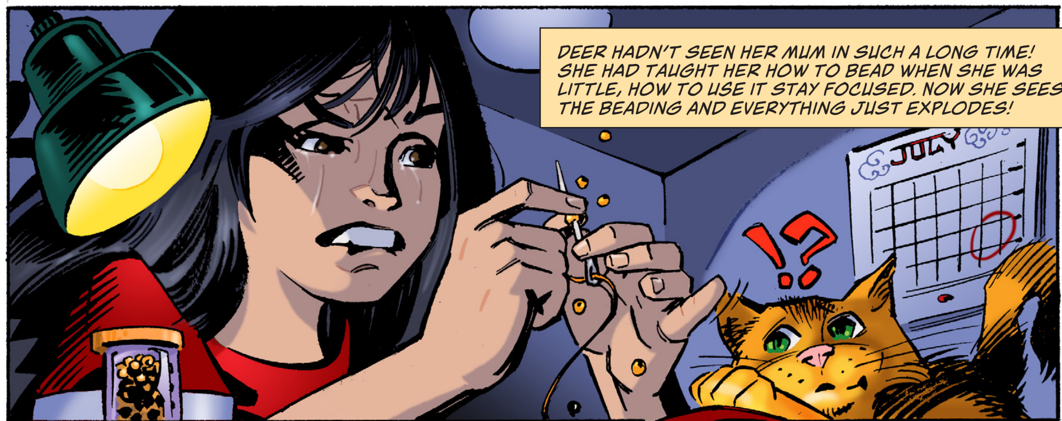
WELCOME TO THE CITY, DEER - WE ARE SO HONOURED TO HAVE YOU!

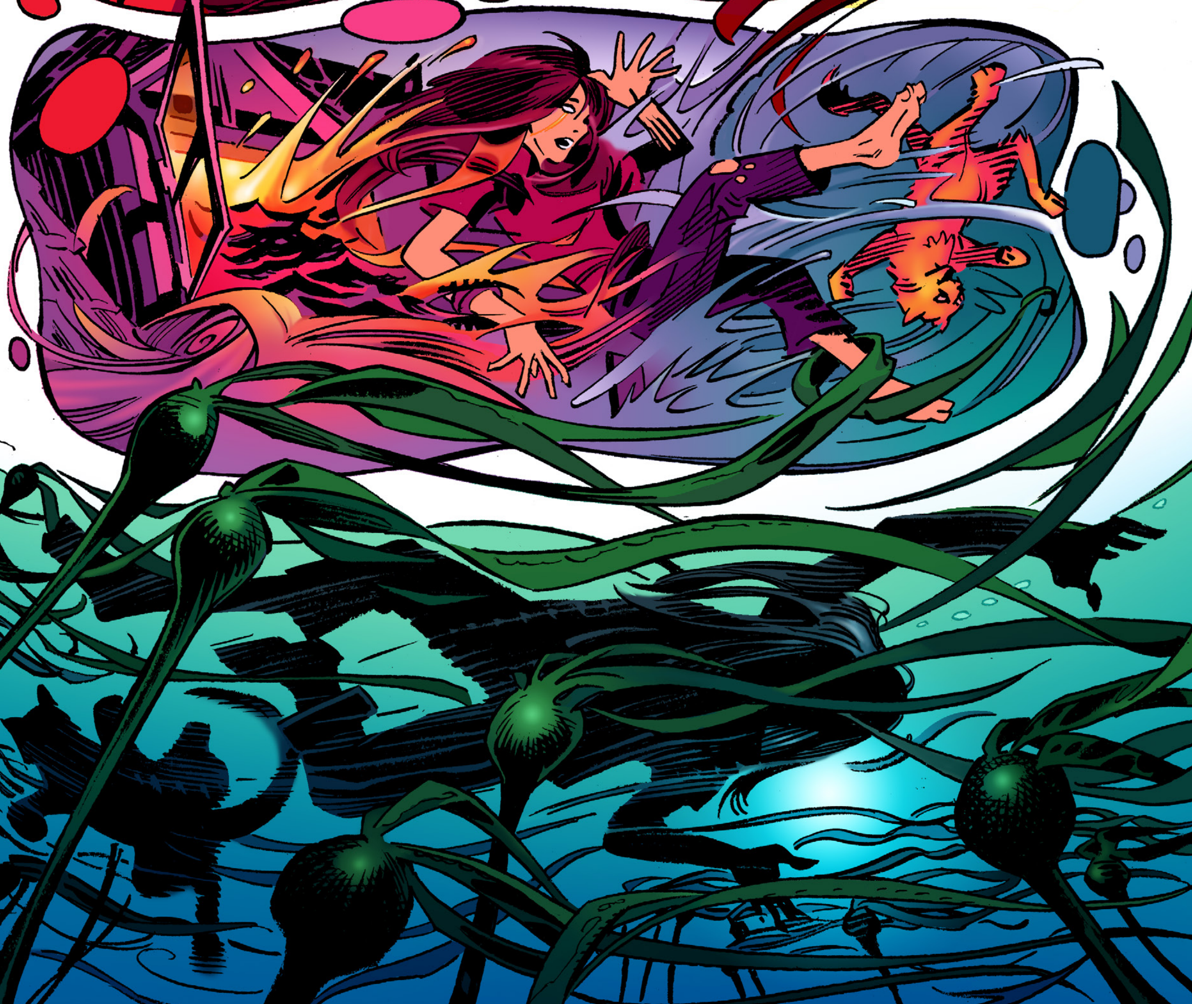
...MONTHS LATER, AUNTY WAS SHOWING DEER HOW TO MAKE FRY BREAD AND FISH HEADS.
YOU NEED TO LEARN THIS SO YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY.

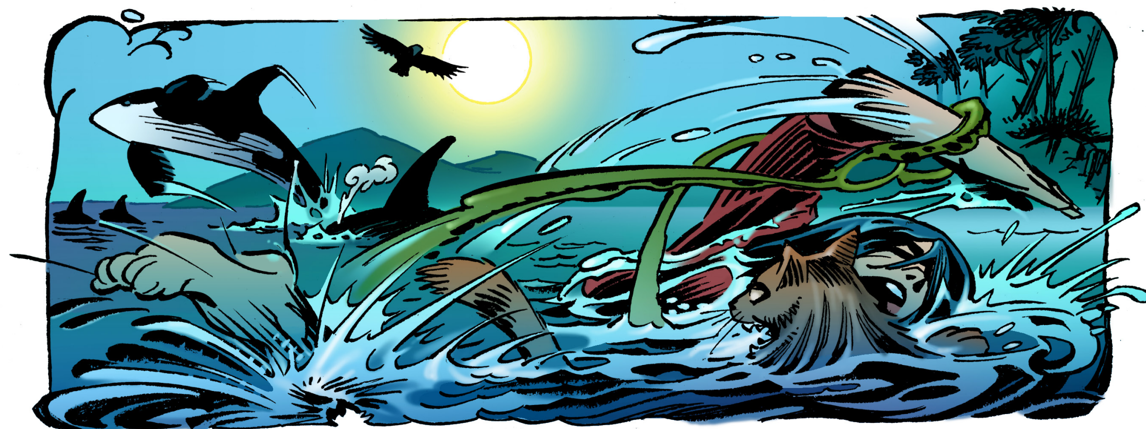
WHAT'S FOR DINNER, CUZ?!
HA! YOU ASK, YOU MAKE!

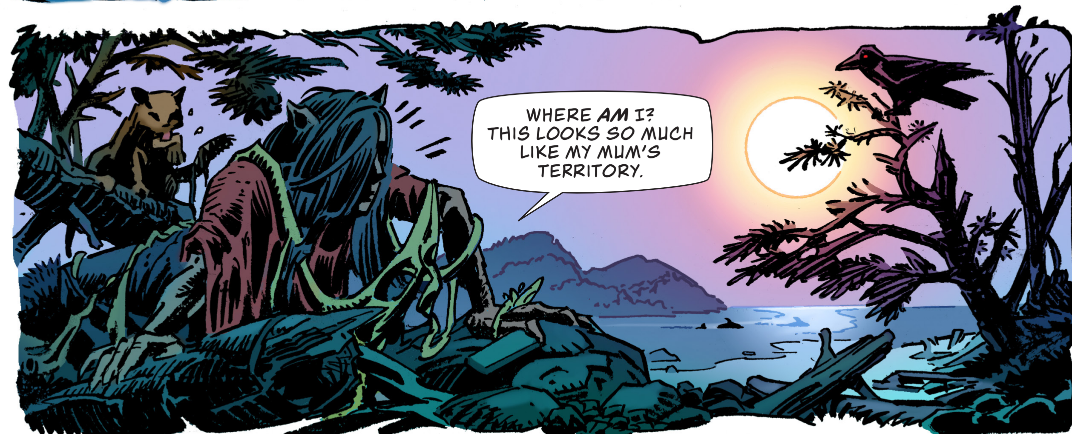
AAAAAGGGGHHHH! WHY WON'T PEOPLE JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!?!

SLAM!
GIVE HER SPACE. HER BODY IS CHANGING, AND IT CAN BE CONFUSING.


DEER HADN'T SEEN HER MUM IN SUCH A LONG TIME! SHE HAD TAUGHT HER HOW TO BEAD WHEN SHE WAS LITTLE, HOW TO USE IT STAY FOCUSED. NOW SHE SEES THE BEADING AND EVERYTHING JUST EXPLODES!
!?
JULY






WHERE AM I? THIS LOOKS SO MUCH LIKE MY MUM'S TERRITORY.

YIP YIP YIP... AHWOOOOO!

WAIT! YIP, YIP, YIP!!!

AHWOOOO - YIKES!

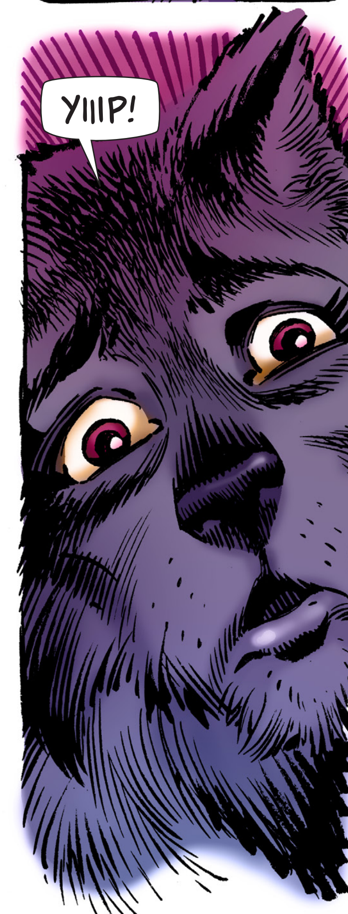
AHWOOO...
AHWOOO!!!

YIP YIP YIP...
I THOUGHT RAVEN WAS GOING TO HELP ME, BUT IT TRICKED ME...

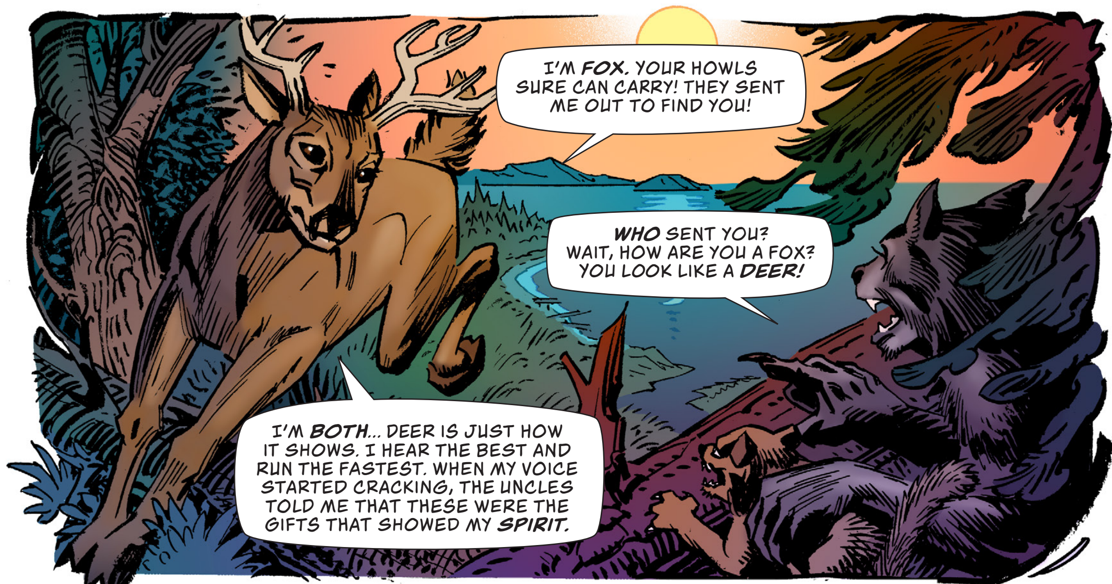
WHAT THE - !?!

SNIFF...
SNIFF-SNIFF!

WHAT'S THAT?!


YIIIP!

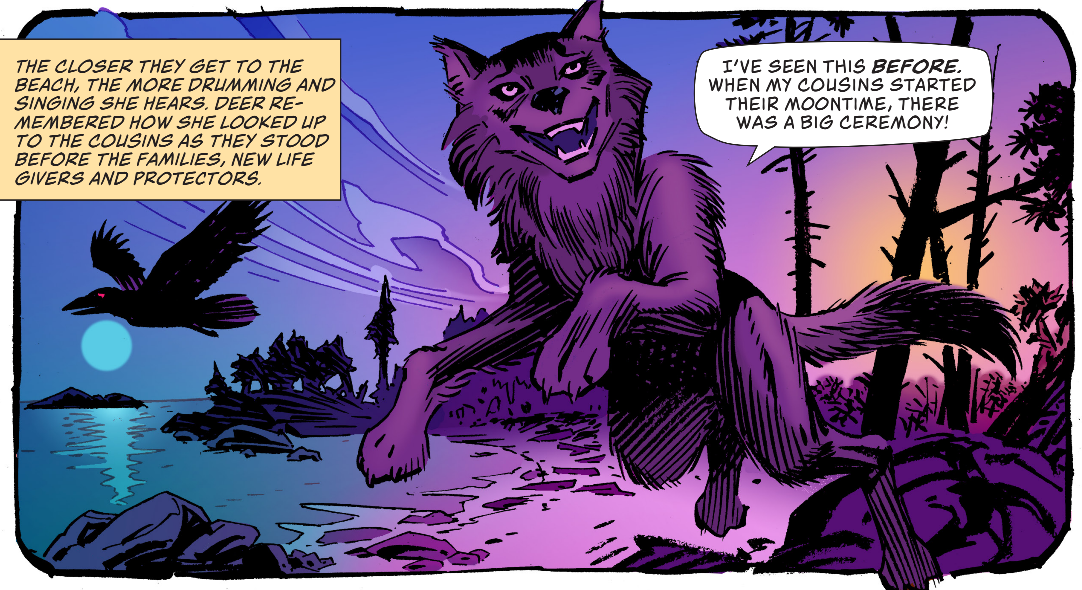
WAIT!
DON'T RUN!


I'M FOX. YOUR HOWLS SURE CAN CARRY! THEY SENT ME OUT TO FIND YOU!
WHO SENT YOU? WAIT, HOW ARE YOU A FOX? YOU LOOK LIKE A DEER!
I'M BOTH... DEER IS JUST HOW IT SHOWS. I HEAR THE BEST AND RUN THE FASTEST. WHEN MY VOICE STARTED CRACKING, THE UNCLES TOLD ME THAT THESE WERE THE GIFTS THAT SHOWED MY SPIRIT.

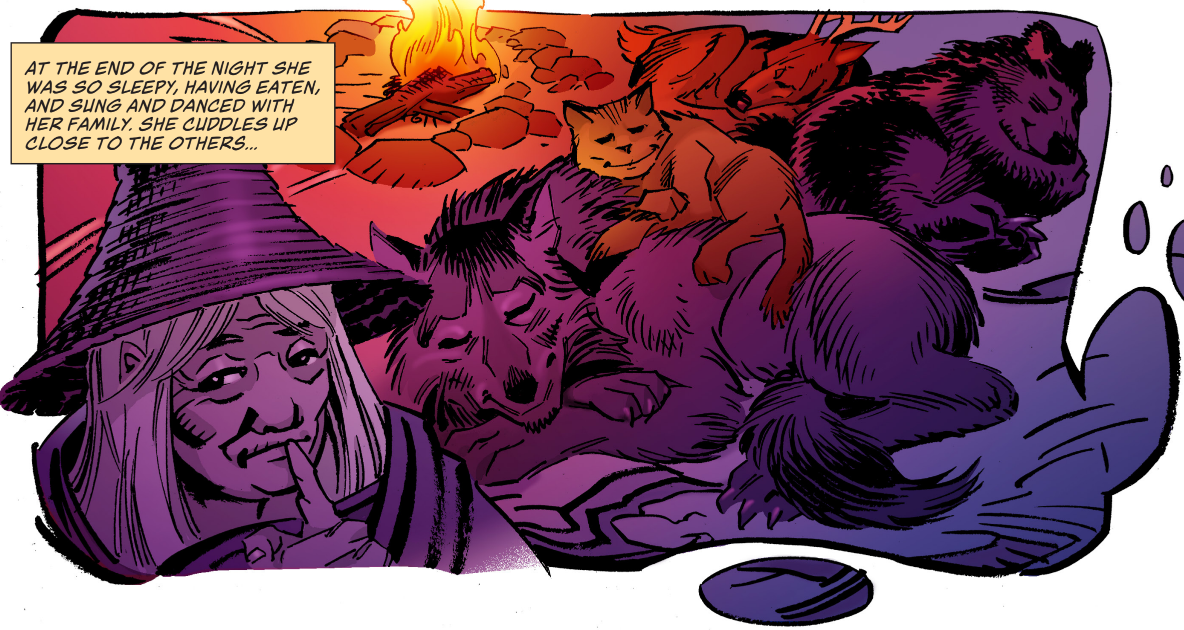
BUT WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?! I DIDN'T WAKE UP LIKE THIS!
HEY, I'M JUST THE MESSENGER!

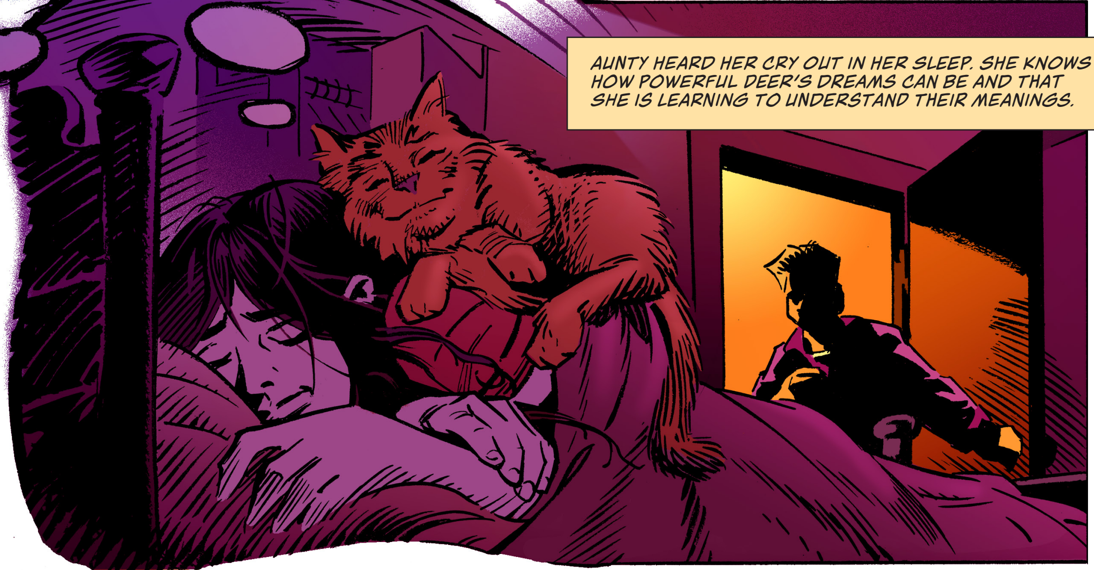
I'M HERE TO BRING YOU TO YOUR AUNTIES. THEY'RE PREPARING YOUR CEREMONY, AND THEY'LL LET YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.

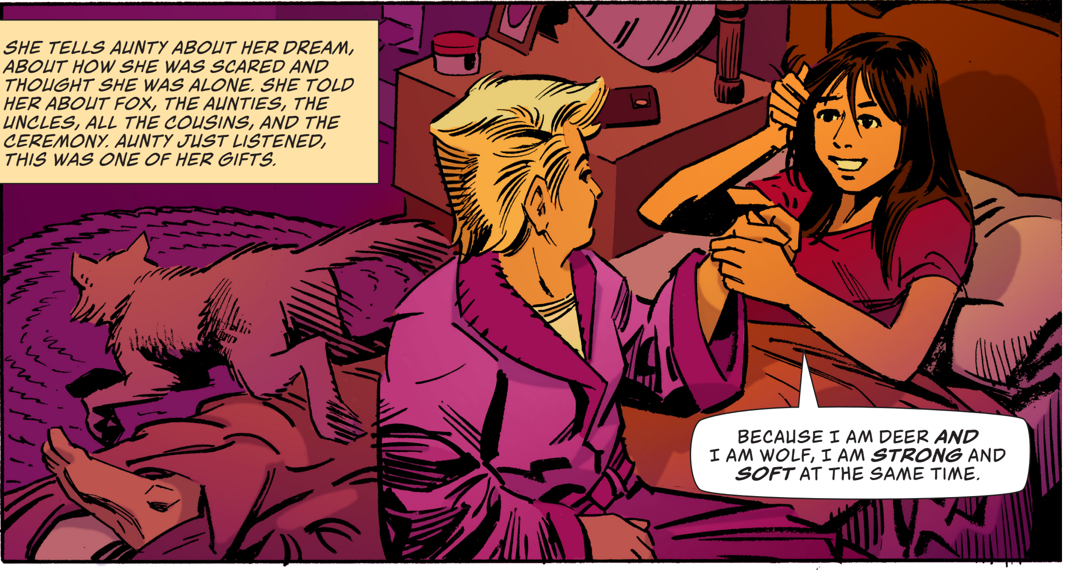
BUT... IS IT GOING TO HURT?! WHAT DO I DO, I DON'T KNOW HOW--
I WAS SCARED AT FIRST TOO, BUT WE'LL ALL HELP YOU FIGURE IT OUT. SEE HOW YOUR PEOPLE LIT THAT FIRE FOR YOU TO FIND YOUR WAY?


THE CLOSER THEY GET TO THE BEACH, THE MORE DRUMMING AND SINGING SHE HEARS. DEER RE-MEMBERED HOW SHE LOOKED UP TO THE COUSINS AS THEY STOOD BEFORE THE FAMILIES, NEW LIFE GIVERS AND PROTECTORS.
I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE. WHEN MY COUSINS STARTED THEIR MOONTIME, THERE WAS A BIG CEREMONY!

THE AUNTIES WASTE NO TIME. THEY BEGIN TO STRAIGHTEN HER TAIL, CLEAN HER PAWS, AND THEN THEY ALL START TALKING TO HER AT ONCE. DEER LOOKS AROUND AND SEES OTHER COUSINS... THEY ALL LOOK A LITTLE NERVOUS. SHE'S GLAD SHE ISN'T ALONE...


AT THE END OF THE NIGHT SHE WAS SO SLEEPY, HAVING EATEN, AND SUNG AND DANCED WITH HER FAMILY. SHE CUDDLES UP CLOSE TO THE OTHERS...

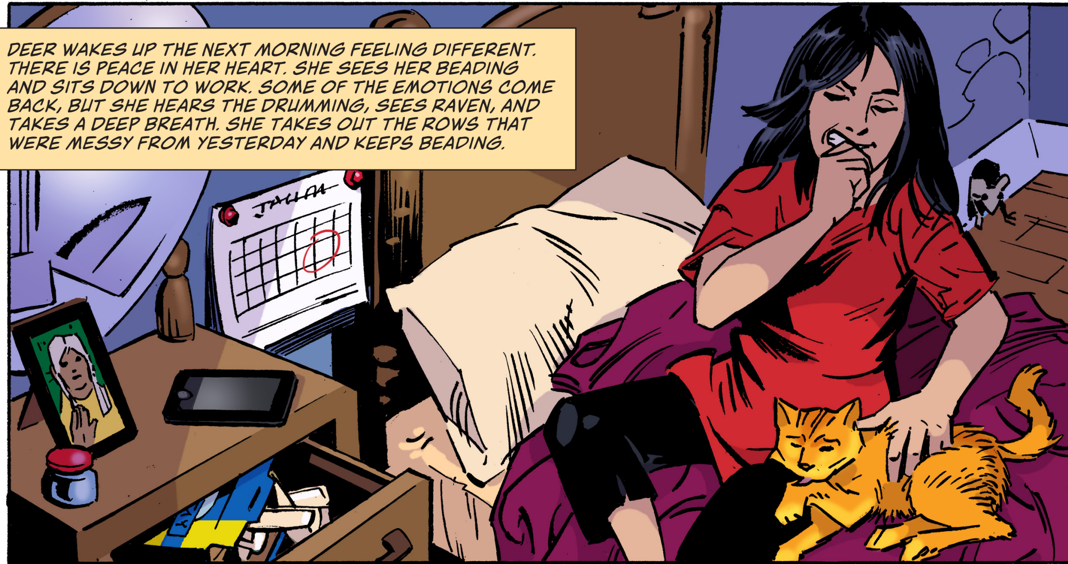

AUNTY HEARD HER CRY OUT IN HER SLEEP. SHE KNOWS HOW POWERFUL DEER'S DREAMS CAN BE AND THAT SHE IS LEARNING TO UNDERSTAND THEIR MEANINGS.

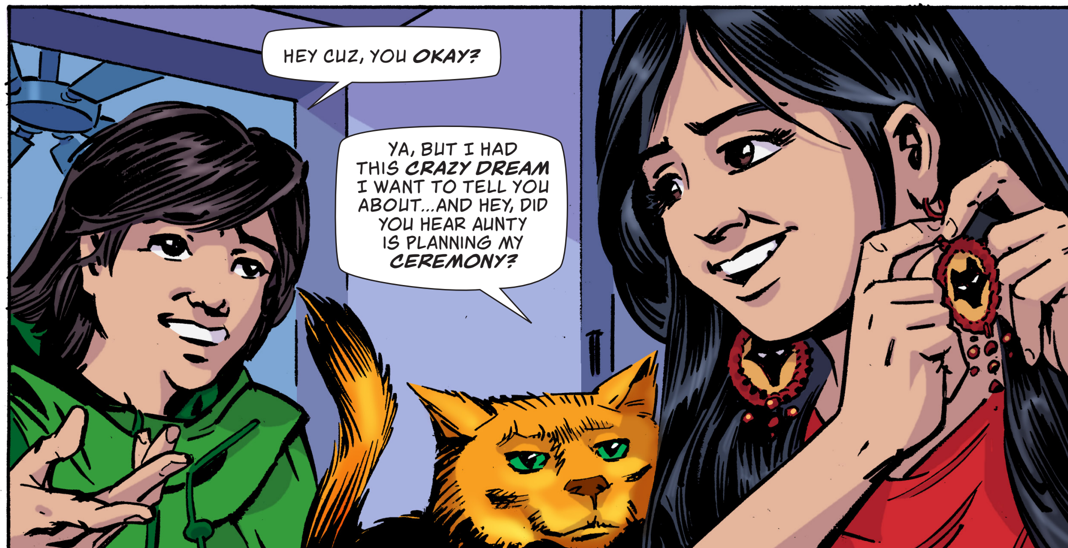

SHE TELLS AUNTY ABOUT HER DREAM, ABOUT HOW SHE WAS SCARED AND THOUGHT SHE WAS ALONE. SHE TOLD HER ABOUT FOX, THE AUNTIES, THE UNCLES, ALL THE COUSINS, AND THE CEREMONY. AUNTY JUST LISTENED, THIS WAS ONE OF HER GIFTS.
BECAUSE I AM DEER AND I AM WOLF, I AM STRONG AND SOFT AT THE SAME TIME.

I KNOW THAT WHEN I SPEAK WOLF, MY PEOPLE WILL HEAR ME AND HELP ME TO FIND A GOOD LIFE.

YOU CARRY THE STRENGTH OF YOUR ANCESTORS, AND YOU WILL SHARE THAT STRENGTH WITH FUTURE GENERATIONS.

THEY WILL ALWAYS WALK WITH YOU!
TOMORROW WE'LL GET BUSY PLANNING FOR YOUR CEREMONY!





ABOUT THIS PROJECT AND INDIGENOUS COMING OF AGE

(RE)CONNECTING TO INDIGENOUS COMING OF AGE TEACHINGS IS PART OF SURROUNDED BY CEDAR'S MISSION TO CONNECT YOUTH TO SPIRIT AND IDENTITY THROUGH FAMILIAL, HEREDITARY, AND CULTURAL LINKAGES BECAUSE THESE ARE PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT PROMOTE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING AMONGST INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. COMING OF AGE TEACHINGS ARE GROUNDED IN WISDOM HELD BY ELDERS AND KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS, AND ARE SHARED THROUGH SONGS, STORIES, CEREMONIES, AND TRADITIONAL RITES OF PASSAGE. (RE)CONNECTING WITH THESE TEACHINGS SUPPORTS COMMUNITY HEALING, WELLNESS, AND RESILIENCE, AND HELPS TO PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THEIR ROLES IN CARRYING THIS WISDOM FORWARD IN A GOOD WAY.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE MANY INDIGENOUS NATIONS ACROSS TURTLE ISLAND, AND THEY HAVE DISTINCT LANGUAGES, STORIES, BELIEFS, AND TRADITIONS ROOTED IN THEIR UNIQUE TERRITORIES. THESE NATIONS UNITE IN URBAN LANDSCAPES, AND THIS DIVERSITY IS REFLECTED IN VICTORIA'S INDIGENOUS YOUTH COMMUNITY. THIS PROJECT BROUGHT TOGETHER LOCAL YOUTH, ELDERS, AND INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS ALLIES, TO DISCUSS HOW INDIGENOUS YOUTH WHO ARE IN FOSTER CARE OR LIVING AWAY FROM HOME CAN ACCESS CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE AND RELEVANT COMING OF AGE RESOURCES. EACH PERSON SHARED PERSPECTIVES SHAPED BY THEIR WORLDVIEWS AND PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SPIRITUAL SELVES.

SURROUNDED BY CEDAR CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

SURROUNDED BY CEDAR'S HISTORY BEGAN IN 1993 AND THROUGH COLLECTIVE EFFORTS, IT RECEIVED ITS STATUS AS A DELEGATED ABORIGINAL AGENCY SERVING THE URBAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN VICTORIA IN 2002. SINCE ITS EARLY DAYS, SURROUNDED BY CEDAR HAS HELD STRONG TO THEIR MISSION OF PROVIDING CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STRONGLY ROOTED IN INDIGENOUS CULTURAL VALUES AND WORLD VIEWS WHILE ENSURING URBAN INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND YOUTH GROW UP CONNECTED TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE. THEY CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE URBAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY, WORKING TO RECLAIM TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS OF CARING FOR AND PROTECTING CHILDREN SO NO CHILD OR YOUTH WILL BE PLACED INTO CARE.

SURROUNDED BY CEDAR'S YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

THE YOUTH INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT COME FROM MANY DIFFERENT NATIONS AND WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR THEIR OPEN HEARTS AND SHARING IN WAYS THAT ALLOWED THIS PROJECT TO COME TO BE.

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

BECOMING WOLF IS PART OF A COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECT SUPPORTING ANDREA MELLOR'S DOCTORAL RESEARCH (SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF HEALTH PROGRAM). THE PROJECT HAS BEEN SUPPORTED BY DENISE CLOUTIER, PHD (DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY), NICK XEMOLTW CLAXTON, PHD (SCHOOL OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE), KAREN KOBAYASHI, PHD (DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY), AND RENÉE MONCHALIN, PHD (SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL POLICY).

WE HOPE THAT THROUGH OUR EFFORTS, WE HAVE DEMONSTRATED DOING RESEARCH IN A "GOOD WAY" AND HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO RELATIONSHIP BUILDING BETWEEN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND THE UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA.