If Suit People Are Going to Listen: A Strengths-Based Perspective on Indigenous Homeless Youth

by

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Abstract

Indigenous youth are overrepresented within homelessness and form approximately 20 percent of the total youth homeless population in Canada that uses emergency shelters. While extensive studies have been conducted and new practices have been put in place in an effort to reduce the number of individuals experiencing homelessness, the number of Indigenous youth journeying into homelessness continues to increase. This suggests that the solutions implemented to date have inadequately addressed the needs of Indigenous youth and the situations integral to their worlds.

The purpose of this research was to explore Indigenous youths' experiences of homelessness that promote positive identity development. It used a community-based Indigenous methodology. Building on research by Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics with the stories of Indigenous homeless youth, this research was centered at the intersection of Indigenous youth homelessness and their engagement in behaviours affected by past and present events that impact their processes of identity development. With its strengths-based lens, it deepens understandings of how Indigenous homeless youth create prosocial outcomes that bolster their self-esteem and encourage positive identity development that will support them in young adulthood and stages beyond. Indigenous youth prosocial outcomes must include holistic health outcomes that encompass spiritual, physical, mental and emotional well-being. Ultimately, this research challenges existing conversations held in society regarding Indigenous youths' behaviours exhibited in homelessness and contributes to Indigenous resurgence, equitable colonial-Indigenous relationships, and reconciliation consistent with the goals put forth in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's recommendations.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge, with respect, the Lekwungen and the SENĆOŦEN-speaking people for allowing me to live, love, and learn on their lands.

I acknowledge and thank my community and my supervisory committee, whose expertise and encouragement were invaluable on this journey.

Lastly, I acknowledge the Indigenous youth storytellers who participated in this research and without whom this research would not have been possible.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

When you know who you are;
when your mission is clear and you
burn with the inner fire of unbreakable will;
no cold can touch your heart;
no deluge can dampen your purpose.
You know that you are alive.
Chief Seattle, Duwamish 1780–1866

As a Coast Salish woman, I believe that change for Indigenous people through research can only occur when it includes community and uses an Indigenous methodology and participatory methods. Absolon (2011) described Indigenous knowledge-seeking processes as ones in which "we journey, we search, we converse, we process, we gather, we harvest, we make meaning, we do, we create, we transform, and we share what we know. Our Spirit walks with us on these journeys. Our ancestors accompany us" (p. 168). However, upon review of current research on homelessness that involved Indigenous people, scholars noted their voices and the voices of their communities were absent from the research presented about them (Baskin, 2007; Patrick, 2014). This oversight created a research relationship based on values of extraction, isolation, and exclusion of community experiences from the actual research outcomes. My research examined Indigenous homeless youths' strengths-based behaviours, as shared by them and drawn upon to support themselves in the harsh environment they currently inhabit. Exposing these youths' strengths helps to deepen understandings of how they encourage positive identity development that will support health, wellness, and success outcomes in adulthood and stages beyond. Ultimately, this research contributes to existing conversations held in society that

promote equality and diversity, which I believe promote Indigenous resurgence and social change.

While this research focused on Indigenous youth who were currently homeless, I understood that these youth were not a homogenous group. This perspective implied that it was unlikely that all Indigenous homeless youth were brought up in their culture, journeyed into homelessness for the same reasons, had the same education level, or fell into a category of gender male or gender female. The label Indigenous implies that these youth participants "share experiences as peoples who have been subjected to the colonization of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty, by a colonizing society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives" (Smith, 2012, p. 7).

This research included youth who were between the ages of 18 and 24, described themselves as homeless and Indigenous, lived in the Greater Victoria region on the unceded Coast Salish territories of the Lekwungen, Songhees, and W̱SÁNEĆ Nations, and volunteered to participate. The term Indigenous implies that a participant self-identified as Native, Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. However, it was also quite possible that homeless youth who identified as Indigenous had limited opportunity to connect with culture or exposure to cultural experiences and thus, while they held Indigenous ancestry, were "white-washed." I use the term white-washed to describe the situation whereby Indigenous people were assimilated into dominant culture and their history, experiences, and cultural ways of being were covered up. Processes of assimilation occurred as a result of events such as forced attendance at residential school. In these school experiences, Indigenous children were removed and isolated from the influence of their homes, families, traditions, and culture (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Assimilation practices such as these were built on inequitable relationships

between the dominant culture and individuals from diverse Indigenous cultures that led to racism and other discriminatory behaviours against them. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) acknowledges that these practices are ongoing in the present. The term *dominant culture* used throughout this research refers to the collective group of primarily white ruling patriarchal settler-colonial people.

To work equitably with Indigenous youth, I attended to the unique worldviews of Indigenous people. Cajete (2000) describes worldview as "a set of assumptions and beliefs that form the basis of a people's comprehension of the world" (p. 62). In my research it was understood that there are multiple Indigenous peoples and thus there are multiple worldviews. However, Hart (2010) notes a consistent theme that exists throughout all Indigenous peoples' worldviews. He explains that Indigenous people share a relational worldview that emphasizes the spirit and spirituality, community, and respect for the individual. Smith (2012) asserts that Indigenous worldviews do not align with generalized themes shared in a Euro-Western worldview whose philosophical considerations (i.e., epistemology) support the notion that humans hold power over others and that there is only one truth and it is based on science, or numbers. Unfortunately, positioning one worldview above all others has led to exclusionary, racialized, and discriminatory attitudes against Indigenous people that persist to this day.

Theoretical Frame and Research Paradigms

To support Indigenous youth and communities for whom this research was intended, I grounded the research in an Indigenous theoretical framework and relied on teachings of the Medicine Wheel to inform a balanced view of mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional health and wellness outcomes. Using an Indigenous theoretical framework implies that I did not begin this research until I met with Elders and community mentors to understand what they felt was

important to learn. Therefore, I attended to their teachings, which they shared through oral stories. Elders' teachings reinforced the importance of equitable, respectful, reciprocal, relational engagement with others, which they stated were absent in past and present relationships with members of the dominant culture. The absence of these values in Euro-Western research has often led to experiences of power *over* by silencing "othered'" voices. Some Elders shared experiences that occurred during their attendance in residential school. These stories served to heighten my awareness of the colonial roots of oppression that began centuries ago during processes of colonization. Indigenous people and Western academics alike note that the roots of Indigenous challenges are deeply entrenched in centuries of colonization. Therefore, I used decolonial methods such as Elders' teachings in my research to overturn power imbalances that are inherent in dominant culture / Indigenous relationships. Antoine and colleagues (2018) note that decolonizing practices help to deconstruct dominant culture superiority, privilege, and thought, and to value and revitalize Indigenous knowledge (p. 18).

In conjunction with the Indigenous values upheld in this theoretical framework, I addressed my philosophical commitments and brought my ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives involved in this research to the foreground. Ontologically speaking, I believe we are all interconnected, and I showed respect for all my relations. The phrase all my relations emphasizes my relationships with my family, my relatives, my community, my research participants, my nonhuman relations (birds, fish, plants, etc.), and nonliving relatives. Dumont (1989) explains that we personify the forces of nature as beings (e.g., the Creator, Mother Earth, elder brother Sun and grandparent Trees). The relationships among all creation are understood as kinship (Dumont, 1989), which implies that I enact responsibility for my universal family by living in a moral, responsible manner (King, 1990). The integrity of this interconnected

relationship is based on my adherence to the Indigenous values of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationships (4 Rs; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001). From an Indigenous research perspective, Wilson (2008) underscores that research should be considered ceremony because it is about making and strengthening relationships, which takes work, time, and commitment. To honour this understanding means that I endeavour to follow the Indigenous relational values described above so that I engage and share *with* others. Indigenous teachings consistent with these values are visually conceptualized by the Medicine Wheel. My research was centered on the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, which reinforce concepts of living in balance and equality. I believe in equitable existence for all people and all ways of being in this world.

My epistemology exists as a web of oral stories passed down to me by Elders and community mentors. Knowledge has been shared with me during formal events, such as ceremonies, as well as informally over a cup of tea or on a drive home. For Indigenous people, oral traditions have always been a viable source of knowledge. The knowledge Elders acquired came to them through similar processes but also included other methods, such as blood memory and dreams. Stories keep Indigenous peoples' past alive. While my Indigenous epistemologies have focused on Indigenous oral tradition, I also read work published by Indigenous scholars and allies that helped me fill in any gaps in my knowledge. Works of significance included *The Saltwater People* told by Dave Elliott, Sr., *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* by Thomas King, *They Called Me Number One* by Bev Sellars, *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Coyote and Raven Go Canoeing: Coming Home to the Village* by Peter Cole, and *One Drum* by Richard Wagamese.

My ontological and epistemological considerations in the context of this research were supported by my axiological perspectives, my ethical framework. I understand that this research adds to the body of knowledge that concerns issues related to Indigenous youth homelessness, and that it is owned by Indigenous people. Through an invitation to participate I relied on Indigenous homeless youths' stories (oral and statistical) to understand their experiences of homelessness, and I listened without judgement. I believed their stories were true. Regardless of a youth's level of participation, a small gift was given to acknowledge their engagement in the research. Furthermore, I treated all youth equally. Each Indigenous homeless youth was given a choice of where and when to participate, was asked similar questions, and was provided equal time to complete their story. Their stories helped uncover their strengths-based behaviours that led to prosocial outcomes that promoted their self-esteem and encouraged their development of positive identity. However, their stories also brought forth understandings that contributed to conversations about equality and diversity that I believe encourage social change.

Locating myself within my research was particularly relevant to this research as it helped me reflect on my past and made me think about how it informs my present. I share my self-location here to alert readers to who I am and where I come from and to biases that may have affected my interpretation of the research results. Lavallee (2009) notes that from an Indigenous perspective, research cannot be completely objective because the researcher is connected to the individuals being researched, "and all concerned are connected to all other living things. Emotions are connected to all mental processes. Every time we think, use reason, and figure, emotion is tied to that process; therefore, it is impossible to be free of emotion and subjectivity in research" (p. 23). Adding to this perspective, Absolon and Willett (2004) state that self-location is "integral to issues of accountability and the location from which we study, write, and

participate in knowledge creation . . . because the only thing we can write about is ourselves" (p. 5). The weighted effects of marginalization, discrimination, and stigma also affected my interpretation of my research results.

My story commences with who I am, where I come from, and what I have learned and am learning of myself. These thoughts inform my present self and my practice and are ever-present as I journey to seek out my Indigenous roots. I am a woman of Coast Salish ancestry who has a disability. My experiences of marginalization to date are consistent with those whom I have provided support to. My ancestors are of European, Japanese, and Indigenous descent. I know very little of my Japanese ancestors because my family never shared their stories. What I learned about them I acquired from translated books. Generally speaking, I understood that during WWII, Euro-Western Canadians feared for their safety following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. To avoid further actions against Euro-Western Canadians, the then prime minister of Canada, MacKenzie King, instituted the War Measures Act and had 22,000 Japanese Canadians removed from their homes and placed throughout British Columbia in internment camps (Stanger-Ross & Sugiman, 2016). In these camps, Japanese Canadians were housed in little more than shacks and experienced food shortages, limited water supplies, poor sanitation, and extreme cold. The men were often sent away to labour on farms and highways far away (Stanger-Ross & Sugiman, 2016). Other Japanese Canadians who lived in British Columbia, including members of my family, had to "carry special registration cards and obey curfews, face restricted mobility and communications, and live with the constant threat of arbitrary searches of their homes" (Stanger-Ross & Sugiman, 2016, s. 6.17). Although today people of Japanese Canadian ancestry and people of white Euro-Western ancestry are amicable, surviving older members of my family

continue to fear anti-Japanese sentiments. Experiences of past oppression persist in their minds. As a result, they remain withdrawn from society and estranged from Japanese family relations.

I connect to my family members from Stz'uminus First Nation although I was raised outside my home community. Like my Japanese ancestors who faced alienation and oppression, so too did my Indigenous ancestors. They attended Kuper Island Residential School. Their colonial experiences were consistent with all Indigenous people whose ancestors lived on Turtle Island (North America). However, my strong and resilient family push against these assimilative tactics and engage in ongoing healing, reclaiming their cultural ways to be.

I engage in ongoing processes of reclaiming Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being. I am visibly white, and I acknowledge the unequal opportunities afforded by my whiteness. I remain committed to unpacking my privileged identity in this regard. I also have Asperger syndrome, which falls under the autism spectrum in the DSM-5 and is described as a neuro-developmental disorder. As a person with a disability, I have clawed my way through academia, sitting on the margins of the classroom trying to understand why those who are neuro-diverse are "othered" and subjugated by dominant culture. The trauma caused by past experiences of othering me created lessons of marginalization that are unforgettable. However, having Asperger's provides me with a unique talent. I have an excellent memory for factual information, specifically on topics that I hyper-focus on. Areas of hyper-focus that best supported this research were my preoccupation with human relationships, power over, and discrimination. This focus encourages my engagement in deep research into the nuances of power-over experiences felt by others, enabling me to reflect on ways that I can challenge existing societal attitudes and be a leader of social change.

My past experiences supporting others also served to reinforce messaging persistent in dominant culture and impacted my interpretation of these events. Prior to taking on this research project I worked in multiple organizations that support marginalized people. At one point I was employed by a daycare organization and worked one-on-one with a child who experienced behavioural challenges. During my employment I was tasked with integrating this child, through play, to engage cooperatively with his peers. However, the process supported by the organization involved exclusionary practices in order to avoid conflict. This child played in a space, on his own and with me, behind a door, with a small window to the world of his peers. He was forced to forego experiences with his peers to avoid displays of inappropriate behaviour. I encouraged parallel play; however, it was not an accepted play behaviour in the context of group play, and we retreated to our assigned space. When the child aged out of the daycare, he was applauded for the control he had learned to demonstrate. There was no mention that in this daycare setting the child played alone in a separate room with limited opportunities to attempt cooperative play with others. I was angry.

After I left my daycare position, I worked as an educational assistant in a Western academic setting. I supported Indigenous youth in the school classroom. However, these youth were removed from the traditional classroom and placed in a separate space away from peers. I was told by the regular classroom teacher to help these youth get "anything on paper so we can give them a grade." I balked at this practice and left the job. Later, I volunteered and then worked as a support worker in the homeless sector. I supported marginalized youth and adults. Again, the goal of the organization was to assimilate minority people into society. In this instance, I helped people attempt to secure employment, find temporary housing, and adopt healthier living practices. These individuals' past experiences that led them to homelessness, or

their understandings of their challenges that they needed support for, were seldom explored. I remain curious whether any of those whom I supported ended up happy or satisfied or at peace with themselves when their unique goals were overlooked. I know that when I experience a lack of acceptance for my diversity, I am frustrated, and even rebellious.

Ableism, sexism, and racism have been infused into my experiences to date. Sadly, these isms suggest that those from dominant culture believe there is one right way to be. Furthermore, this one right way is granted superiority over another's right to equitable existence. Marginalizing experiences make me sensitive to relationships involving power over another. Thus, to overturn power differentials inherent in dominant culture, I encourage equal citizenship for all persons of diverse abilities and ways of being. From a Western perspective I support engagement with others through a critical disability theory lens. This theory suggests that I should not engage with others through the lens of "fixing" their challenges (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). Continuing these authors add that fixing focuses on dis- (or in-) ability as a social, cultural, and environmental construct and is oftentimes more disabling than the actual physical and cognitive disabilities themselves.

Thus, rather than fixing others, I believe the othered need to give voice to their experiences. This belief brought me back to the significance of supporting others by listening to, honouring, sharing, and documenting the voices of those who have historically been silenced in research conducted on them (S. de Finney, personal communication, June 19, 2021). It reinforced the importance of following Indigenous research protocols, methodologies, and methods when I worked with Indigenous homeless youth. From a strengths-based perspective, I believe the Indigenous homeless youth who participated in this research have abilities, knowledge, and resources to achieve goals they establish for themselves.

Research Methodology and Research Methods

In my research, it mattered how I conducted it. In order to support decolonized research, I approached this research with special attention to philosophical considerations and methodologies that reflect Indigenous cultural norms and that disrupt power taken by dominant culture when they engage in relationships with the othered. I worked toward moving past the concept of Indigenous homeless youth as victims and voiceless and explored the broader socioeconomic and political conditions and actions of colonial violence that affect them. In Indigenous research, Smith (2012) reminds me that decolonizing practices of rewriting and re-righting Indigenous peoples' position in history must continue to be at the forefront of research with them.

As a participatory community-based researcher, I developed and conducted this research in partnership with members of Indigenous communities. Together, Elders and community mentors helped me draft questions that explored Indigenous homeless youths' histories as well as current experiences that uncovered their strengths and their proposed goals for their future. Elders who chose not to actively engage in the research process still acknowledged its general usefulness to Indigenous communities.

To support equitable relationships, my research methods focused on sharing knowledge through stories using a woven methodological approach. Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall describes Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett et al., 2012) as a methodology that weaves back and forth between Western and Indigenous worldviews and brings together the two diverse ways of knowing embedded in guided oral storytelling and statistical storytelling in a collaborative manner. This woven methodology was important to this research because not all Indigenous homeless youth who claim Indigenous ancestry grew up surrounded by culture or are familiar

with Indigenous cultural practices, including Indigenous oral storytelling practices. The results from these two diverse research methods united through Two-Eyed Seeing created a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous homeless youths' experiences than either of these methods could do alone.

In this research, youth who volunteered to share their stories orally engaged with an Indigenous oral storytelling method. Oral storytelling is an Indigenous tradition that has kept our ancestors alive and transmitted knowledge since our time on earth began (Smith, 2012). Furthermore, oral storytelling connected me to the storyteller; it was effective, respectful, empowering, and demonstrated a way to engage in trusting relationships.

Oral storytelling in the context of this research used focused objectives and, as a result, was guided by three questions. As noted previously, these questions were created in consultation with supportive Indigenous community mentors prior to conducting any research. I am aware that my oral storytelling method, which directed youth to share specific stories, deviates from traditional oral storytelling methods that allow the storyteller to direct the path of the story. To reflect this shift from a traditional oral storytelling method, I refer to my method of storytelling as guided oral storytelling.

Not all of the Indigenous homeless youth who participated in my research shared a story using the guided oral storytelling method. Some Indigenous youth participated using a quantitative statistical storytelling method. Again, questions were developed with the support of Elders and community mentors prior to beginning the research. In the statistical storytelling method, youth were provided with a series of predetermined closed questions and asked to select the best response from the choices offered. If a youth gave perspective to their response through anecdotal feedback, with their permission, I incorporated it into the research results. This too

deviates from the traditional survey method, because it incorporated youths' voices if they chose to respond. Statistical story data were integrated into oral storytelling themes. During my research, I committed myself to work with Indigenous communities, be culturally aligned, and engage respectfully with youth participants. I expand on my research methodology and methods in Chapter 3.

Research Location, Community, and Participants

This research focused on Indigenous youth who self-described as homeless and who resided in Greater Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Greater Victoria is located in Canada's most westerly province of British Columbia, on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, on the unceded Coast Salish territory of the Lekwungen, Songhees and WSÁNEĆ nations. In 1846, when the Treaty of Washington established the International Boundary, and then in 1852 through the Douglas Treaties, "we lost almost all of our territories" (Elliott & Poth, 1983, p. 17) in exchange for cash and trade goods, and now we have only our reserve land left. Unhonoured treaties remain a focus of vigorous Indigenous land claim disputes to this day (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

The number of individuals living homelessly in Victoria is staggering. On March 15, 2018, 1525 people were described as homeless in Greater Victoria (Homelessness Services Association of BC, Urban Matters, and BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2018). Of these 1525 homeless people, 14.3% were youth (ages 18-24); more specifically, 4.6% were Indigenous youth. However, these statistics overlooked youth who had not met the specific definition of homelessness established for the survey. Because of the potential for error in the count, I concluded that there were no definitive statistics that accurately counted all homeless persons living in Victoria. Furthermore, statistics failed to enlighten me about the living conditions and

experiences of those who were unhoused. The only concrete information that statistics offered here was that too many people were living unhoused and under-housed. In observations about the homeless made by Machado Pais (2006), he offered the compelling statement: “It does not matter to me how many there are—even one would be too many” (as cited in Aldeia, 2013, p. 70). I agree with that synopsis.

To understand who these Indigenous homeless youth were, it was important that in this research I worked with a unified understanding of homelessness. However, homelessness was not easy to define. From a Euro-Western perspective, the concept of “home” is “anchored to a brick and mortar building or another physical structure of habitation” (Christensen, 2013, p. 14). A Western perspective of homelessness then simply focuses our attention on one aspect of the individual’s story—lack of residence. Somerville (2013) suggests that homelessness also involves “deprivation across a number of different dimensions—physiological (lack of bodily comfort or warmth), emotional (lack of love or joy), territorial (lack of privacy), ontological (lack of rootedness in the world, anomie) and spiritual (lack of hope, lack of purpose)” (p. 1).

The unique worldview of Indigenous people contributed to my struggles to define homelessness. While the term homelessness from a Euro-Western perspective focuses on the lack of a structural building in which to live, Indigenous homelessness is also understood as being isolated from a “reciprocal responsibility and stable relationship with such things as place, geography, animals, community, sense of belonging, identity, family, ancestors, stories and independence” (Christensen, 2013, p. 15). Specifically, Christiansen (2013) and Thistle (2017) outline an Indigenous concept of home as a holistic, metaphysical understanding of emplacement rather than a built environment. When these relationships are disrupted, as was the case through

colonial oppression, racism, and inequalities, the outcome is feelings of being rootless or homeless.

Homeless people are also not a homogenized group. They include "battered and abandoned women, single mothers, evicted families, single unemployed and older women, deinstitutionalized mental patients, illegal immigrants, street youth, drug addicts, alcoholics . . . and those living on skid row" (Karabanow, 2004, as cited in Murphy & Tobin, 2011, p. 8), as well as LGBTQ2, newcomers to Canada, people from diverse cultures, and veterans (Homelessness Services Association of BC, Urban Matters, and BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2018). However, homogenization facilitates the development of public policies, given that they tend to be viewed as having a "single object" (Aldeia, 2013, p. 70). Unfortunately, this approach led to a mismatch between the policy targets and the subjects to which they were applied.

The last challenge I encountered in attempting to define homelessness was that not all Indigenous youth who live unhoused define themselves as homeless. In a study conducted by Rogers et al. (2014) in Canada, one respondent used the term *hermit crab* to refer to his way of being. He had not considered himself homeless because, in his words, "I travel around with my pack and I, even if all I have with me is my pack, I usually have like a tent with me, so I always have shelter, regardless of whether or not I have like a place that I'm renting, or a mailing address" (Rogers et al. 2014, p. 52). Thus, my research on homeless Indigenous youth recognized their story and considered how they perceived their living situation, rather than taking liberties to define them. I accomplished this by inviting only those who referred to themselves as homeless to participate in the research. I did not "pick" the participants I deemed homeless. In the literature written about them, Indigenous youth who experience homelessness have been

described as street-entrenched youth, system youth, street-involved youth, street youth, street children, curbsiders, runaways, and throwaways, that is, a form of social leper who are separated from housed peers (Patrick, 2014; Rogers et al., 2014; Saddichha et al., 2014). In this research I recruited Indigenous homeless youth as persons between the ages of 18 and 24 with Indigenous ancestry who had suffered experiences of marginalization from dominant culture *and* were living on the streets *and* without permanent shelter *and* described themselves as homeless.

Significance of the Study

There were two goals for this research project. The first was to develop an understanding of Indigenous youths' strengths-based behaviours in homelessness that created prosocial outcomes that supported their positive identity development. Weaver (2001) describes Indigenous identity as multifaceted, including self-identification, community identification, and external identification. External identification is impacted by the degree of congruency between a youth's cultural group relative to the dominant cultural (ruling) group and thus must be reflected upon when considering Indigenous youths' achievement of positive identity development. Specifically, I explored relational experiences, which Reading and Wien (2009) note influence the individual's social determinants of health and well-being outcomes that impact their processes of identity development, highlighting their significance to this research. Social determinants impacted by relational experiences include the individual's social position, income, education, social supports, cultural background, and health, to name a few (Reading & Wien, 2009). For Indigenous people in Canada, colonization is recognized for its processes of cultural "untraining" where cultural traditions and values were deemed irrelevant. Sadly, social determinants of health, which are shaped by the "distribution of money, power and resources at the global, national and local levels" (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2012, p. 381) have, to date,

disfavoured Indigenous people. My research focused on Indigenous youths' strengths-based behaviours that led to prosocial outcomes, rather than solely on the outwardly dysfunctional behaviours that media emphasize in their characterization of homeless youth.

The second purpose of this research was to challenge inequitable colonial-Indigenous relationships that continue to reflect oppressive practices employed by dominant culture and overlook the actual experiences of Indigenous youth living in homelessness. Decolonizing practices that were held up in this research and supported by an Indigenous framework repositioned Indigenous homeless youths' marginalized voices at the core of the research. Furthermore, decolonizing practices that alter power dynamics inherent in colonial-Indigenous relations were important to this research, particularly given my goal of social change.

Indigenous homeless youth were more than victims of their lived histories and locations. Instead, they were competent social actors who lived in challenging circumstances and were capable of enacting changes that supported their desired outcomes. This strengths-based perspective created an opportunity to develop a more meaningful understanding of the youths' experiences. As an advocate for equality, I believe that youth whose voices have historically been oppressed and disenfranchised deserve to be listened to and acted upon, because this allows for a more robust understanding of their situation and encourages self, and community-led responses. No less important, Indigenous homeless youths' stories that supported my research contribute to Indigenous resurgence, colonial-Indigenous cultural healing efforts, and reconciliation and are consistent with goals put forth in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations.

Summary

In the process of acknowledging the diversity of Indigenous homeless youth, this research moved beyond youths' deficits, because a deficit focus potentially obscures youths' strengths. In the same vein, Gaboriau and Terrolle (2007) ask: "Couldn't we talk about the wretched in some other way, in terms of what they think, with their outlook on life and on our society?" (p. 29), including their desires, knowledges, capacities, values, and feelings. The youth who participated in this research brought diverse strengths to their homeless situation that helped them live through this segment of their life journey. The questions that guided this research focused on how Indigenous homeless youths' relational experiences impacted their behaviours, which then influenced their identity development processes and further affected their experiences, shaping their subsequent life trajectories in adulthood and beyond.

My research exploring the circumstances associated with Indigenous youth homelessness and processes of identity development was participatory action-based community research. It was supported by a Two-Eyed Seeing methodology interlaced with storytelling methods that were congruent with Indigenous knowledge-making systems. This research was anchored in an Indigenous theoretical framework that incorporates teachings of the Medicine Wheel, that held up Indigenous knowledge and promoted equality through engagement processes *with* Elders, community mentors, and Indigenous research participants. Furthermore, the results contribute to ongoing societal conversations that promote diversity for all ways of being, which I believe will lead to social change.

Next, I review the literature that focuses on youth identity development processes and relational systems of influence from an ecological systems theory perspective. Library searches for relevant literature focused on human services, social sciences, health, and Indigenous history

publications. Search terms included storytelling, methodologies, epistemology, ontology, resurgence, Indigenous youth, homelessness, oppression, marginalization, discrimination, child abuse, ecological systems theory, lifespan development, adolescents, colonization, health, identity development, decolonizing practices, and strengths-based behaviours. I paid special attention to research written by Indigenous researchers and allies.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The purpose of this research was to explore Indigenous homeless youths' strengths-based behaviours that help promote positive identity development outcomes that support their health, wellness, and success during their life journey. Health, from Indigenous people's perspectives, extends beyond individual behaviours and genetics to include a holistic concept that focuses on balance among four dimensions, that is, spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional well-being (Bautista-Valarezo et al., 2020). Allan and Smylie (2015) assert that Indigenous health "cannot be understood outside the context of colonial policies both past and present" (p. 2). Colonial policies and practices, including the Indian Act (1876), forced relocation, the residential school system, entrenched racism, and the child welfare system have separated, and continue to separate, Indigenous children from their families and communities (Allan & Smylie, 2015) and have adversely affected Indigenous people since the arrival of colonizers over four centuries ago. Academic resources developed by Western developmental theorists center societal understandings of youths' developmental processes and reproduce dominant discourses that reinforce existing relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people in Canada (King, 2003). From a Western developmental theoretical perspective, youth are described as being in the adolescent phase of development (Santrock, 2019a). Three stages of adolescence are described: early adolescence (10–14 years), middle adolescence (15–17), and late adolescence (18–24). This research focuses on youth who are in the late phase of adolescent development where there are fewer physical changes but greater cognitive developments and an ability to think ideas rationally, delay gratification, plan for the future, and gain a sense of who they are (i.e., identity; Santrock, 2019a). During the period of adolescence, youth develop coping skills that help them navigate rapidly occurring physical and psychosocial changes inherent to this

stage as they engage in processes that lead to identity development. In dominant developmental discourses, identity development is described as a progression leading to goals that support the individual in adulthood and beyond (Erikson, 1968, 1980; Santrock, 2019a; Tsang et al., 2012). However, how youth cope with their experiences and navigate adolescent physical and psychosocial changes either supports or counters their opportunities to formulate positive identity (Tsang et al. 2012). Tsang et al. (2012) assert that successful coping culminates in the formation of a clear and positive identity that facilitates future development and productive use of personal resources. However, when youth cannot cope, Tsang et al. note that they become vulnerable to emotional and behavioural challenges that inhibit positive identity development. This critique sees development as highly individualistic, bio-psychological, progressive, linear, and linked to becoming productive of the neoliberal subject (i.e., the successful and productive citizen who gets a job and learns to fit in; S. de Finney, personal communication, June 21, 2021). de Finney, however, challenges this perspective because it overlooks an Indigenous holistic framework and does not address ableism, race, racism, structural inequities, systemic violence, and other issues such as colonialism in shaping Indigenous youth identity development (personal communication, June 21, 2021). Furthermore, Western scholars' theories have been used against Indigenous communities as a strategy to justify labelling Indigenous children as less capable, less smart, and more at risk. I concur with de Finney and acknowledge that it is not my right to impose such knowledge on Indigenous people because it perpetuates colonial injustices. Despite its significant limitations for framing issues impacting Indigenous youth, I did draw on key aspects of developmental theory to explore ways in which childhood experiences continue to shape identity across the life course. I address critiques of normative developmental theory presented by both Western and Indigenous scholars and development theorists in further detail in

the following sections. Drawing on research by Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, I situate my research at the intersection of Indigenous youth homelessness and their engagement in behaviours affected by past and present events that influence their processes of identity development and subsequent experiences in adulthood.

Media is an important resource that disseminates information and reproduces dominant discourses of the world. Media images may also be "reproduced by academics in how they choose to frame their projects and discussions" (Thistle, 2017, p. 5), especially when they define and label, and by extension, alienate the "other." Unfortunately, dominant discourses that concentrate on homeless youths' criminal activity, drug involvement, prostitution, "the 'nuisance' of panhandling or squeegeeing" (Gaetz et al., 2013, p. 1), mental illness, laziness, and risky behaviours (Kendall, 2005) make it difficult to imagine how these youth would achieve positive identity. Added to the envisaged description of deviance that is described in Western youth-focused research and noted for its role in reproducing dominant ways of knowing and understanding the world, by virtue of their age and developmental stage, homeless youth are also understood as "at risk" (Kelly, 2000). Kelly (2000) notes that "potentially, every behaviour, every practice, every group of young people [could] be constructed in terms of risk" (p. 463) and in need of adult guidance to navigate risk to achieve positive identity development. Furthermore, youth identity is responsive to extra-personal influences like environmental changes and life experiences. Hagan and McCarthy (1997), who describe homelessness and street life as descending experiences, note the potential for these experiences to negatively impact youth health outcomes and inhibit positive identity outcomes. However, Bucholtz (2002), Gaetz et al. (2013), and Kelly (2000) explain that when we rely on existing dominant beliefs and understandings about normative development, opportunities to explore youths' agency as

cultural and political actors are overlooked. This literature review explores identity and cultural identity themes for Indigenous youth and their relationship with dominant culture through an ecological systems theory lens developed by Bronfenbrenner (1981, 1994) in order to understand the impact of these systems on Indigenous youths' lives. To do this, I focus first on literature that speaks to the identity development of Indigenous youth, both dominant and Indigenous, and then on what systems theory offers when thinking about homelessness and Indigenous youth.

Identity Development

According to Bucholtz (2002), youth, who are the focus of this research, are understood by developmental theorists as "not-yet-finished" human beings (p. 529). Santrock (2019a) describes adolescence as a cultural universal that rests between childhood and adulthood, but notes that there are no tangible markers that characterize a successful transition through adolescence and into adulthood. He observes that individuals are described as adults once they develop personal belief systems and values independent of their parents, are individualistic, are responsible for the consequences of their actions, accept increased responsibilities, and are relational (Santrock, 2019b). While the views of dominant systems theorists such as Santrock give the illusion that their theories are based on universal norms and incorporate cross-cultural differences, dominant systems theories do not reflect universal norms, nor can they be applied universally to all cultures. Furthermore, theorizing normative expectations overlooks unique processes and goals that are embraced by diverse cultures of the world that also create a successful transition to adulthood.

According to Western theories of development, adolescence is noted for "major physical transitions that include growth spurts, sexual maturation, hormonal changes, and, as the most recent neurological research shows, brain development in the prefrontal area that is critical for

impulse control" (Chen & Farruggia, 2002 p. 4). However, Chen and Farruggia note, adolescents lack "the psychological maturity, social status, and financial resources to perform these functions responsibly" (p. 4). In addition to these biological and neurological changes, Erikson (1968, 1980), Santrock (2019a), and Tsang et al. (2012) note that youth are tasked with identity development, such as figuring out who they are and the values they want to live by. According to Sharma and Sharma (2010) "identity is an umbrella term used throughout the social sciences to describe an individual's comprehension of him or herself as a discrete, separate entity" (p. 119). Geldhoff, Bowers, and Lerner (2013) describe youth who achieved positive identity as being able to "thrive in the diverse settings where they live" (p. 2). They add that to thrive means youth possess qualities of "competence, confidence, character, connection and caring" (p. 2). Creed, Dejordy and Lok (2010, as cited in Morgan & Creary, 2011) also note that from a developmental perspective, identity is referred to as positive when the individual defines themselves "in a way that generates fit between the content of the identity and internal or external standards" (p. 3). Morgan and Creary (2011) mention that positive identity includes resistance to stigmatization and oppression.

Social science researchers Erikson (1980) and Zimmerman and colleagues (2013) believe self-esteem is at the root of positive identity development. Self-esteem involves feelings of self-acceptance and self-regard (Erikson, 1980). Erikson refers to self-esteem as the outcome of crisis resolution. If crisis is successfully resolved, the individual develops their identity through the integration of accumulated self-esteem. However, the goals and behaviours adults expect youth to embrace to achieve positive identity development are those that mirror their own. Kelly (2000) points out that when positive identity development is defined as conforming to adult behaviours, by default defiance is also defined. Kelly (2000) also acknowledges that when youth are

collectively referred to as an "at risk" group, this is an adult attempt "to regulate their identity" (p. 465). However, Bucholtz (2002) states that it is not youths' behaviours that are the problem, but rather a community's response to youth behaviours that makes them a social problem. Santrock (2019a, 2019b) describes opposing behaviours with reference to showing off and testing boundaries, while Jaworska and MacQueen (2015) and Lesko (1996) describe youth as moody, poor decision makers, rebellious, and peer centered. In contrast to these negative representations that dominate social discourses and media representations of youth, this research sought to identify youths' engagement in strengths-based behaviours that positively influence outcomes and enhance self-esteem, which then promotes positive identity development. According to Oko (2006), strengths are often broadly defined as positive characteristics possessed by the individual. For Geldhoff et al. (2013), strengths-based behaviours refer to developmental assets that "describe skills, competencies and values a youth possesses" (p. 67). This framing was important to the study because, for youth more than any other group, identity development is an ongoing, flexible, and ever-changing process that results from their engagement with progressions of self-questioning, reflecting, and working toward ideals (Bucholtz, 2002). As early as the 17th century, references to youth engagement in processes that help them create identity are evident in literature from the period. For example, Shakespeare echoed this theme of uncertainty and torment created by our present selves when his character Ophelia said, "We know what we are, but not what we may be" (*Hamlet,* Act 4, Scene 5). Erikson (1980) and Santrock (2019a) state that the process of positive identity development involves building self-esteem, facilitating exploration of and commitment to self-definition, reducing self-discrepancies, and fostering role formation and achievement. Researchers agree that tasks in identity development include youth committing to a set of values and ideologies that

best fits their moral standards and supports their life goals, such as what they want to be and do with their lives. However, it is important to remember that moral standards are not universal but rather culturally specific, and for Indigenous people, must include interconnected dimensions of well-being, or balanced living.

For some youth, such as Indigenous homeless youth, processes that promote positive identity development are an imperfect route as a result of the challenging conditions in which they live and their perceived lower position in society which Allan and Smylie (2015) described leads to second class treatment. Researchers Baron, Forde, and Kennedy (2007) suggest that when youth who are working through identity development processes suffer negative early-life experiences and coercive interaction styles (p. 413) they unintentionally participate in a perfect "training ground" for development of antisocial behaviours that impede positive identity development. Experiences such as those that occur in homelessness and include pushing against social, systemic racism, colonial policies and cultural biases, limited food sources, and harassment would be potential antecedents to poor identity development. Lansford et al. (2003) and Reading and Wien (2009) emphasize that when youth suffer negative experiences it leads to low self-esteem that impacts their abilities to achieve goals they set for themselves. However, MacDonald (2013) argues that "identity construction is always provisional and evolving and is based on an intersecting trilogy that ties past histories with present experiences and projects future ideals of selfhood" (p. 434). In this way, identity development is fluid and changes based on previous marginalizing experiences, current experiences that guide present pathways, and behaviours used to achieve goals that then impact future outcomes in adulthood. Therefore, to understand Indigenous homeless youths' experiences and their underlying motivations, values,

and strategies for survival that support positive identity development, albeit from the unique pathway of homelessness, all conclusions drawn must include the stories youth tell.

Cultural Identity

While identity development from a Western developmental perspective is believed to occur at the personal level, Indigenous youth also participate in processes that support their development of cultural identity. The concept of cultural identity is significant to Indigenous youths' identity development processes because it incorporates social, political, and economic forces that impact youths' process of identity development. Furthermore, when identity development is seen as only an individual process without the inclusion of cultural identity, youth tend to be blamed for their situations and for their failure to thrive and develop (S. de Finney, personal communication, June 21, 2021).

Cultural identity emphasizes the important role culture plays in constructing the structure and processes of self (Misra, 2007). Indigenous youth who belong outside of dominant culture attempt to answer the question "Who am I as a member of my group?" However, when dominant culture devalues or holds negative views of Indigeneity, Indigenous youth are conflicted. More specifically, when Indigenous youth suffer racism and inequality, are stripped of their traditional cultural practices, language, religion, land, and social structures, and when their pasts are erased, they might lose hope in their future (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Feelings of negativity also arise when youth are impacted by substantial systemic barriers created by second class treatment (Allen & Smylie, 2015), such as inequitable education, employment and housing opportunities and family wellbeing. Roberts and Creary (2012) state that when feelings associated with group belonging are negative, youth suppress their devalued identity. From this understanding, when dominant culture attempts to destroy important cultural

practices, or subject youths to barriers that impede success, opportunities to develop positive cultural identity are hindered, and Indigenous youth question their value or worth relative to the dominant society. These experiences can lead to feelings of inferiority which impede youths' ability to develop high self-esteem, which impacts their ability to achieve the life goals they set for themselves, discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. Reading and Wien (2009) reported that youth with lower self-esteem were more likely to suffer poor health and wellness outcomes, experience increased antisocial behaviours, suffer reduced academic success, and undergo challenges while attempting to achieve positive identity development outcomes.

As a point of interest, while cultural oppression continues to exist, Indigenous people are demonstrating resistance against such behaviours through their engagement with decolonizing practices. For example, members of Indigenous communities are reengaging in traditional cultural ceremonies that mark the transition to adulthood. Naming ceremonies, whereby youth receive a traditional name from an Elder or family member that reflects that youth's strengths and ties them to their Indigenous family lineage, is one example of Indigenous resurgence that reinstates their cultural ways of being at the forefront of youths' developmental processes. Resurgent acts, according to Corntassel (2012), mean reimagining life beyond the colonial state, and because this research is with Indigenous people, together we are doing just that. The Indigenous homeless youth whose stories form the data that supported this research replanted their discourses over top of dominant discourses, helping to rebirth truthful Indigenous histories and understandings that promote equality of diverse ways of being in the world.

Systems of Influence: Ecological Systems Theory

Harris and Fiske (2006) state that existing research describes homeless people as the lowest of the low forms of human life and as provoking feelings of disgust and contempt from

the public toward them. Some researchers, according to Harris and Fiske, took these feelings of disgust one step further and concluded that homeless individuals were not fully human. Indigenous youth who currently live homelessly are attempting to navigate their identity under these Western research assumptions. However, to assume that Indigenous homelessness is a fault these youth put upon themselves overlooks their unique stories that impart their accounting of their experiences shared from their perspective.

Bronfenbrenner (1981, 1994) contends that youths' behaviours are affected by multiple levels of relational influence that shape and are shaped by the social environment's youth participate in. To summarize, described levels of influence simultaneously occur at the intrapersonal level (i.e., an individual's internal abilities that help them cope, as well as gender, age, and culture patterns [Tsang et al., 2012]) among many other factors, as well as at interpersonal, organizational, community, public policy, and historical levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1994); all of these - and others not identified by Bronfenbrenner- impact youths' behaviours.

Levels of influence is an important concept to this research because it is intimately connected to events that channel Indigenous youth toward homelessness, impacting their process of identity development and in turn their response to their environment. Within Bronfenbrenner's (1981, 1994) construct of influences, the individual is described as being at the core of all relationships. The individual brings their unique genetic makeup (racial belonging, temperament, cognitive ability, sociability, physical characteristics, neurological differences, etc.) to all relationships. Authors Geldhoff et al., (2013) and Lerner et al. (2013), use the term *development assets* to describe these attributes. Reading and Wien (2009) use the term resiliency factors. Bronfenbrenner (1981, 1994) argued that youths' most personal environment of influences occurs in their immediate environment, or microsystem, which involves one-on-one

relationships. He stated that these relationships expand outward and are affected by interactions between immediate environments, described as mesosystem influences. One example of a mesosystem would be a relationship between a youth, their parent, and their step-parent (if their parent was divorced and later remarried) and the relationship between that parent and step-parent. Mesosystem influences are influenced by exosystem relationships that consist of procedures and rules of conduct. This system includes family resources, such as wealth that is impacted by organizational and workplace rules and contracts that define wages, benefits, and working conditions provided to employees. Exosystem influences are affected by macrosystem influences that exist within the political, economic, societal, and cultural systems and affect the policies, laws, and rules that govern all members of society (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

The ecological micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems are influenced by relationships that occurred in an individual's chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1981, 1994). This system of influence, referring to the historical context in which youth are raised, reinforces the ideals of dominant/ruling culture. However, researchers (Gaetz et al., 2013; Lynn-Callo, 2008; Hulchanski et al., 2009) note that not all cultural groups are represented fairly. When these relationships result in an uneven distribution of power, money, and resources, which are then reinforced through the webbed effect relationships impart on other systems of influence, groups that are adversely affected experience discrimination, stigma, even racism. For Indigenous youth, negative influences impact how they view themselves and how they are viewed by others, which then affects the goals established for identity development that would support them in adulthood and stages beyond.

While all systems influence youths' behaviours and all systems are influenced by other systems in bidirectional and unequal ways (White, 2007), this research paid particular attention

to chrono-, macro- and microsystem relationships. Dominant culture ideologies that result through relational engagement with chronosystems of influence are reinforced through relational engagement with macrosystems of influence that trickle down and are personally messaged to youth through relational processes of engagement at the microsystem of influence. If youth relationships at their most personal or microsystem level are harmful, disapproving, and destructive, it adversely impacts a youth's self-esteem and they are more likely to develop a negative concept of self. When this occurs, youth revisit their established identity goals set for adulthood to refit their diminished self-esteem. However, it must be understood that interactions within each ecological system will not produce identical results for all people. Humans are "unique in [their] capacity to adapt, tolerate, and especially to create the ecologies" in which they live and grow (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 41). In the remaining sections of this chapter, I will review systems of influence as they relate to Indigenous youth, starting with chronosystems.

Chronosystems

Attesting to the significance of past events on human development, and specifically those impacting Indigenous youth, The Tribes of Manitoba (1971, as cited in Thomas & Green, 2007) stated that "to deny the past and to refuse to recognize its implications is to distort the present; to distort the present is to take risks with the future that are blatantly irresponsible" (p. 96). Thus, consistent with the Indigenous theoretical framework that holds up this research, Canada's systems of colonial domination will be exposed. It is paramount to this research to understand how these systems were enacted and how they have impacted Indigenous homeless youths' experiences, influencing the behaviours they draw upon in the present to create identity, which then becomes the outcome of their environment (Jones, 2013).

Chronosystems of influence, which include historical events, impact entire populations and root themselves into the fibre of that society. Smith (2012) asserts that history is "about power . . . it is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others (p. 35).

The American Civil War, the Great Depression, and the Holocaust are some examples of events that affected entire populations. For Indigenous people, processes of colonization that began centuries ago and were predicated on promoting the superiority of ideals consistent with those of a northern-European, white, male, Christian, neurotypical worldview (Christensen, 2013) became the dominant cultural ideology that was reinforced through all of the relational systems of influence.

Colonialism created dysfunctional Indigenous/dominant culture hierarchies that led to the breakdown of Indigenous family relationships, resulting in such experiences as childhood abuse, poor child-parent relationships, family breakdown, parental absenteeism, and homelessness (Gaetz, 2004). Researchers (e.g., Berk, 2000, Christensen, 2013; Darling, 2007; Gaetz et al., 2013) have described colonization as the birthplace of Indigenous homelessness. However, Smith (2012) emphasizes that colonialism is ongoing and thus these relationships persist into the present. Indigenous youth who live in homelessness illustrate the effects that chronosystem relationships create toward Indigenous people, especially as they struggle against structural systems, social misrepresentations, and identity constraints placed on them (Gaetz et al., 2013; MacDonald, 2013).

State-sanctioned land removals, forced assimilation, genocide, and laws that "essentially [legalize] the Aboriginal out of existence" (King, 2003, p. 132) were all part of a process aimed at eliminating Indigenous people. Youth have been particularly hard-hit through mandatory

residential and Indian day schools established to improve their "uncivilized" ways (Alfred, 2009; Milloy, 1999; Reid, 2010; Union of Ontario Indians, 2013). However, Milloy (1999) points out that it was never intended that Indigenous people would become equals to whites through education.

At least 150,000 children were forced to attend residential school (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). In these schools, children were "fed to pedophile priests and nuns. Children whipped and starved. Families and communities destroyed. Generation upon generation, courtesy of the Canadian Government. Courtesy of the Canadian public" (Halfe, 2016, ix). The last of Canada's 139 residential schools closed in 1996 (Union of Ontario Indians, 2013). Stories of residential school experiences are well documented in *The Survivors Speak: A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2015). Those youth who survived held memories of experiences of "adults who abused them and spewed racial hatred that made them feel ashamed, confused, lonely and unloved" (Halfe, 2016, p. xii). In a country where government officials took Indigenous children away from their families and placed them in residential schools for the purpose of "killing the Indian" in them (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 211) today their families spend their lifetimes trying to reverse this process.

Presently, ongoing experiences of marginalization, racism, and discrimination against Indigenous youth are embedded into societal systems. These experiences impact Indigenous youths' ability to create a positive cultural and personal identity whereby they feel valued for their place in dominant society and the world. According to Lynn-Callo (2008), systemic inequalities contribute to the production of many dysfunctional behaviours that are commonly referred to as pathological disorders. Reading these behaviours as individual disorders plays "a

role in silencing work against exploitative social conditions and in limiting our ability to work more effectively against the[se] condition[s]" (Lynn-Callo, 2008, p. 52). Chronosystems' influence on Indigenous youth today positions them along diverse life pathways that impact their opportunities to participate in processes that are understood to create positive identity. However, White (2007) reminds us that systems of influence do not impact all youth equally, and some who are impacted do rise above challenges presented to them.

Macro- and Exosystems

Macrosystems are the political and economic systems under which a society operates and a family lives; macrosystems promote the dominant societal and cultural values reinforced through laws, policies, and systems. Ensuing interactions in this system (and all systems) create overt and covert forms of discrimination against the other, which, as Reading and Wien (2009) and Allan and Smylie (2015) describe, impact an individual's social determinants of health and wellness and thus subsequent behaviours that guide identity development.

Following the growth of neoliberal modes of governance in the 1980s, the Canadian federal government's responsibility toward helping all its citizens was reduced in favour of a dominant cultural ideology of open market competition and individual responsibility (Begin, 1999; Christensen, 2013; Hulchanski et al., 2009; Lynn-Callo, 2008). Lynn-Callo (2008) and Phoenix (2004) note that neoliberal policies grounded in social values of competition, individualism, and privatization place little emphasis on social justice or the welfare of a country's citizens. Furthermore, neoliberal values are contrary to Indigenous worldviews. Policies that involve cuts to social systems programs, reduction of preventive programs, growth of private, for-profit social services for youth, and of course, drastic underfunding of Indigenous services, including child welfare, education, health, and housing, support dominant ideologies

that have been instrumental in creating complex social issues (S. de Finney, personal communication, June 21, 2021). These policies have a leading role in the cankerous growth of homelessness, which affects Indigenous people at higher rates than non-Indigenous people (Gaetz et al., 2013).

Little and Marks (2010) assert that neoliberal ideologies woven into macrosystem relationships serve primarily as a tool to impede family financial stability, which this research understands has impacted youth through subsequent relational systems of influence. For example, youths' exosystem relationships are influenced by their parents' capacity to provide adequately for their family. In 2016, Statistics Canada reported that 24% of urban Indigenous families lived in poverty. This pattern of poverty was consistent with Indigenous families who lived on reserve. Poverty in Indigenous families results from racism and economic exclusion and has reduced their "access to quality housing, employment, education, social and counselling services, life skills training, recreational activities, and child and health care services, among other things" (Galabuzi, 2004, as cited in de Finney et al., 2011, p. 364).

Family financial dis-ease impacts youths' future. Adults who cannot provide adequately for the youth in their care often express their frustration by engaging in unhealthy behaviours. According to Reading and Wien (2009), parents transfer the outcomes of these maladaptive behaviours connected to drinking or drug use or displays of anger onto youth through abusive interactions (physical and emotional abuse). Indigenous youth who become the undeserving victims of their parents' situation are described as acting out. Researchers suggest that some homeless Indigenous youth left intolerable situations, while others were forced out of their homes. However, as these youth drift from their homes in search of acceptance, belonging, and love elsewhere, they become drawn toward complex life choices that impact their unique identity

development goals. Molnar et al. (2008) and Newacheck et al. (2003) note that youth who feel unsupported are more likely to develop drug dependency, engage in heavy drinking, and participate in aggressive and violent behaviours. These behaviours are not necessarily intentional actions of risk-taking but rather strategies to negotiate the risks that arise in their world. Furthermore, when diverse expectations of new friendships and peer pressures surface, the youths' identity construction reflects these influences (Erikson, 1968, 1980). Many of the new behaviours they adopt help them adapt to the new environment they find themselves in. To fit with their personal goals of identity, they manipulate their environment and make unconventional choices that help them reach these goals (Jones, 2013).

While neoliberal policies impact the way businesses and governments are run and families exist, neoliberal perspectives also shape how people make sense of the experiences of others. When an individual's outcomes fail to meet ascribed standards established by the ruling government, they are blamed for their failure to provide adequate self-care. However, access to supports that promote self-care are often difficult to acquire, are limited, or are unequally available to all citizens, which further impedes success for those in need.

Blackstock (2009) argues that neoliberal policies have led to an overrepresentation of Indigenous children "in care." de Finney et al. (2011) confirm that "children and youth who [fall] outside the norm have historically been institutionalized for the purpose of segregation and correction" (p. 365). However, when youth are taken from their homes to become part of the foster care system, they then experience "lower educational achievement; higher rates of unemployment and underemployment; are overrepresented in the homeless … [and] suffer more mental health issues such as PTSD, depression and substance use than the matched comparison groups of non-foster children" (Fechter-Leggett & O'Brien, as cited in de Finney et al., 2011, p.

366). Furthermore, youth who are carving out belonging are often exposed to a life on the streets that Hagan and McCarthy (1997) describe as a "downward spiral of deviance, danger, and despair" (p. 3). While homelessness is "not structurally suited for habitation" (Jones, 2013, p. 54), it must be understood that individuals who live in this environment "both create and adjust to the environment to establish fit" (p. 54). Youth, whose identity fluctuates with social influences, may then explore alternative identities that reflect the behaviours of those they associate with (Erikson, 1980) as they work to achieve social acceptance and respect.

Micro- and Mesosystems

Interpersonal relationships, described as microsystem relationships including interactions in one-on-one situations (Bronfenbrenner, 1981, 1994) affect youth profoundly. Bronfenbrenner (1994), Lansford et al. (2003), and Santrock (2019b) note that the more supportive and nurturing these interactions are, the higher the level of self-esteem the individual develops, which in turn supports their identity goals and potentially, success in life. When a youth's identity development is a positive experience, it is understood as affirmative contributions to self, family, and community (Santrock, 2019a). However, for Indigenous youth who experience challenges that are a result of unequal opportunities relative to members of the dominant culture (de Finney et al., 2011), the tendency to blame the youth for their situation (Thistle, 2017) arises, often with a focus on their "amorality, laziness and (possible) dangerousness" (Aldeia, 2013, p. 5). While attitudes toward an individual are a result of relationships that occur at the microsystem level, Stern (1984) argues that these attitudes emulate those of the broader society. Attitudes that perpetuate dominant cultural beliefs serve to deflate marginalized youths' self-images (de Finney et al., 2011). Sadly, the discrimination and racism that were at the forefront of many Indigenous

youths' social and personal experiences centuries ago continue to influence Indigenous youths' experiences today.

Summary

Research conducted in support of this thesis focuses on relational systems of influence that rest at the intersection of Indigenous youths' experiences that led to homelessness and their processes of identity development, which are then impacted by and further impact their experiences. Speaking from the perspective of a Euro-Western development theorist, Santrock (2019a) notes that the primary task of youth identified as being in the late adolescence phase of development is identity development. While engaging in processes that support identity development, youth are typically characterized as rebellious, peer-centered, and without appropriate decision-making skills (Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015; Lesko, 1996); in extreme cases, this is presumed to be the cause of their homelessness.

To understand Indigenous youths' experiences into homelessness, which impacts their identity development and subsequently their future experiences, I relied on Bronfenbrenner's (1981, 1994) ecological systems theory to understand the effects of the interconnected systems of influence. From this perspective, Indigenous youth are impacted by relationships at the micro- (interpersonal), meso- (social/multiple micro), exo- (indirect linked), macro- (societal blueprint), and chronosystem (historical) level. Resulting experiences that negatively affected youth within these relational systems created their homelessness (Berk, 2000, Christensen, 2013, Darling, 2007; Gaetz et al., 2013) and also impacted their processes of identity development.

While experiences in chronosystem relationships that supported dominant discourses have led to the cultural genocide of Indigenous people, ensuing relationships that were reinforced through macrosystem relationships and supported by neoliberal ideologies discriminated against,

racialized, and stigmatized Indigenous families and their youth (Allan & Smylie, 2015). Notably, Indigenous families experience high rates of family poverty and its associated challenges. These relationships deeply affect youth at the microsystem level. Indigenous homeless youth are blamed for their life outcomes, which others were responsible for creating (de Finney et al., 2011). Later, their children often struggle with issues connected to poverty when they become adults (Brown et al., 2007).

While this research focused on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1994) to understand the impact systems of influence had on youth that affect behaviours that support or inhibit positive identity development, it must be understood that this theory is not a definitive construction of knowledge. Bronfenbrenner's theory's applicability to this research is limited to understanding Indigenous youths' current life pathways (that include living homelessly) and to the data that resulted on the specific time, day, and place the research was conducted. Furthermore, this research focused on the effects of relationships on youths' behaviours that potentially encouraged self-esteem, and thus identity development. It did not include other factors that impact identity development. Factors such as gender, neuro-hegemony, or the weighted effects of youths' external environment (urban or reserve), were not explored.

Next, in Chapter 3, I discuss my methodology. To decolonize knowledge, I focus on Indigenous knowledge-making practices as my framework. I use an Indigenous theoretical framework to uphold storytelling methods embraced in this research. The stories and statistics that result from guided oral and statistical storytelling are woven together with Two-Eyed Seeing, which I believe will be most effective in honouring Indigenous decolonizing research methods because they cannot be broken apart by colonial methods (Absolon, 2011). The two unique storytelling methods used in this research will be described separately.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Indigenous research must involve movement toward self-determination by attending to processes of healing, transformation, and decolonization (Smith, 2012). To challenge colonial discourses that are deeply rooted in systems of control, this research used an Indigenous theoretical framework and an Indigenous methodology with modified storytelling methods. A decolonized approach to this research is a positive step toward Indigenous self-determination, because it centers research *with* Indigenous people rather than *on* Indigenous people. As an Indigenous researcher, I understand that it is important to acknowledge who owns, designs, interprets, reports, and benefits from the research. Additionally, when I committed to an Indigenous framework and methodology, it implied Indigenous values of responsibility, respect, reciprocity, and ethical relationships (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001), and cultural teachings were embedded throughout the research. In this chapter, I move through each of the framework values and interlinked methodology and methods.

Indigenous Theoretical Framework

At the center of Indigenous cultures are Indigenous worldviews. For my research to be *with* Indigenous people, Indigenous worldviews are vital. Indigenous worldviews imply there are many truths and they are dependent upon a person's experiences; humans are not most important; everything and everyone is interconnected and all are related (Hart, 2010). These elements of Indigenous worldview emphasize community and respect for the individual. Identity comes from this interconnectedness.

Noting that Indigenous research must include Indigenous cultural teachings and knowledge (Lavallee, 2009; Smith, 2012) I relied upon the Medicine Wheel teachings to

illustrate balance and equality. The Medicine Wheel, divided into four identically sized wedge shapes, is traditionally used to represent engagement in balanced emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical behaviours fundamental to Indigenous health and well-being. Each wedge or behaviour is interconnected to all other wedges or behaviours at the hub of the wheel, implying that everything is interconnected. However, when one wedge is inadequately attended to, another wedge overcompensates, and imbalance erupts. In the context of my research, balance and equality extend to relationships between all people and all ways of knowing, doing, and being in the world. However, when diversity is pushed aside, those who are othered are treated unfairly while those who do the pushing live a privileged existence. Multiple forms of oppression maintain these current imbalanced relationships between Indigenous and dominant cultures. In the case of Indigenous homeless youth, these oppressions impacted the youths' life pathways and influenced the behaviours they used to formulate positive identity development, which will impact them in adulthood and stages beyond.

Responsibility, Respect, Reciprocity, Relationships

The Indigenous theoretical framework that holds up this research implies that how I conducted my research matters (Lavallee, 2009; Smith, 2012). To that end, my research processes attend to the four Rs of Indigenous values described earlier: responsibility, respect, reciprocity, and relationships (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001). Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) suggest that these values help to overturn the power imbalances inherent in colonial research practices.

My research began by attending to my processes of research responsibility, which means I am accountable to participants, communities, and the research topic and design. I am also responsible for the impact of my research on Indigenous homeless youth and the

communities that supported me throughout the research. Even after this research is completed, I am aware that if I am needed, I will provide support.

During the early stages of this research, I reached into the local Indigenous communities. I drew upon knowledge shared with me by Elders. Lavallee (2009) explains, "for research to be based on Aboriginal knowledge, Elders must be included" (p. 27). Iseke (2013) states that "Indigenous Elders are the educators, storytellers, historians, language keepers, and healers of our communities" (p. 35). Elders are committed to the survival and continuance of our traditions through transgenerational memory; they ensure the survival and continuation of Indigenous epistemological traditions. Furthermore, as Iseke writes, "their stories illuminate a process of becoming whole within the ongoing challenges posed by colonization" (p. 35).

In addition to conversations with Elders, I spoke with members of local Indigenous communities whom I referred to as community mentors. I listened respectfully to their stories, which focused on their experiences at residential school, but I also encouraged conversation about our youth. Elders and community mentors acknowledged and celebrated their youths' accomplishments. Pictures and ribbons were posted on fridge doors, and creations dangled from windows. However, sadder stories were shared about youth who had been drawn away from the community and lived on the streets. The heartbreak I felt in hearing these stories reinforced my desire to learn more about these youths' experiences. Furthermore, the substantial growth rate of Indigenous youth homelessness confirmed through statistical data provided by Statistics Canada (2016) suggests that Indigenous youth homelessness is a concern across the country.

In my research, respectful relationships were paramount. Working with respect helped me build stronger relationships between myself, Indigenous homeless youth, Elders, and supportive community mentors who helped steer the research. Furthermore, my research is

owned by community. The results will be returned to interested community mentors, Elders, and youth who participated as a show of respect for the knowledge shared with me. In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* Smith (2012) used the term w*hanaungatanga.* This term means that everyone involved in research becomes family. I feel that this is an important concept for my research, because family is at the heart of our Indigenous communities. Dr. Margo Greenwood tells us that "to be strong as nations, we must nurture and support our families and communities. It is within our families that we as individuals come to know our place in the world and to know ourselves as part of a larger collective" (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2015). Thus, by attending to respectful relationships, I join with others through my research and become part of a resilient research family, community, and nation.

I engaged in reciprocity in my research, demonstrated through reflexive processes to ensure I worked equitably with everyone involved. Reflexive processes including self-locating, cultivating transparency, and promoting relationships help demonstrate respect for the research participants. As an Indigenous researcher who engages with Indigenous methodologies, I understand that it is impossible to conduct my research without the results being influenced by my biases. To expose biases that impact my interpretation of the results, prior to conducting any research with Indigenous people I situated myself in Indigenous re-search through reading and self-reflection that center relationships between self, responsibility, location, political climate, environment, history, and cultural knowledge in my work (Absolon, 2011). Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) state that reflexivity "challenge[s] us to claim our shortcomings, misunderstandings, oversights and mistakes, to re-claim our lives and make strong changes to

our current realities. Being reflexive ensures we do not compromise our identity whilst undertaking research" (p. 212).

In this research, I held an in-between positionality. Kita (2017) used this term when she described researchers who held both insider and outsider perspectives. As an insider, I acknowledge that I shared cultural belonging with my research participants. I believe that our familiarity with each other made it easier for me to encourage Indigenous homeless youth participation. I have also faced experiences of discrimination and marginalization from a lived perspective, so I was conscious of feelings that included anger, self-hate, and depression that potentially resulted from such experiences. However, some challenges surface within shared common perspectives. For example, because of existing relationships with youth, my participants might presume that I was looking for a specific story I had heard before and wanted retold. This was not true. Secondly, there was potential for me to be biased regarding information I knew about some of the youth. To reduce this challenge, I created probing questions in advance so that I could maintain the same focused questioning approach with all who became involved.

While I acknowledged ways in which I held insider perspective in this research, there were areas where I considered myself to be an outsider. For example, I lacked some of the characteristics of Indigenous homeless youth from a lived perspective. To date, I have never experienced homelessness. In addition, I held a higher social position than youth based on my housed status, and I had completed more formal education. However, I concluded that more formal education was not a strength the youth lacked in order to work respectfully and equitably together, only that we had each experienced unique learnings that aligned with our current life goals. Furthermore, I acknowledged that our living circumstances were not fixed. There was always a possibility that my life circumstances would change and that I would one day be faced

with homelessness, or that an Indigenous youth's circumstances would change and they would one day be housed. Reciprocal relationships created through reflexive processes demonstrated affirmative steps that could be taken to avoid perpetuating oppressive practices that marginalize the Indigenous homeless youth who participated in this research.

The final value I upheld in this research design was the principle of self-determination of Indigenous people. Furthermore, relationships tie us to everything and everyone in both the physical and spiritual worlds and those still unborn and are consistent with Indigenous epistemologies. No one participated in this research with Indigenous people without giving me free and informed consent developed through relationship-building processes.

The data gathered in support of this research project was acquired outside of an official Indigenous community. The research neither documented cultural knowledges nor attended to the needs of a specific nation or community. Therefore, I acknowledge that no participant or findings represent a specific Indigenous person, or a specific Indigenous community, or all homeless Indigenous populations in British Columbia, elsewhere in Canada, or the world.

Research Methodology

To decolonize knowledge within research, Indigenous knowledge is at the core. In this research, I used Two-Eyed Seeing methodology. Two-Eyed Seeing is a process whereby we "see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowledge, and [use] the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and . . . use both of these eyes together" (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335). Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall (2017) recommends that Two-Eyed Seeing methodology be pictured as

> dragging a heavy "sledge with all our might, and we need others to help us by pushing as hard as [they] can on the rear of the sledge. But, it is we, the Elders, who will determine

> where it goes. Other times that heavy sledge represents a passion we Elders hold that the Western sciences can help address. Then we, the Elders, will help you Western scientists with that sledge . . . you drag, we push . . . while we all also constantly exchange understandings about where it is going. (p. 1)

Kovach (2010) states that Indigenous methodologies not only contain a belief/knowledge system with its underlying ontological and epistemological roots, but also include the actual methods used. In this research, Two-Eyed Seeing united statistical (quantitative) and oral storytelling (qualitative) methods to develop a deeper understanding of the research question than either of these methods could do alone. Bartlett et al. (2012) describe Two-Eyed Seeing as a framework that reconciles Western knowledge to further support research conclusions. I drew upon Indigenous knowledge and teachings shared by Elders and community mentors, alongside Western knowledge. Here I relied on non-Indigenous academic allies who challenge dominant discourses and investigate dominant culture / Indigenous relationships that are responsible for youth pathways in homelessness. Storytelling methods are congruent with Indigenous epistemologies.

Two-Eyed Seeing methodology is described as a strengths-based research approach. It values Indigenous epistemologies while making space to unite diverse processes in a supportive way. I drew upon knowledge provided in statistical stories as well as information communicated through oral stories. Mixed storytelling methods helped glean deeper insights and patterns connected to Indigenous homeless youths' experiences which impact behaviours and guide their processes of identity development. Two-Eyed Seeing does not suggest that I use quantitative knowledge and qualitative knowledge equally. But, given that this research was prepared in the context of Western academia whose sole realm to claim truth is in numbers, this study's

quantitative data confirms what Indigenous people know, while providing numerical proof for those who might challenge qualitative data. Following my thesis defence, my results will be presented back to the community in a meaningful, culturally safe way that benefits both the community and myself. Thus, this research's goals of centering Indigenous knowledge, questioning colonial influences that impact dominant discourses, and striving toward a decolonizing outcome for all involved were honoured using Two-Eye Seeing methodology.

Guided Oral Storytelling Method: Qualitative Research

Thomas King (2003) writes that "once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told" (p 10). I begin by describing my guided oral storytelling method entwined with Two-Eyed Seeing as used in this research. Guided oral storytelling is consistent with Indigenous knowledge-making systems. Indigenous stories told by Indigenous people imply that Indigenous peoples exist and that the colonial project that intended cultural genocide and Indigenous erasure failed (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In this research, guided oral storytelling processes provided Indigenous homeless youth with opportunities to resist colonial erasure and violence and live out their ancestors' stories in ways that sustain, resist, and create anew.

According to Restoule and Chaw-win-is (2017), storytelling is "one of the most fundamental and powerful forms of teaching and learning" (n.p.) and creates multiple health benefits for the storyteller. For example, Trzesniewski and colleagues (2006) reported that storytelling promoted youths' confidence and self-esteem as both the listener and the storyteller co-created understanding and meaning. Reading and Wien (2009) state that self-esteem is a causal force in determining future health and wellness outcomes, which for youth include

positive identity development. Storytelling provides youth with opportunities to learn from their experiences and helps shape, strengthen, and challenge opinions and values about their situations of homelessness. Lastly, because it was "their" story, it was impossible to assess right and wrong, true or false. It was their truth. These positive benefits attributed to youths' storytelling processes created space for youth to germinate alternative visions of their future that supported ongoing health and wellness outcomes. Furthermore, these stories expose dominant culture's privileged existence and expand Indigenous knowledge within homelessness-related research.

To understand Indigenous youths' pathways into homelessness and their strengths that support their identity development and their transitions to adulthood, I developed guided oral storytelling questions in collaboration with Elders and community mentors who served as research advisors. Elders and community mentor contributors whom I leaned upon and who supported this research were Elder Skip Dick, Elder Victor Underwood, and community mentors Charles Elliott, Charlie James, Michelle Williams, and Lillian Underwood. Three key questions arose through my conversations with Elders and community mentors: What drove youth away from home? How were youth who lived in homelessness coping? Would these youth one day want to return home? I was told that home in this sense referred to community. These questions underwent multiple revisions. After reflecting on my own practice experiences, Elders' and community mentors' shared stories, and my engagement with the literature on youth developmental processes, the following agreed-upon questions resulted:

1. What events or trauma drive Indigenous youth to leave their home and community and journey into a homeless lifestyle?

2. What strengths-based behaviours do Indigenous homeless youth engage in to create prosocial outcomes which help build self-esteem that encourages positive identity development?
3. What do Indigenous homeless youth imagine for themselves ten years from now?

At the recommendation of research resource persons, I developed probing questions prior to engaging with youth in storytelling so that I would remain focused on my research goals. I vetted these draft questions with Elders and community mentors. In some instances, a question was modified based on their feedback. I am aware that my biases, which resulted from personal experiences of marginalization, research I conducted in the field, previous surveys I reviewed, and previously held work relationships with homeless people, influenced the questions I sought answers to. The questions used to draw out youths' oral stories were modified when an Elder or community mentor expressed a concern, and these modifications were eventually incorporated into the statistical storytelling questionnaire. Generally speaking, Elders and community mentors were very agreeable to the questions I constructed under their direction and appreciated my interest and engagement in community. I am grateful to them for their guidance, and willingness to support this work.

Six Indigenous homeless youth participated in guided oral storytelling: three males and three females. These individuals are described in greater detail in Chapter 4. I allotted two hours to each youth for them to learn about the research, ask any questions they might have about the research, and, once these questions were answered, tell their story. There was no time limit allotted to each question, nor was there an expectation of response detail. Had two hours been insufficient, more time would have been granted. If a youth chose not to respond to a question, I

did not push for more. Although I describe my method as collaborative, I acknowledge my role as facilitator. It was my job to focus the youth on the questions I prepared while not disrupting the flow of their story. However, I acknowledge my potential to bias the results which then influenced the kinds of questions and responses I sought out. Engaging community mentors and Elders in discussions on questions that were developed and asked of youth in support of this research was intended to remove or at least reduce my bias. When youth digressed, they were not discouraged from telling their off-topic story. McNiff (2007) asserts that this approach returns power and voice to those who are marginalized and silenced. These collaborative processes share power and responsibility with Indigenous homeless youth in the context of this research (Richardson & Reynolds, 2014). This meant that youth decided what was safe to share. My research honours their voices. Any youth who participated in guided oral storytelling could not participate in statistical storytelling and vice versa, because participants who responded multiple times could potentially compromise the integrity of the results by creating biased response outcomes.

Statistical Storytelling: Quantitative Research

To include Indigenous homeless youth who were raised outside of their community, who were unfamiliar with the practice of storytelling, and/or who expressed minimal interest in participating but wanted to participate nonetheless, I included a closed-question questionnaire approach, also referred to as a survey questionnaire (see Appendix A). I refer to this method, which aligns with traditional positivist research, as statistical storytelling. Aspers and Corte (2019) describe data acquired through responses to questions as being about numbers and counting. However, I believe the approach of statistical storytelling differs from Western survey questions and answers in that it was developed to include Indigenous research values upheld in

an Indigenous theoretical framework and Two-Eyed Seeing methodology, which are part of the Indigenous knowledge-making systems described above.

Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) emphasize the importance of drawing upon Indigenous peoples' knowledge to ensure that research *with* Indigenous people captures their past, present, and future lives, which have been shaped by historical, political, and social contexts. These aims were upheld in the research questions I prepared. As mentioned earlier, Elders and interested community mentors provided me with research support. Overarching and probing questions used in guided oral storytelling were developed into the statistical storytelling questions. To create these questions, I drew upon experiences shared by Elders and community mentors, my own experiences working with marginalized youth, and material I had leaned on that supported this research, including other questionnaires. Questions that exposed Indigenous history and explored youths' strengths-based behaviours that encouraged prosocial outcomes were developed and vetted by Elders and community mentors. Because I focused on maintaining statistical storytellers' anonymity, I was careful about the kinds of questions I asked and the answers I provided for them to select from. I did not want their identities compromised. Some questions underwent revision, and others were eliminated based on the feedback I received from Elders and community mentors. Elders and community mentors received a gift from the hand and heart as a thank-you for their work in conjunction with this research.

As I worked with Elders, they raised the question that if I was interested in the statistical stories of Indigenous homeless youth, why was I not making space for any verbal comments or written comments that these youth might share during the experience. Initially, this shortcoming seemed impossible to reconcile. I intentionally chose this method to collect information in a uniform way, because it was an efficient way to gather more information from a larger group of

people. I wanted everyone who met the statistical storytelling criteria and who were interested in participating to have an opportunity to do so, and I wanted to reflect the results in a statistical manner. However, after lengthy discussions with a few Elders and others, we decided that Indigenous homeless youth who participated in statistical storytelling would be invited to include an oral response or written comment in addition to their closed-question response if they desired to do so. When youth and I met together to engage *with* statistical storytelling, I informed each participant that if there were ideas, thoughts, or perspectives they felt important to share, they were welcome to do so. Furthermore, I would include these ideas into their statistical stories if they granted me permission to do so. However, youth who wanted to complete the statistical questions in silence, or without me present, or at some other time, were respectfully granted this opportunity.

Fourteen anonymous Indigenous homeless youth participated in statistical storytelling. To honour their anonymity, I do not provide personal histories, background or exact ages of these youth. I allotted one hour to each youth where I explained my research and the research process. The youth were encouraged to ask any questions about the research, and, once these questions were answered, I invited them to respond to predetermined questions. To confirm that youth met the research criteria, they were asked to respond to three questions (C1, C2, C3) connected to criteria to ensure they met them. Criteria questions were connected to age, Indigeneity, and present living arrangement. The youth were informed that if they did not meet the participation criteria, I would be unable to incorporate their responses into the results. As with the guided oral storytelling method, additional time would have been granted if it had been necessary. However, no youth who participated in the statistical storytelling method required more than the allotted time.

All Indigenous homeless youth who participated in statistical storytelling returned their statistical story back to me sealed in the envelope they were provided with. The envelopes were stamped so that if a participant wanted to return it by mail, they could do so at no cost to themselves. Youth who engaged in statistical storytelling were informed prior to beginning the process that when their responses were submitted or their anecdotal comments were recorded (with their permission), they could not be retracted because all submissions using this method were anonymous.

Ethical Engagement

My research involved securing procedural ethics approval from the University of Victoria Research Ethics Review Committee and securing signed or verbal consent from the youth who participated in the research prior to commencing the research. It also involved a commitment to reflexive processes that were described earlier. Participant recruitment was initiated through a poster (see Appendix B) approved by the University of Victoria Ethics Review Committee (Ethics Protocol Number 19-0333) and posted at locations I knew Indigenous homeless youth frequented. I also talked with people whom I had a relationship with to help me encourage Indigenous homeless youth to participate. I urged Indigenous homeless youth to recruit interested peers. This approach, referred to as snowball recruitment, was most effective. Indigenous homeless youth reached out to me by phone, text and in person. To avoid coerced participation, I did not reach out to any Indigenous youth who I had a personal relationship with who I knew was homeless. This removed some pressure to participate. Dependent upon each youth's potential research participation method and preferred method of communicating with me, each youth was recruited using a consistent recruitment script (see Appendices C, D, E, and F).

To promote safe, ethical participation, Indigenous homeless youth who engaged in guided oral storytelling or statistical storytelling participated on a day and time and at a location of their choosing. Furthermore, they were given full control to decide how much and what they wanted to share. Following an explanation of the terms of our relationship and prior to commencing storytelling, the youth participants gave either verbal or signed consent (see Appendix G: Participant Consent Form). Youth were reminded that if either an oral or statistical question opened up areas of their life they wanted kept private or that they were unprepared to explore at this time, they could pass on the question. I made it clear in my consent form that there were no penalties for withdrawing from the research. Because this research presented some risks to youths' confidentiality due to existing interwoven relationships within the homeless community, all participating youth were given a pseudonym. At the conclusion of their story, all youth were offered a list of community supports and phone numbers should they need to access these services in the future (see Appendix H). If any youth withdrew from the research it did not impact our relationship. During the process of storytelling, youth who felt triggered were encouraged to take a break and when they were ready, to resume their story. A few took a cigarette break. Two participants brought a companion with them for support. Companions listened but did not actively participate. However, I recognized that peer presence potentially affected the participant's shared story based on their side remarks, glances, and quips to said peers.

As I understood the process of collaborative engagement, it encourages respectful engagement. Therefore, I incorporated food into my research because I believe that food is both essential to youth health and well-being and empowers a relationship with one another. Furthermore, this gesture was my way of honouring the time and effort the youth participants

gifted to me in support of my research. To each event of storytelling, I brought bottled water and traditionally prepared deer and moose jerky sticks given to me by a community mentor. The animals used to make these jerky sticks had been prepared by Indigenous people for Indigenous people and were not contaminated by Western food preparation methods. I also brought convenience food snacks for youth who preferred this type of food.

As noted earlier, I engaged in ongoing reflexive processes as a demonstration of ethical behaviour in this research. However, the youth participants also held power and responsibility in the research (Richardson & Reynolds, 2014). Riessman (2001) suggests that youth share stories that support their agendas to "encourage . . . others to listen, to share and to empathize" (p. 697) in a way that focuses on their story as a kind of performative piece. This notion suggests that the "story" in storytelling is alive and changes each time it is told, depending on the teller, the audience, the context, and the intent. Phoenix and Sparkes (2009) highlight that stories serve youth as a source of pleasure, skill, and status and are a powerful and transformative force and a currency in the world of the street. From this perspective, storytelling potentially helps Indigenous homeless youth obtain resources, promote their own safety, create social connections, and relieve the boredom of their existence (Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). I was mindful of these diverse purposes and the role storytelling played in our collaborative relationship.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this research was to create a collaborative analysis of Indigenous homeless youth stories using content analysis. I used a method of thematic analysis that focused on identifying patterns of meaning in the data (stories) that would help provide answers to the research questions I posed. As the sole researcher of this self-funded research, I acknowledge that it was limited to my perspective and interpretation. I engaged in reflexive work prior to

commencing this research, as I was aware that my biases were woven into the interpretation of the data. I chose qualitative research inherent to the storytelling method because it stresses "the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. [Qualitative] researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10). Storytelling as qualitative research involves building a complex picture with words shared by the storyteller in their natural setting (Cresswell, 2013), which in this research included at outside spaces near the Dallas Road breakwater, Beacon Hill Park, Fisherman's Wharf and other public places in Greater Victoria.

I listened to the audio recordings of the storytelling multiple times before I began transcription processes in order to search for meaning, patterns, and common themes. All the youth who participated in guided oral storytelling had completed telling their stories prior to me beginning the process of transcription.

Stories were transcribed using Microsoft Word for Mac. Some spoken words I could not hear. Therefore, I acknowledge there were omissions in the transcribed stories. Once a story was transcribed, it was reviewed against the recording to confirm accuracy and any errors were corrected. Microsoft Word autocorrects spelling errors, so transcription was a time-consuming process because I wanted words spelled as I heard them spoken in order to ensure the stories were authentic. Furthermore, I reflected on the history of exploitive research conducted *on* Indigenous people, including misrepresentations of their thoughts, and I wanted to ensure I did not perpetuate these forms of oppression. After the audio recordings were transcribed, some sentences were intentionally removed from the transcripts, either because the content was

irrelevant to the research goals, or an event a youth revealed made it possible to identify the storyteller or others in their homeless community, or the content potentially compromised their own or others' safety. Ellipses (…) were used in the transcripts to indicate instances of withheld or missing information. Every effort was made not to compromise the integrity of the stories told. Although participants were asked not to identify other people in their stories by name, some did. All names were removed during the transcription process and replaced with pseudonyms. When I felt certain all errors had been eliminated, I deleted the audio file. Following transcription, coding was conducted by hand.

I explored single ideas within the data (stories). These single ideas were reflected in the questions I developed for use in statistical storytelling, and thus the closed questions asked in the questionnaire supported ideas in the guided oral stories. Themes in the stories helped me to identify prosocial outcomes that are part of holistic dimensions of health that other researchers have suggested lead to enhanced self-esteem, which encourages positive identity development. While there are computer programs that code free-text responses, because my research's storytelling methods involved guided questions to focus the storytelling, I felt that some of the work involving coding began when the questions were developed. For example, when I asked youth to explore prosocial outcomes, I wrote all the outcomes from all the stories they shared in order to explore potential patterns. This is referred to as "bottom up [analysis], by organizing the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information" (Cresswell, 2013, p. 45). I then clustered these outcomes into broader categories based on the quadrants of the medicine wheel, which reflect dimensions of health. To illustrate, I categorized ways in which prosocial outcomes encouraged emotional well-being. Eventually, these clustered ideas were shaped into more abstract ideas or themes. For example, relative to friendships, the theme of belonging arose.

Due to my being inclusive of the Indigenous storytelling practices that incorporate the type of free-flowing stories that were part of this research, new categories arose through the stories the participants told. Because this research focused on youths' strengths-based behaviours, which led to the themes that I believe helped them survive in the challenging environment of homelessness, only themes that reflected these characteristics were included in the final results shared. Most significant to this process is that the themes promote a deeper understanding of Indigenous homeless youths' collective experiences and how inequitable Indigenous / dominant culture relationships affect their lives.

Consistent with the Two-Eyed Seeing methodology that supported this research, statistical story results were merged with Indigenous homeless youths' guided oral stories. Statistical storytelling captured youths' responses in a standardized manner. At its core, quantitative research looks toward numbers to inform an action (St. Pierre, 2013). Anecdotal comments provided by some youth gave perspective to their responses, helping to create a more comprehensive story of their experiences.

Indigenous qualitative (guided oral storytelling) and quantitative (statistical storytelling) methods supported my collective goal of creating a deeper understanding of how Indigenous homeless youth engaged in behaviours that promoted positive identity development that would support their health, wellness, and success in adulthood. However, it was important to remember that there was no one "correct" pathway or behaviour. Furthermore, these methods support decolonized research practices that focus on Indigenous youths' rights, histories, experiences, and ways of thinking and behaving at the center of this research *with* them.

It is important to note that I intended to present the final research outcomes to the Indigenous homeless youth and community members involved in the research in a face-to-face

experience during the thesis defence. However, due to health guidelines established for the province of British Columbia to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, this is not possible. When this thesis is complete, a copy of the results will be provided to interested participants, Elders, and community mentors so that relevant sections can be shared with their respective communities.

Limitations of the Study

Indigenous homeless youths' stories illuminated their social connectedness, skills, status, and pleasures. Their practice of storytelling helped uncover their social relationships and the ideas, structures, and processes that shaped their lives, especially when they were characterized by instability and suffering (Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009; Riessman, 2001; Sandelowski, 1991). However, authors Singer and colleagues (2001) suggest that youths' stories are also told as "war stories" of adventure, suffering, and survival, especially when their lives are fraught with weariness and boredom connected to poverty. Notably, storytelling processes in this research supported each of us in unique ways to achieve our personal goals.

A final limitation of this research that extends beyond the data collection methods used is that I relied solely on Indigenous homeless youths' perceptions of their experiences. McAlpine (2016) points out that storytellers' stories rely on their memories to tell their stories, and because recounted experiences are sometimes painful, details may be blurred as a result of ongoing stress and pain. From my strengths-based researcher perspective, I assumed the stories told in this research to be true, and I did not push against incongruent details evidenced in some of the stories told.

COVID-19 Impacts on the Research

As an addendum note to this research, I would like to address the impact of COVID-19 on my research involving Indigenous homeless youth. I received ethics approval in mid-November 2019. By mid-December, a few interested youths had reached out to participate. However, in Victoria, on March 13, 2020, the magnitude of devastation COVID could inflict upon community was felt. I was unable to engage in further face-to-face contact with Indigenous homeless youth. None were familiar with Zoom as a strategy to communicate stories. Ostracized groups, such as the homeless community, are furthered marginalized and physically cordoned off from mainstream society. In the present, Indigenous homeless youth still find themselves living in a less tenable position than they experienced prior to COVID-19. There are still insufficient spaces available in homeless shelters to temporarily house all of Victoria's homeless population, and drop-in sites must operate at a lowered capacity to adhere to physical distancing rules. Some homeless persons who are without indoor sleeping space still remain in tent encampments throughout Victoria green spaces. Given the close physical proximity of homeless persons to each other in this environment, physical distancing, self-isolation, and quarantine are impossible. Access to showers and running water is limited yet understood as essential to reduce COVID-19 disease transmission. Unable to meet even the lowest level of Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs, Indigenous homeless youth focus on their ongoing daily survival. Libraries, which before the pandemic typically offered free computer use and WiFi and were consistently used by Indigenous homeless youth for communication, now have restricted access privileges in place to adhere to COVID-19 health guidelines. When the pandemic eases, I anticipate being able to reconnect with participants to share my final results. However, in the present this is not possible.

Summary

The methodology for this study was Two-Eyed Seeing, interlaced with storytelling methods that incorporated guided oral storytelling (qualitative research method) and statistical storytelling (quantitative research method) united with an Indigenous framework. This framework upheld core Indigenous values of responsibility, respect, reciprocity, and relationships (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001). Attending to these values led to ethical Indigenous engagement in this research. My research relied on cultural teachings symbolically represented by the Medicine Wheel, and the supportive engagement of Elders and community mentors.

Participation by Indigenous homeless youth in storytelling was voluntary. Guided oral storytelling questions used encouraged youth to share their experiences that led them to be homeless, as well as experiences while they lived in homelessness. From a Two-Eyed Seeing methodology, diverse perspectives do not have to be weighted equally. In this research, the collective responses derived from Indigenous homeless youths' statistical stories would be meaningless without being enveloped by oral stories.

Chapter 4. Storytelling

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Multiple barriers affected the Indigenous homeless youth who participated in this research. Hunger, sleep deprivation, cold, drug use, loneliness, fear, and, by mid-March 2020, COVID-19. Their edited oral stories below describe their dismal reality. Subhuman treatment of their grandparents, their parents, and themselves exposed the darker side of humanity and created indignities that ate away at these youths' self-concepts. Unique life pathways resulted. Many of these pathways were connected to relationships in these youths' relational systems of influence that resulted from colonial systems of oppression that began four centuries earlier and persist to this day. Central to all Indigenous homeless youth histories in Canada are perpetuated untruths that support colonialism, paternalism, and the privileged existence of white patriarchal settler-colonial culture.

During the process of gathering Indigenous homeless youths' guided oral stories, I was sensitive to the ever-changing landscape of street life, which included an awareness of street code. This code is implemented by enforcers, dealers, and gang members, to name a few. Homeless youth protect themselves by following established code of the street. To follow street code, I protected the anonymity of the participants and their peers. I provided each youth who shared a guided oral story with a pseudonym[1] that reflected a street name in the Greater Victoria region. Oral stories shared in this research were gifted to me by Fort, Courtney, Dallas, Johnson,

[1] To protect the identities of all Indigenous homeless youth participants, as well as their peers and people who work in the sector who are spoken about in youths' stories, I randomly assigned pseudonyms based on the street names that homeless people work and live on in Victoria, BC.

Pandora, and Yates. I would like to acknowledge that in the present, Indigenous people are pushing governments to return colonial place names to their traditional names. This is a work in progress that has just begun. In the present, these places still hold their British street names that celebrate white male colonists who were central to the harms against Indigenous people (S. de Finney, personal communication, June 23, 2021).

All names of peers spoken about in the youths' stories were replaced with a pseudonym. The stories presented below concentrate on Indigenous homeless youths' self-described strengths-based behaviours that led to prosocial and other positive outcomes such as optimism, adaptive life skills, and self-determination. Western developmental theorists (e.g., Erikson, 1980; Geldhoff et al., 2013; Lerner et al., 2013; Zimmerman et al., 2013) suggest that strengths-based behaviours that lead to prosocial outcomes support the development of youths' self-esteem, which then encourages positive identity development. However, from an Indigenous perspective, positive identity development also includes holistic health outcomes supporting mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Reading and Wien (2009) have drawn our attention to the significance of strengths-based behaviours Indigenous youth participate in that ultimately promote balance in these four dimensions of health and thus promote prosocial outcomes that encourages positive identity development; behaviours connected to these themes and subsequent outcomes were the focus of my research.

Indigenous homeless youths' guided oral stories recounted their detailed, truth-filled recollections of experiences that transpired in their past and present lives that disquiet and unsettle dominant discourses. Their stories are their contribution to "try to set the world straight" (King, 2003, p. 60). Indigenous homeless youths' guided oral stories are brave stances taken in spite of potential challenges created by storytelling, and they are presented here to challenge

readers to commit to engaging with their existing assumptions and rethinking their knowledge that typifies Indigenous homeless youth as broken and in need of fixing. As a witness to these stories, I gained insight into the youths' complex worlds. Both the telling of and listening to stories challenges us each to investigate relationships that expose systems intended to assimilate us. Resurgence work such as this supports healing and identity.

Prior to my publishing their edited oral stories in this thesis, I texted each Indigenous homeless youth a copy for their approval (texting was their selected method of communication). Each youth was given one month to review the transcript of their story. I also encouraged any youth who wanted to meet a second time virtually to discuss their story to contact me. If no feedback was provided or meeting requested, I made note of an affirmative response that the information I was publishing was authentic and acceptable for inclusion in this thesis. Two youth responded, Fort and Pandora. Fort indicated no changes were necessary. Pandora's feedback was incorporated into her introduction.

Guided by ethical processes, I asked Indigenous homeless youth to begin their stories by focusing on the "hard stuff" that transpired in their past. Thomas and Green (2007) emphasize that contextualizing research in Indigenous lived realities is "vital to understanding the contemporary lives and subjective experiences of Indigenous peoples, and the ongoing relationships between Indigenous people and the Canadian settler state" (p. 91). The very aim of colonization was to erase Indigenous people's past so that we would lose hope in our future. The stories of Indigenous homeless youth in this research highlight re-remembering oppressive behaviours inflicted on them and their ancestors. Corntassel (2012) reminds me that "within the colonial context, acts of remembrance are resurgence" (p. 91).

In his research, Gaetz (2009) emphasizes that how we think about homelessness is never neutral and shapes how we respond. Unfortunately, when Indigenous homeless youth are held responsible for their living circumstances, those who hold them responsible are intolerant of them and judge them poorly. Statements of judgment towards Indigenous homeless youth who participated in this research are predicated on centuries of negative relationships disseminated through dominant discourses shared in media sources such as newspapers, magazines, and social media platforms. In Johnson's story he remarked, *"Like, where do they get off judging me? Ain't lived it. They can piss right off."* Dallas added, *"They can quit judging me. I carry my weight—paid the master."* Sixty-four percent of the Indigenous homeless youth who participated in statistical storytelling also expressed feelings about being judged. Some statistical storytellers deepened their group's aggregated response to their experiences of being judged. "*They think we're bad people." "They're scared of us." "They think I'm a freak show." "This one time this guy yelled to get away from his car. Guess he thought I'd break in or something. I wasn't doing nothing." "People think that like 'cause I have like tattoos. They think everyone's in a gang."* Experiences of judgment can negatively affect self-esteem and self-concept, which then would impede competencies connected to creating positive identity development outcomes. In the Indigenous homeless youths' stories, I recognize that due to my own experiences of being judged and "othered" I carry these appraisals of my personhood with me during my research; they inform my journey and impact my analysis of the stories.

Following the youths' exploration of events and subsequent decisions that led to their departure from home, I encouraged them to story the activities they participated in that created prosocial outcomes. Research conducted by Zimmerman et al. (2013) and Erikson (1968, 1980); suggest that strengths-based behaviours that create prosocial outcomes positively impact self-

esteem, which these authors describe as the root of positive identity development. However, Reading and Wien (2009) point out that when Indigenous youth create prosocial outcomes they are considered holistic in nature, that is, they include spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental dimensions of health. During my engagement with Indigenous homeless youth, I did not use the word "prosocial outcomes." I used language familiar to the youth so as not to create a power-over dynamic or power imbalance. I used words such as "providing comfort to others," "good work," "helpful to yourself and others," "participating in cultural activities," "talking with Elders," and "team player" depending on what resonated with youth and determined by their engagement with the question. The intent was to encourage youth to think about outcomes that were significant to them and that also reflected spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Meeting them where they were at and using language best suited to them helped encourage them to share how they helped others or themselves. However, dominant ideologies reinforced through various media platforms repeatedly tell youth that their rebellious behaviours and irresponsible acts are contrary to the existing order and to forms of acceptable social behaviours and thus are responsible for the youths' present homeless living situation. Furthermore, the visibility of homelessness in Victoria has led many who support dominant public attitudes and privileges to recommend the implementation of laws against activities that typify homeless people, including panhandling, sleeping in inappropriate places, and disobeying laws (Gaetz et al., 2013). When Fort was asked to talk about prosocial behaviours he said *"I got nothing for you. I remember someone said I was a piece a shit"* (followed by silence). With a focus on what Indigenous homeless youth do wrong, these youth spent little time thinking about what they do right or could do right in the future. To encourage youth to reflect on prosocial

outcomes created by their behaviours, I used prompts to help them develop this segment of their story.

Cajete (1994) reminds me that storytelling is a basic foundation of all human learning and the central focus of Indigenous epistemologies and research approaches. I am grateful to the Indigenous homeless youth who embraced the act of storytelling to educate me on their life journey to date. No Indigenous youth was asked to share spiritual, sacred, or traditional knowledge during their storytelling, as this could potentially endanger them (Haig-Brown & Dannenmann, 2002) especially if the knowledge is later appropriated by others who intentionally or unintentionally misuse it, harming the people who own it. I accept their stories as their truths and respect the knowledge that was gifted to me in support of this research. Their stories captured childhood memories with biological parents, child welfare intervention, school experiences, their engagement in strengths-based behaviours that promoted prosocial outcomes, and future aspirations. This presentation of findings begins with the guided oral stories Indigenous homeless youth shared with me.

Guided Oral Stories

Fort was the first person who approached me to participate. He told me he was 23 years of age. Fort was a big, burly man who towered over me. We originally became acquainted with each other when I worked in the homelessness sector, and we were reacquainted when I was posting research recruitment posters in areas that Indigenous homeless youth frequent. Fort said he had lived hard for a few years now. He expressed interest in sharing his story if I was going to *"make it worthwhile and suit people were going to listen."* Fort's reference to suit people pertains to those individuals who wear suits, such as businessmen and women, executives, policymakers, and government officials. He did not use it as a complimentary term, and in fact

he used it as a way to separate himself from them. In terms of compensating him for his story, I informed him that he and all other participants would receive a gift voucher at the conclusion of their experience. I also informed him that I would do everything I could to have his story heard by "the suits." Fort was responsible for recruiting three peers from within the community. When he met with me to share his story, his friend Courtney accompanied him. She later participated. Here is Fort's story.

I used to live up island. Not much to tell. We bounced 'round lots. We'd come to Vic tons when I was a kid. Ya know, family, parties, right. Mostly when I was little I lived on reserve. My parents were always yelling and throwing shit at each other. Don't know where my dad went when he left on binges. Sometimes we went to my Aunt Jo's, but she had a shit-load of kids so no space for me. We never stayed there long. I sometimes stayed with Granny and Gramps. Did you know when Granny was a kid, they hunted in the back 40 of her house (back 40 refers to the furthest back portion of his granny's yard)*? Like how fun would that be? Now it's all buildings. Hummm, ya, she talked sometimes about school stuff. Him too. Like that it was shitty—not much else. At night, sometimes we'd sit around the fire—her and him would have a few brewskies, sometimes he'd give us a little, if she weren't watching. She'd give him shit if she saw. Anyways, she always made us kids stuff. Like I said, I liked her. Hey, you had frybread afore? I miss that. When I was a kid, they called me KD King. My speciality. That's what I always made when I had to feed 'em—that and wiener sandwiches.*

There was this one time I gotta go with 'im moose meat hunting. It was way up north. Took a few days to get there. We got family up there, ya know. Dad always went huntin' forever. He's got this whistle that made the sound of a girl moose. That was my job when we went out. The whistle. Simpson could make the sound with his voice. That's how we got 'em ya know.

Sometimes he don't get nothing. But the time I went they did. I haven't been hunting for a long time now—not since he left. One day maybe I will again.

Mom and me didn't get along real good, but especially I didn't get along with the Old Man . 'Cept when we went hunting that one time it went good. I don't know much about him. Yelled lots. Mom kicked him out sometimes. But then she'd get pissed. She'd drank her weight. When she stopped, after a while, she'd let him come back and we'd go again. Pretty messed up, eh?

When she was pissed, she had a short fuse. Then she got mad at us kids real easy. Sometimes she'd tell us he'd take care of us when he got home. Sometimes he'd smack us about, teach us to behave, he said. Broke my arm good this one time. And like no one took me in to get it fixed. It hurt real bad. She didn't even care. She just grabbed me. (Fort rubbed the bump on his arm. He inhaled on his cigarette, holding the smoke deep within his lungs and momentarily drifted away from our conversation. He continued to gently rub his arm and it appeared that he was reflecting on the break, and the bump that signified a heal. I wondered if he was contemplating his capacity to heal from other physical and emotional wounds that occurred in his past, such as broken family relationships and broken dreams.) *Said it was my own damn fault. Set it herself. See.* (showing me his arm) *Can hardly tell, right? Just a bump here. Not bad, eh? Didn't even need to go to no white coat at the hospital to get it fixed. I healed it by myself.*

Like I don't think neither my dad or mom wanted us with 'em at the house. Mainly ended up at the grandparents. They lived far away. They were pretty broke. Worse part was I had to go to a different school when I stayed with them. I got me no friends there, like at first at the new school. Teachers got attitude. I don't think they liked any of us. Called me a troublemaker like the rest of them. They don't see the shit them other kids do, just the stuff I did. When I was at this

one school a few of 'em picked on us lots. Called us chugs and Indians. One time I had me this bike. First day I rode it, it got broke. It was sitting in the bike rack with all the rest. But just mine got broke. (I noted that Fort began to stroke the bump on his broken arm again as he talked about the bike incident. I wondered if he was reflecting on this event as yet another break he had been expected to heal from.) *Don't know who done it—no one fessed up. But it wasn't an accident. I know that for sure. I was so pissed. And they never got it fixed. Stuff like that happened to my friends, too.* (Fort described how he healed from the bike experience.) *But I learned me not to let them get to me. That really pisses them off. Everyone's always testing you.*

After I finished school I didn't stick around long. I couch-surfed for a bit. I decide how and where to live now. No one tells me nothin' no more. This is my third winter here. Summer's a blast. Chill with my buddies all the time. Winter gets pretty cold. It rains lots here. It gets tense here, lots of fights. But, I got my homies here. We do good together. And, like I said, a helluva lot better than before.

I asked Fort to story positive outcomes he had created in homelessness. His harsh tone echoed the anger he felt and verbally expressed towards those who should have cared about him. *I remember someone said I was a piece a shit. Ya, thought I'd prove 'em right, like right. But, ya, I still sometimes talk to Granny. She was in Vic a bit ago seeing her brother. Guess what she brought me? Frybread. I shared with my homies.*

Suits always trying to make us leave here (tenting location), *pushing our stuff around. That don't work for us. Like who leaves their friends? Bunch of us stayed down at the park last summer. Some scary shit went on there. Like one of my friends died. He was by himself. It was too late when we got there. Lots of my friends died, you know, OD'd.* (While Fort assigned himself the role of street person protector and conveyed information about conflicts he had

settled in homelessness in his shared stories, he was aware that the most powerful adversary to homeless people is a 3 mg dose of fentanyl, which is sufficient to kill an average-sized person. In 2020, 1,716 people died due to illicit drug use in British Columbia (Ross, 2021), a number that far exceeded the number who died due to physical violence from others.) *That shit is crazy buffed out with some wacked out stuff.*

Yep, I'm pretty good at takin' care of myself. I mainly eat at Our Place. Ya'd get sick if ya didn't eat. Anyways ate KD at home all the time. Sick of that shit. Our Place, the stuff ain't bad. 'Cept no frybread (laughing). *I'll show 'em. And I'll help them out too* (pointing at Courtney, who stood nearby). *I'm here for now . . . I won't leave 'em, least not yet anyway.*

Courtney was the second Indigenous homeless youth who participated in guided oral storytelling in this research. Fort recruited Courtney. She said she had been living here almost a year. She was 21 years old. She told me she had arrived last spring after she lost her job. When she slid into the homeless community, she became reacquainted with Fort, a peer she'd met at a party. She said he was helping her "figure things out." She expressed confidence that once she was ready, she would move on, but right now she wasn't ready to leave. She offered limited insight into her early life experiences.

Before I left, things weren't good. I almost finished school, just a year ta go. Maybe I'll finish later, maybe not. No one cared if I went. Yah, my mom, she was useless. Don't know when it all started. That's the only way she ever was. But, like once an addict always an addict—a real stoner. Used to tell me she needed it to get through a day. Booze, too. When I was little, she let me try a sip. When I was older, ya, I used to sneak it out of the cupboard, and then put water back into the bottle so she didn't know. Like this one time I drank too much. It made me real sick.

Told her I got the flu. But I get used to it. I hold it real good now. I caught up to her. (Courtney's sarcasm illustrated the disdain she felt towards her mother.)

Didn't have it in her to do kids. I don't know why she had us sometimes. He wasn't 'round much. Dad, he went on benders, so was gone spaces. When he was around, he would be hollerin' and shit. Used to bug my little sis so that she'd end up crying. That pissed Mom off and then she'd get right riled up with him. Ya and my mom, like when he was gone and she had to do it alone, she got mad real easy and yelled at us kids all the time.

Anyways, I'm not stickin' round to relive this dance over and over. (Courtney's choice of the word dance was ironic. Dance typically cultivates social and cultural bonds that were potentially possible through coordinated movement with others. In Courtney's case, this was unlikely due to the dysfunctional family dynamics she described she grew up in.) *Like I said, I quit school. Got me a job. Lived with friends for the first bit. When me and Menzies* (a boyfriend) *had some money, we got this apartment. Moved in together. He ended up being a real jerk. The old man woulda said I told ya so. Menzies, ya, he was no good. When I left him, he threw my clothes at me. After that, me 'n Princess got us a place together. We took turns who got the bedroom. Depended on who was partnered up. I lost my job end of summer. I didn't have no other job lined up, so I was outta money pretty quick. We hadda give it up, the apartment. No loss. It was too small anyway. Ya, eventually kinda just ended up here. Fort helped set me up. He's solid.*

Ya, sometimes I think about home. Pretty shitty. Sometimes, Mom would get in a mood and would have a real hissy-fit. Like this one time, it was at dinner and I was pissed off about school and started bitching about it. Usually I went on about Mr. Richardson. He always picked on me. I don't 'member exactly know why—I wasn't the worst in the class. Anyways, she got real

pissed with me ranting on about school. Said something about how lucky I was. Said I was lucky to go to my school. Like how messed was that? Said hers was better than Granny's but not much. Said no one should ever have to go ta hell every day. Talked 'bout the creeps at her school always pickin' on her and her friends. Then she'd go on and on about something that happened there. She flipped out at me. Smashed her plate on the table. Food everywhere. Then she yelled some more about the wasted food. School was shitty, okay. I quit school. Couldn't stand it no more. Left. I'm not never going back home neither. I'm not takin' the shit no more. I'm better outta the mess—here for now.

No one asked me about good stuff I do. Humm, . . . okay, but like I do stuff like . . . like I guess I helped Princess like when she first got here. Don't know her whole story. She came from Van. When Princess first got here, she stayed at Transitions. I went to Rock Bay once. Just the mat. I'm not staying at the shelter. Broughton told me they farm your stuff so ya gotta keep watch when yur there. I told Princess 'bout that. Now she hangs with us. Ya gotta watch out for your family. She's a cool chick. So that's good, right? Like being a friend? Yes? Ya seen Walter? I think he's sick. He never eats. He's so skinny. He's bin here a long time. Last time I saw him I tell him he gotta get help. So I that's good. Like I can tell when someone is sick and I tell 'em to get help. Ain't seen him since.

What's next? Not sure. I didn't finish school. Hummm, lots of reasons I quit. They were ass hats. I don't take that shit no more neither. Ya know, why does everyone get worked up about school anyway? Doesn't make no difference what grade I done here. I learn the school of hard knocks. Stuff that matters to me. Like the bestest eats, like who to trust, where the best place to make money is. I know the hustle. I help my friends. How would school help that? I'm getting the degree of life. That kind of stuff matters here.

I got me a job. Like I don't do nothing all day. I carry my own weight. I sometimes sign up to do farm stuff. I don't mind doing that kinda stuff. I like being outside. I picked corn a bit ago. Been haying last summer. Burchett never done it, but I got him to go with me. We made some pretty good coin. I'd say I'm doing pretty damn good. Like Mom. She's still kickin' it upright. Me too. I do what I want when I want. I'm not doing nuthin' 'til I'm good and ready.

Dallas was a thin woman. She did not give me her exact age, only that she was under 24 and over 18 years of age. She told me she used to like jogging when she was younger. Dallas eluded that jogging was a form of escapism. She said *"no one bothered me on my runs."* She added that she quit jogging some time back. She and I had no previous relationship. Pandora waited for her while she told her story.

Dallas said she'd lived in homelessness for less than six months. She had siblings, but made no reference to what happened to them. She was placed in foster care when she was 12 years of age. The experience was not positive. She never completed high school. She described being ostracized by peers who racialized her. When she left school, she got a part-time job. She said her goal was to save enough money to be able to move out on her own, away from her foster mother. However, her foster mom kicked her out when the payments from the government stopped at 18 years of age, and she hadn't saved enough money to rent an apartment. For a period she stayed at the youth hostel. Nightly parties downtown led her into the homeless community, where she met lots of *"good people."* She indicated that at this moment she was content staying between the homeless community, couch-surfing, and, on the odd night, staying at the youth hostel. She had no immediate plans for the future.

Dallas spoke about the foster home her mother had lived in as a child.

That's when it started, ya know, for my mom. Pulled her 'n her other sisters 'n brothers outa their home . . . brutal. 'N mom got it worser. She hardly remembered her parents. I remember mine, her. I hated her—like stupid, right? She was messed up. I don't hate her no more. I know'd she was messed up. Ya, like I think she like cared as good as she could. I think we bin cursed. She was a shitty mom. Ya know, some days she was real nice, buying me like stuff, and things. The next, wo, the devil. Ahhh, the things I can tell ya. (Dallas highlighted experiences suffered at home that continue to cast a long shadow over her life, influencing present decisions.) *Ya, she had this stick. She hit me with it this one time, hard enough that it left marks on my legs. I kept it secret. I didn't want no one ta know. Dad lived in foster care too. But like I said, he left for good when I was around 10. Ya, it was tough at home when I was little. Foster care weren't no better.*

Mom, ya, she talked about school, but I was little. I don't remember much about what she said. I know she didn't like school. But she was one tough bird. Right. I didn't like school neither.

Like there was this one time when I was in grade maybe 5 or 6 it was a snow day—we didn't get snow much—we did gym outside. I didn't have no boots at school. The teacher brought me a couple a garbage bags. I don't even know if I had boots. Anyways she telled me (the teacher) *to wear garbage bags over my shoes to keep 'em dry.* (Dallas's words were enunciated with precision as if to ensure every word hit a specific note. However, she held her head down and she kicked at the ground. She appeared to be extinguishing a cigarette butt except she didn't have a cigarette to extinguish. I wondered if she was extinguishing the experience that still had a hold on her.)

Garbage bags. Everyone was outside waiting for me. I remember them laughing, pointing at my feet as I walked outside. Some like said I was trash. Some called me Bag Lady, others called me Trash. Someone else said we were all trash. Like that was about ten years ago and I still can't forget it. I hated 'em all after that. I got lots of other stories about school stuff that went on.

Ya, school was a bit of a gong show. I wasn't great at it, and it was tough breaking in to the group, like when I was 12. I was dumb, lousy reader. Eventually like I told you, I quit school. Couldn't do it no more. And beside they weren't teaching me stuff I wanted to know. Like not working for me.

When Dad left fer good he didn't pay child support like he was supposed to. And Mom, like she wasn't working, so things got behind. No money. We couldn't afford anything, even food was tight. I know she went to see someone to get help. I don't know what happened, who said something, but the social worker messed into our business. Shitty, huh. Anyways I got sent away. Went into foster care when I was 12. Pisses me off, even now.

Foster mom was a real piece a work. No help at all. Ya, and like my foster mom, when the money stopped coming in, she was done with me. Like she kicked me out. Like I told you. (Dallas seemed to be aware that her relationship with her foster family was based principally on money. She was like the Canadian penny. When her monetary worth was zero, she too was discarded.)

Dallas digressed. To engage collaboratively with Dallas and to avoid long experienced oppression by Western researchers, I respectfully listened to others stories she felt important to share. Eventually, she ended with a story where she created a positive impact on a peer living in homelessness. She focused on an experience where she offered advice to a peer who was

suffering physical discomfort which I told her was a good outcome—a prosocial outcome. *Me, here, like I help my friends. I'm smart, 'cept not at reading. Like I know stuff. Like I know about the rain. Like stuff you don't know. Like ya know when we had all that rain? . . . Like Gorge, like he was wearing runners. I remember this one time when he came over, sat with us. We had a fire going. He grabbed a box, sat, and then took his shoes and socks off to warm his feet. Probably wished they'd get dry fast. Like in the winter yur feet always wet here. You probably don't know street feet. He don't know street feet neither. Ya, but I know street feet. Anyways, I saw his. He kept rubbing his feet ya know 'cause they were itchy. Shrivelled up to prunes—and white. Like I'm not a doctor, but I tell him ya gotta keep your feet dry. I told him to hit up Our Place—socks; they got 'em, and like other stuff too for free. I tell him to get socks, lots of 'em. I got 'im a pair of mine. I'm not a doctor I tell him, but he gotta get 'em looked at. If he don't they might have to cut it off* (his foot).

Dallas and I briefly discussed future possibilities. *I didn't finish school back then. You can't seriously think I care 'bout school now. Stupid question. Teached me nuthin'. No, ya, they teached me that I was a loser. But I've showed 'em. Still alive. Ya know, maybe Mom mighta cared but she didn't show it and my foster family weren't no good. They didn't help.* (Dallas had been powerless to change past experiences but she was in the driver's seat of current experiences that affected her. Future directions were self-driven, and she appeared to be unwavering on decisions she was self-selecting for her future. She stood up and placed her hands of her hips.) *Hmm, so my final answer, no f--ken way I'd go back to any of 'em, least not for sure now. But I learn stuff here all the time. Got me work, right. I am smarter than any of those learned people in their fancy cars looking like they all got a stick up their ass. They wouldn't last a day out here. Anyways, I gonna get me a job at a hair joint next. One day maybe I'll do them fancy asses' hair.*

Maybe I'll tell 'em they met me afore, when they tossed me some coin in my jar. Bet that'd spook 'em plenty.

Johnson. Johnson was a friend of Fort's. Johnson said Fort told him to participate. He is 22 years old and the fourth storyteller I engaged with. He described himself as a protector. Johnson told me he had lived in the homeless community for over a year.

Johnson's mother passed away a while ago, although he did not provide me with a date. Following her death, he said the family underwent a period of upheaval. He was hospitalized for a period. He and his father's relationship became strained after his mother's death. Eventually, he and his siblings were placed in foster care.

Mom offed herself. Suicide, ya, right, offed herself. Dad got pretty messed up. Couldn't look after us. 'Magine comin' home to see your mom like ya know, dead. I knew she had stuff going on. I think it musta exploded—like that day.

Ya, I got sent to a doctor after. I was at the hospital—like after I got sick in the head. Dr. Martin was supposed to get me betterer from it. Mom went to hospital, too. Bet they did shit like that for her, too. (Johnson compared the care he received to care his mother received and determined that neither of them received adequate support based on the final outcomes achieved by each of them respectively.) *Like how well did that work?!* (angry tone). *Just gave me some drugs. Like they fixed nothin', but I hadda go in if I wanted more meds.* (Johnson's tone became irate.) *Psych would talk to me. When I went in, it was like he had me all figured out. Maybe that's how it was for her too.* (Johnston covered his ears and began saying "la, la, la, la" thereby silencing the doctor's message.) *I didn't wanna go there. Lucky for me I didn't have to go for long. Moss took care of it. He fixed me up* ***real*** (with emphasis added by Johnson) *good.*

It doesn't go away ya know. Like she's still dead. It sucked. Like how would you get betterer from that? But like once she was gone, things got more messed up at home. After she died, after a bit we got sent to different foster families. Ya, everything was messed, especially like once they (I assumed this to be social workers. Johnson did not specify) *came 'round. May* (younger sibling) *was hanging on to Dad's leg, screaming. Like she wouldn't let go. Tore his pocket.* (Johnson was holding his paper coffee mug tight, as if demonstrating the intensity of the physical and emotional hold May had on their father. Johnson's hold was tightly maintained until he squished the soft cardboard inward so that hot beverage dripped over the cup's lip and he had to loosen his hold. Similar to the cup that could no longer hold its liquid contents within the cup when its structure was altered, when Johnson's family structure altered, it too was difficult to hold previously held family bonds in place.) *Anyways, a real shit show. I couldn't do nothing. Him neither. Split us up. Like how messed up was that? I hated him for a bit after that. But, maybe nuthin' woulda helped. Someone messed up Mom, but she like messed us up. But, it wasn't on purpose.*

Afore it happened, ya, things were 'kay. Dad and I had been tight. Before she was gone, we used to fish, me 'n him, too. Sometimes my uncle and some friends come too. And she'd make us wiener sandwiches to take. I remember that 'cause they were my favourite and she always made them for fishing days. When we got back, they'd be waiting to see what we catched. If we'd got lots she'd invite some of our friends over. They would help us gut 'em and eat 'em—a big party.

It ended ya know once she was gone. After that the old man was on his own. He couldn't get his shit together. Started boozing. I don't remember the booze so much when she was around. School—I kinda quit after that. Anyways Moss helped me make things better. Like I said, ya,

heroin. I came here after a bit. We stick together, me and my buds. Anyways, 'ventually landed there (pointing to a nearby greenspace). *No, don't use the shelter. High stress. Lots of fights break out. At the end of the day, everyone's gotta help each other. I tell some of 'em about POD*[2]*. They're cool there. Ya, everyone uses. Ya I know about fentanyl. Bad shit. Sometimes, ya I go to the shooting gallery, too. They got Narcan there. Woulda saved Cook. He didn't get it in time. Sometimes I think 'bout it. Like what if mine was bad. Ya can get clean needles there, too.*

I asked Johnson what plans he had for the future. He thought for a moment before proceeding. *Maybe that's what I'd do one day, ya know, I might fix cars agin. Yep, cars, that's where it's at.* (Johnson seemed to be talking himself in to the idea). *I know how to fix some stuff already. But, I might gotta learn more stuff. Maybe the old man, my uncle, maybe we might start working on car stuff again. So ya wanna know what I would do in 10 years, eh? That's a long time away. Ummm. Maybe I could have me a shop and be the boss. Ya, I like that idea. And I'll get my friends jobs—ya know the ones that like to work on cars, right. And maybe I'll still live here and maybe I won't. I don't know. Does it matter?*

Pandora had an amicable personality. She considered this subculture a transitional place to ready herself for next steps. She said she had been living in the homeless community for only a couple of months. Her 20th birthday was coming up in April. She was unaware of the early life experiences of her biological parents because she had been adopted as an infant. She said she grew up feeling misunderstood and ostracized by peers. Pandora's current best friend encouraged Pandora to come join friends who were part of the homeless community. Pandora said friends in homelessness *"had your back."* I asked her how she found out about the research. She said

[2] POD is an acronym the youth used for Place of Dignity run through SOLID, which is a harm reduction facility near Our Place.

Dallas told her about it. They'd met at a party earlier in the year and thereafter remained friends. She shared her story January 28, 2020, the first day Victoria had a diagnosed COVID case.

When Pandora received her copy of her edited story for inclusion in this research, she responded to me requesting an addendum be made. She asked that I note that she presently was completing course work necessary for graduation and would be applying to an ECE program at a postsecondary institution soon. She no longer lived in homelessness and was currently living in central Vancouver Island.

I was adopted by them when I was a baby. I remember I used to ask my step (adoptive) *mom about her, them. She didn't know much. She told me my bio mom was real young. They told me she had another kid already. Guess she didn't want me, like right. I'd done nuthin' to her and every time I think about it, it pisses me off. Like can you believe it? Like who does that?*

When I was little, I didn't think about it much, ya know about my real mom and dad. I don't think I knew I was adopted like until I was in about grade two or three. But later, ya it mattered. And then like I was always pissed. Ya know, never got why they (adoptive parents) *wanted me. They had a kid already. I got nuthin 'gainst my brother, Simpson. He was older 'n me by lots. Sometimes I think like I was that kid ya see on TV, like ya know at Christmas, with the runny nose and flies all 'round 'em. I don't know nuthin' about my real parents. Didn't leave nuthin' for me when I was born. No blanket, no stuffy.* (Pandora's feelings experienced towards her biological parents suggested to me that she felt she was a throw-away item. She had no emotional value to them and thus she was seemingly easily discarded.)*. Least, that's how I think about it sometimes. I just know 'cause why else would you pass me off to someone else? When I was older, like in high school, I started thinkin' more about it. I starting thinkin' maybe my real mom didn't want me to go away. Things sometimes aren't like, ya, simple.*

I went to a preppy school. I wasn't dumb, I just didn't fit. I didn't like the school. For my step parents, it was always about the grades. (Pandora shared multiple mental acrobatic feats she achieved that were perceived by her adoptive parents' as poorly executed through their reminders to Pandora that she missed the preset bar they established that denoted success was achieved.) *Not reaching my potential.* (Pandora mimicked her adoptive parents' words with dry sarcasm. She proceeded to describe herself as having faced multiple forms of discrimination by her peers. As an Indigenous woman, Pandora concluded that peers believed she was connected to an immoral, dirty, and evil culture. Pandora noted that peers thought she was the host of lice, that Western science describes as a blood-sucking parasitic creature, that laid eggs in human hair which in this instance Pandora was believed to be contaminating her peers with.) *Like this one time some kid in the class had head lice. Guess who got blamed? Me, and I didn't even have 'em. Said I was dirty and I don't know no better.* (Pandora noted a correlation between being described as dirty and being of coloured skin.) *Another time, did you know that the cool guys had ranked us chicks. It bugged me. But, I still asked 'em what number I was. I shouldn'ta cared 'cause that's shit, right!* (Pandora faced opposition and obstacles that she almost succumbed to as a result of messaging shared about her by others. However, she showcased a certain amount of agency to create a life that is rightfully her own when she escaped suffocating relationships and systems that imprisoned her.)

(Pandora maintained a solid relationship with her stepbrother, Simpson.) *Simpson kinda got what it was like for me. Like I said, he was way older, but he heard stuff that went on. I used to go to Adelaide's house lots in high school. We bin friends, like always. Started cuttin' classes. Her parents weren't home much so we'd chill there—smoke up. Course I knew I'd get in trouble when I did that stuff. But it didn't matter. I did it anyway. And then my grades, they got shitty.*

Mom let me switch schools out of private school in my last year. I quit part way through the year. Got me a part-time job, and as soon as I could pay for rent in this scuzzy apartment I left. Adelaide moved in with me. It was squishy, but fun times. Sometimes, we were still partying in the early morning and I'd have to call in sick for work. But then the boss started ragging on me. Pissed me off, so I quit.

Since I quit my job, I mainly couch surf. I told you. My best friend, Adelaide, she likes to sleep at the park. She's bin here a bit longer than me. Until I got here, I never done that before—ya know sleep outside in a tent. I tried it. Might be better when it's not as cold outside.

Right now, I got a job like working under the table like at this day care place. Not a lotta hours, but it pays. I like clean up the place, make sure the toys are washed, blankets washed, stuff like that. Like it's just a few hours. I'd work more if they asked me to. If they let me, I'd work with the kids, too. Not just cleaning up. She said maybe one day. But first, I gotta get me more schooling done.

Pandora talked with me about prosocial outcomes she had created thus far in homelessness. *I like, I help my friends. Ya, like when Frances was hurting, I walked with her to find Gonzales* (outreach worker). *I talk with Gonzales sometimes. He's safe. I told Frances that Gonzales got smokes, condoms* (laughing)*, bus passes, stuff like that like. I know that she don't trust these guys, but I think 'cause I was with her that time it was okay. Can't trust the counsellors. They ask too many probing—get it, probing—questions* (probing was referenced as a sexual innuendo that made Pandora laugh softly)*. And anyways, ya gotta always be there for your friends 'specially if ya want 'em to stick up for you.*

Pandora was invited to contemplate her future. *Ya, I think when I leave, like some day, I think I'd make a day care. I'd care for anyone's kid who needs it. Ya, that means moms who have*

babies and live here, and people like me (pointing to the colour of her arms, i.e. referring to persons of colour. Pandora was aware that exclusionary practices were influential in determining her life pathways. Consequently, she demonstrates agency to stand firm against ongoing subjugation by culture or lifestyle of others when she considers inclusionary practices in her future goals.) *Ya, ya, I know. I gotta finish more school first. One day, when I have my baby, I'll never give 'er away and I won't let no one take her. I'll love her forever.*

The last person to join this research was **Yates**. Yates was another participant recruited by Fort. He said he was 21 years of age, but then later he said he was 24. He was a wiry male in constant motion and obsessed with sports statistics. He referred to himself as the best basketball and lacrosse player. During our time together he walked around and around the picnic table I sat at. It was difficult to capture his words on the recorder because he often moved beyond the recorder's range. Yates currently had lived in homelessness in excess of a year. He valued his athleticism and his capacity to support his "homies" who lived in homelessness with him.

Ya, I don't member much good about home, like ever. Like the old man was a real ass. He was a mean drunk with a bad temper. Like ya, lots of battles. Dad beat up on Mom sometimes. But she was pretty good at holding her own. She didn't take shit from no one. Sometimes the old man would push us about. Like I said, he was a real ass—not much good.

Like when I was little, when our building was being dozed, she like couldn't find no other place we could 'ford like for a bit. No, I don't know where the hell he was. At first, we bunked with another family—that didn't work the best. There was like six kids in a little house—two rooms for all us kids. That was shitty. Fisgard still wet the bed. (Yates' choice of profane language demonstrated the trauma which invaded his mental and physical being and impacted his present-day experiences.) *I know it was screwed up at home, even when I was littler. I know*

that. He'd (his father) *go off somewhere, like for a bit. He drank all the time. Probably that's what he was doing—somewhere—when our place got dozed. They* (Yates was referring to his parents) *were useless, and always scrapping.*

When I was a kid, ya school was crap. I got called stupid. I heard someone joke about me this one time. Something about being like a light bulb that wasn't in the on position. Like what's that supposed to mean. Like, ahh, like there was this one time when I was going to school, like on the school bus. I was sitting with my bestest friend, Hazel. She lived near me when I was little. We played together all the time, lots. And this kid on the bus piped up. Like he said ta me, "Who's your girlfriend, chug? She's too good for you." I remember he said that. I think I was probably pretty pissed. (As Yates spat out these words it was indicative of the malice he still felt towards the youth who hurled racial comments toward him which still infected the inner core of his mental well-being and that he wanted to be rid of.) *The guy told Hazel to come back and sit with him. I think she mighta been scared 'cause that day, she didn't come around no more to play with me.*

Like my dad, one day I left the shit hole we lived in, too. I got a place on Lampson Street at first—just a room. It was a bitta a dive. I woulda stayed longer but the landlord upped the rent, and it weren't worth it. 'Sides, I were always with my bros and scrambling for dough for rent so it worked betterer here, like right. Sometimes shelter can be sketchy. Gotta watch out there. But it's still better 'n it was.

Me and my friends, we hang out. I bin here like a while so I know lots of stuff. (Yates acknowledged in his story that while peers and teachers in school thought he lacked intellectual prowess, in homelessness he believed himself to be an invaluable resource that supported others. His cultivated wisdom regarding street life extended beyond the acquisition of quantitative

knowledge relevant to classroom learning, to qualitative knowledge which helped him cope with the unexpected and unknown of street life and which he willing shared with peers to support their survival.) *The newbies, sometimes if they don't know shit—like I tell 'em stuff. Like where to eat. And like where to get a place to sleep. Like at Rock Bay. Ya and I tell 'em to never rat out someone. That'll get you the shit kicked outta you. And, like the POD—I tell 'em about that. Ya can use there, they got clean gear. Like I tell 'em stuff like that.*

What's next? Sorting shit out, partying, working, ya, no time for thinkin' about that kinda stuff right now. Anyways, my friends need me here. Like one day, when I make millions—like when I win the 649—I'm gonna build me my own house. I'll bring my friends with me. I won't like forget them (referring to friends) *behind.*

Statistical Storytelling

Statistical storytellers participated throughout the fall and winter of 2019–2020. Snowball recruitment was most effective as a strategy to encourage participation. Indigenous homeless youth who participated in this research method responded to questions that were provided on a closed-question questionnaire, with the option of adding written or giving verbal comments. I created aggregated percentages of the entire group's responses. In their results, participants were unnamed and collectively referred to as statistical storytellers. The statistical narrative that arose from their quantitative data complemented that of the Indigenous homeless youth who shared guided oral stories to create a more robust understanding, especially for those who believe in the power of numbers to draw conclusions.

I met individually with each statistical storyteller. Before providing them with a questionnaire, I confirmed verbally with each participant that they met the participation criteria (i.e., Indigenous, aged between 18 and 24, and self-described as homeless). Furthermore, I

reviewed the closed-question response process that I had previously discussed with the participant in person or over a phone or through text at a number they provided me with (see Appendix D). I answered any additional questions that arose during our face-to-face interaction at the start of the process. When a participant had no other questions, I provided them with the questionnaire. As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, all of the youth were informed that the first three 'C' lettered questions connected to participation criteria (age, Indigeneity, and living circumstances) must be answered to confirm their eligibility and allow for their responses to all the other questions to be included in the aggregated totals. While I asked them to identify their gender, their response did not impact eligibility to participate. Furthermore, I reminded each participant that by completing a questionnaire and handing or mailing it back to me they gave me consent to include their results in the aggregated total which supported this research. Each statistical storyteller returned their completed questionnaire in person in the envelope they were provided with. It was returned, sealed. The envelopes were stamped with sufficient postage to be mailed to me should anyone who participated in this research method have chosen to use mail services. No one did. I closed this segment of the research off on March 15, 2020, when the COVID19 pandemic contact restrictions were put in place.

Recruitment of statistical storytellers relied heavily on the snowball approach. One youth who participated in statistical storytelling was instrumental in encouraging several other youth to participate. Notably, this youth, whom I refer to here as Kimta, had a potent influence on peers in the homeless community who wanted to be connected to him. Kimta recruited ten homeless peers to participate in statistical storytelling. For these peers who had been disconnected from family, Kimta headed a unique kind of unit (perhaps family-like) that some youth sought belonging to and connected with through their consensual participation in the activity he

encouraged them to participate in. Following Kimta's participation, on three separate occasions he requested he and I meet up again because he had recruited peers who would also engage in the research. On these occasions, I purchased snacks and brought traditional foods for the youth while they waited for one another. At each unique event I was able to have youth who were present engage one after the next, on the same day, as was their wish. Each youth received my full attention, and complete instructions. Of the entire group of statistical storyteller participants, four youth participated without me present. They were skeptical about retaining their anonymity, and wanted to maintain their privacy during the process which they felt could be best accomplished without me present. After I explained the research and answered any questions they had I gave them the questionnaire and honoured their request to work independently.

In total, 14 Indigenous homeless youth participated in statistical storytelling. There were 8 male and 6 female participants who met the age criteria (between the ages of 18 and 24 years), were Indigenous, and self-described as homeless. There were no 'other' genders identified by any participants. This does not preclude anyone identifying as LGBTQ2S+ in their life outside of this research. Of these youth, 8 (57%) self-described as being homeless for less than one year, and 6 (43%) self-described as being homeless for more than one year. Ten youth invited me to be physically present with them. If a youth asked me to read a question and/or the corresponding responses I complied. I did not initiate conversation so as not to influence their responses. Each youth was encouraged to select the response most appropriate to their unique lived experiences. Some youth chose to engage in limited conversation during our interaction. Anecdotal comments were recorded with their permission. Where relevant, these comments were included in the themes that arose through the guided oral stories told. No one wrote comments on the questionnaire.

The complete aggregated results from statistical storytellers are provided in Appendix I. Table 1 provides a summary of statistical storytellers' responses and notes the number of non-responses to each individual question. Because the results were anonymous, I do not know who chose not to respond to a specific question, or why.

Table 1. Summary of Statistical Storyteller Responses

Corresponding Survey Question	Indigenous Homeless Youth (IHY) Self-described Experiences	Total (n=14)	%	Did Not Respond
1	IHY has currently been homeless for less than one year	8	57%	
2	IHY experienced homelessness as a child	4	29%	1
3	IHY grew up primarily in the care of their biological mother and/or father	4	29%	1
4	IHY's care provider(s) experienced financial dis-ease during the period IHY lived at home	14	100%	
5	IHY believed their care provider(s) used excessive amounts of alcohol or drugs during IHY's early years	9	64%	
6	IHY believed their care provider(s) use of alcohol or drugs affected the care IHY was provided with	11	79%	
7	IHY described their care provider(s) as providing poor care to IHY	9	64%	1
8	IHY described the primary reason they left home was hostile family dynamics	8	57%	
9	Prior to living homelessly, IHY knew individuals from the homeless community	14	100%	
10	IHY experienced no exposure to cultural events/activities prior to becoming homeless	4	29	4
11	IHY who was exposed to cultural experiences younger, enjoyed them	5	36%	5
12	IHY experimented with drugs or alcohol prior to becoming homeless	11	79%	3
13	IHY's primary reason for engaging in substance use was to cope with life stressors	6	43%	2
14	IHY currently attended school	0	0%	
15	IHY's experiences with the education system to date were poor	10	71%	1
16	IHY had not completed formal schooling (high school graduation)	14	100%	
17	IHY moved directly from a housed to the homeless community	3	21%	2
18	Since becoming homeless, IHY described themselves as being more satisfied with life	9	64%	2
19	IHY felt people who were housed judged people who were unhoused unfavourably	9	64%	1
20	IHY made friendships in homelessness	13	93%	1
21	Friendships were valuable to IHY for multiple reasons, e.g., to prevent loneliness, provide protection, teach street-smarts	13	93%	1
22	IHY maintained previously existing relationships with friends or family while living unhoused	5	36%	2
23	While living homelessly, IHY preferred to sleep in a self-made shelter, e.g., tent	6	43%	1
24	IHY accessed supportive services provided through an agency service including services provided at a shelter or drop-in centre	14	100%	
27	IHY recommended supportive services such as food and shelter services to their peers/friends in the homeless community	14	100%	
28	IHY accessed harm reduction services	7	50%	2
29	IHY described harm reduction services as very useful	6	43%	4
30	IHY was presently employed	10	71%	
32	IHY felt their current level of completed schooling affected their employment options	3	21%	1
33	If there was an opportunity for IHY to complete schooling in the future, they would	2	14%	2
34	If there was an opportunity for IHY to participate in an apprenticeship program that guaranteed work upon its completion in the future, they would consider it	4	29%	1
35	If it was possible for IHY to walk away from homelessness today or in the future, they would want to	3	21%	2

The Indigenous homeless youth whose stories were presented above created possibilities to re-present Indigenous knowledge and histories that empower these youth through research (Absolon, 2011; Iseke, 2013). Storytelling was part of re-searching that signifies the importance of using Indigenous ways of knowing as a way to reconnect Indigenous homeless youth to culture and to engage in resurgence activities. It is an act of decolonization whereby we use our methods to uncover meaning and the inherent power we all hold that support new pathways forward. As mentioned earlier, I used thematic analysis to analyze the shared stories of the Indigenous homeless youth who participated in either guided oral or statistical storytelling.

Next, in Chapter 5, I explore themes that arose in youths' stories to develop a deeper understanding of their homeless experiences and strengths-based behaviours that encourage their development of positive identity.

Chapter 5. Thematic Analysis

In Indigenous homeless youths' guided oral stories four themes arose. These themes were supported by youth who participated in statistical storytelling. My research, grounded in an Indigenous theoretical framework, centered on teachings inherent to the Medicine Wheel to explore these themes. The Medicine Wheel's teachings vary between nations. However, Dumont (1989) notes that the Wheel's shape and the continuous interaction between the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual realms and living in balance are consistent with teachings embraced by all Indigenous cultures. Generally speaking, the Medicine Wheels teachings are about "walking in a good way" (Dumont, 1989) by balanced living in the four realms. I relied on the teachings that focused on interconnectivity or the relational nature of Indigenous homeless youths' experiences in these realms. Collectively, the youths' engagement in strengths-based behaviours that led to prosocial results in these realms enhanced their self-esteem and supported positive identity development outcomes that are of significance to this research.

No less important to this research, I believe, is that the Medicine Wheel's symbolic representation of balanced living extends to equality for all ways of being and acting in this world (i.e., diversity). Indigenous homeless youths' strengths-based behaviours that promote self-esteem should not be judged against behaviours held by those in power and whose views are held in place by self-serving laws and policies. Relative to this research, the cumulative effects of discrimination that are amplified at the individual level affect Indigenous homeless youths' health and wellness, impacting their self-esteem, which then influences their identity development outcomes. Furthermore, the societal failure to accept diversity creates a hierarchy of humanness where those who have privilege are idealized and those with diverse characteristics are deemed less desirable. The history of colonization of Indigenous people is

based on advancing the actions and behaviours of the white settler society through laws and policies while excluding the othered.

The Medicine Wheel's importance to this research is illustrated in Figure 1. The figure implies that the individual's health and well-being and subsequent positive identity development potentially arise in part when Indigenous homeless youth engage in strengths-based behaviours that align with the four realms of the Medicine Wheel.

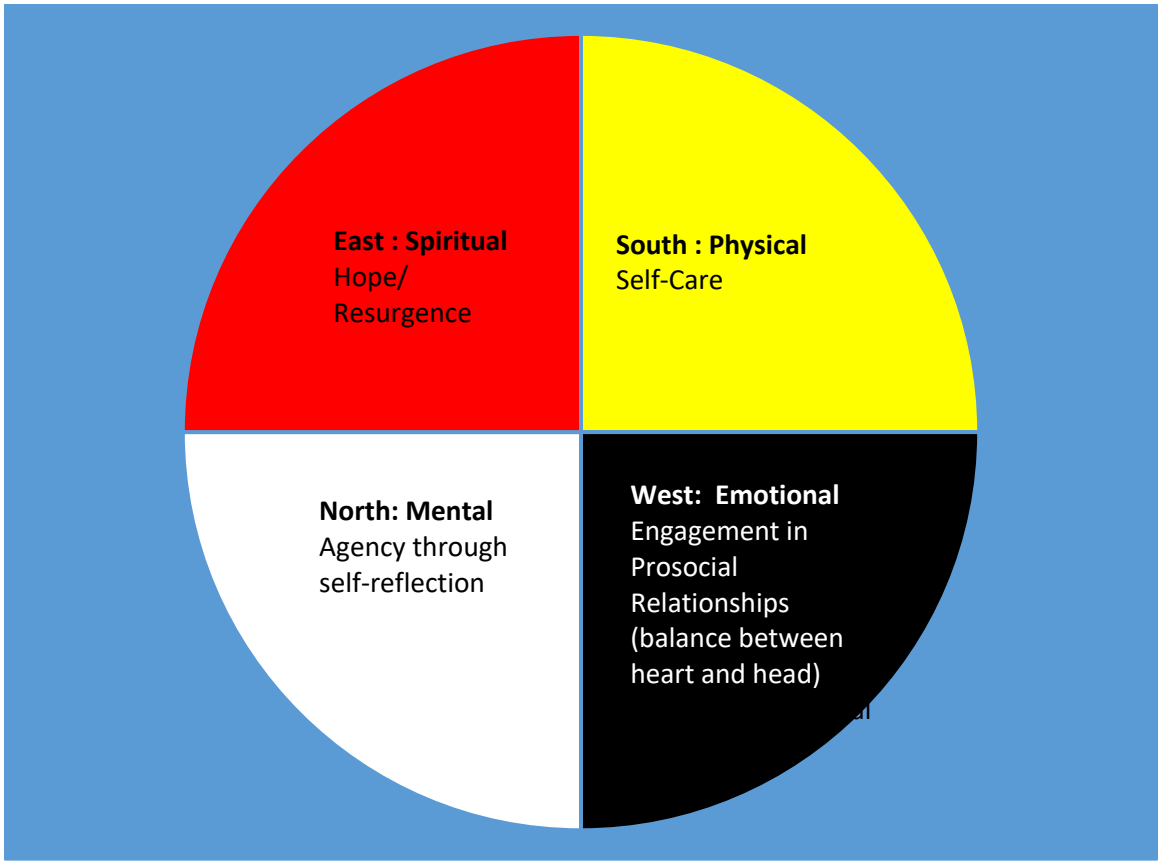

Figure 1. Medicine Wheel: The four directions of Indigenous homeless youths' strengths-based behaviours.

Indigenous homeless youths' strengths-based behavioural themes uncovered in this research include the following:

- the spiritual realm, or East = resurgence (hope)
- the physical realm, or South = self-care

- the emotional realm, or West = creating and engaging in prosocial relationships (friendships)
- the mental realm or North = agency (self-reflection that leads to self-directed action).

Notably, the experiences of the youth who participated in this research challenge existing understandings held by those who believe that the homeless are "at risk" to fail, have failed, or are presently failing. My research findings indicate that these youth were attempting to develop in their best way possible when they engaged in strengths-based spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental behaviours. Research that supports this thesis suggests that youth who participate in strengths-based behaviours that boost their health and wellness outcomes have improved self-esteem that is a root of positive identity development. I reflect on research conducted by Benson (2003), Geldhoff et al. (2013), and Lerner et al. (2013), who use the term *development assets* to describe strengths-based behaviours that support an individual's opportunities to grow up to be competent, caring, and responsible (i.e., to thrive), which is linked to positive identity development. These authors note that internal strengths-based behaviours that model thriving include a commitment to learning, as well as positive values such as caring, responsibility, and social competencies (interpersonal competence, decision-making skills). These behaviours are demonstrated in the themes that emerged from the youths' stories. It is important to note that specific strengths-based behaviours described in this research are not universally held by all youth who are homeless. Furthermore, as new situations arise in their lives, the youth who participated in this research may develop or demonstrate different strengths.

While the teachings of the Medicine Wheel emphasize the interconnectivity of the four realms, within this research they will be discussed separately. Furthermore, it is understood that

the cyclical nature of the wheel implies that the past merges with the present. Thus, past experiences impact present experiences of Indigenous homeless youth that will impact their future experiences. The accumulated effect of diverse experiences impacted the youths' chosen and imposed outcomes and influenced their strengths-based behaviours they participated in. To explore their strengths-based behaviours, I listened to stories that reflected the skills they used to survive in their hostile homeless environment. Honouring their strengths required me to extrapolate at times, because the youths did not specifically describe an event or a skill as a self-identified strength-based behaviour they possessed.

The East: Spiritual Well-Being

I began exploring Indigenous homeless youths' strengths-based behaviours by looking toward the east. The sun rises in the east, bringing with it light and life to each new day that helps to illuminate new pathways and uncover deeper levels of understanding. The sun's energy and warmth, which are essential to all life forms for survival, ignite this journey into Indigenous homeless youths' strengths.

Youth began their journey with resurgence work that involved exposing dominant culture inequities that create a privileged existence for white settlers in the mainstream while adversely impacting Indigenous homeless youth. Naming the experiences of colonialism that affected Indigenous homeless youth created opportunities for them to participate in cultural revival and gain well-being that supported cultural and identity development opportunities. Pandora and Yates expressed interest in participating in cultural activities in the future. Pandora was interested learning about traditional Indigenous foods and food preparation. Pandora said, *"High school was pretty much just shitty. Pretty much. I liked Home Ec, though. Not the sewing, the foods. There was this one part of the class where we learned about traditional foods. Each kid*

like had to tell where their family was from and then we learned how to make a traditional dish from wherever. Like we made stuff like rice, lasagna, and tacos. I didn't know nothing about where I was from so I just went with where my adopted parents' family were from, like somewhere in England. I picked Toad in the Hole. I think it'd be neat to learn about traditional foods eaten by my real people (referring to her biological parents) *and like how to make it. Sometimes, at the beach, I see 'em collecting sea cucumber to eat. And I remember hearing about bannock from Bay. He said he liked it when it was warm, dipped in fat with sugar on top. I know I'd like that. Like it would be cool to learn that stuff.* Yates, who prided himself on his physical prowess, spoke of an interest in participating in traditional Indigenous activities, specifically Tribal Journeys: *"At school I remember a bunch of us did rowing this one time. I liked it. I was in the middle seat 'cause that's where the powerhouse sits. I think one day I'll do Tribal Journeys, show 'em what I'm about."* I believe the youths' potential engagement in resurgence activities was a strength-based behaviour that would buoy them to become leaders of change, encouraging their self-esteem and potentially supporting their development of positive identity.

Resurgence work involves truthful storytelling. Here, Indigenous homeless youth use powerful stories to challenge colonialism, created hope for themselves and for Indigenous people in general in order to gain new perspectives, purpose, and well-being. Larsen, Edey, and Lemay (2007) describe hope as a strengths-based behaviour linked to improved mental health, well-being, coping, problem solving, confidence, and self-esteem. Lopez and colleagues (2004) suggest that having hope leads to beneficial changes and healing, which can be achieved through the individual's abilities to perceive a trail that guides the way to such aspirations. Finally, Bishop and Willis (2014) describe hope as playing a key role in people's quality of life and well-

being in the present and "necessary for the construction of a positive self-identity and positive sense of self-worth" (p. 781). Succinctly said, hope nurtures the spirit. Corntassel (2012) reminds us that resurgence work means reimagining life beyond the colonial state. I realize that resurgence work in relation to my own journey means I strive to expose inequalities suffered by my ancestors and myself and to engage in respectful relationships with all others, because I understand that personal resurgence work is connected to resurgence at the larger community level.

All Indigenous homeless youth in this research took a difficult stance against those in power and deconstructed dominant discourse interpretations of their lived experiences through their self-motivated strengths-based acts of truth-telling and remembering through storytelling. Their stories exposed and pushed against colonial injustices intended to control and marginalize them. Homeless living is a symbol of colonial violence and inequality that disproportionately affects Indigenous youth relative to non-Indigenous youth. While many of the Indigenous homeless youth stories in this research focused on experiences resulting from microsystem relationships, these stories arose out of chrono- and macrosystem dysfunctional relationships these youth bore. Storytelling opportunities in this research created space for Indigenous homeless youth to air their frustrations and to draw others into their stories. Youth wanted their stories heard, listened to, and reacted to. Some wanted justice. For example, Fort agreed to participate if *"suit people were going to listen."* I promised him I would do what I could, which in the context of this research meant completing this thesis so that others would read his story. One statistical storyteller said, *"Like one hour* [one hour was the amount of time I had asked the youth to allocate for statistical storytelling]. *You like think that's gonna make a difference? But at least it'll show 'em they can't shut me up. I gotta big mouth."* Because all of the youth who

participated in statistical storytelling submitted their completed survey back to me immediately in the envelope provided and all their submissions met the participation criteria, I can confidently say this statistical storyteller made a difference to this research's outcomes, for which I am grateful.

Indigenous homeless youths' stories disrupted "ongoing, destructive forces of colonization" that are best conceptualized as an "irresistible outcome of a multigenerational and multifaceted process of forced dispossession and attempted acculturation" (Corntassel, 2012, p. 88). Alfred (2009) notes that past experiences and lack of confidence in who we are as Indigenous people continues to adversely affect our Indigenous communities. These behaviours reach inward to the soul, affecting personal health and well-being (Reading & Wien, 2009). Common themes exposed in the stories were parental trauma (abusive behaviours, residential school, foster care) stemming from their experiences with foster care, adoption, emotional and physical abuse, poverty, and racism which led to intergenerational trauma that then affected the youth. While elected government officials, who represent the views of the majority, tend to focus on the ways youth fail, they overlook the ways in which laws and policies that support their agenda support themselves and fail youth. However, youths' processes of confronting these challenges through truth-telling helped them to defy existing understandings of who they are and why they behave in certain ways and to favourably initiate processes that create renewal, which is recognized as a foundation block in Indigenous resurgence. Furthermore, their engagement in acts of resurgence demonstrate positive contributions made toward new relationship building between Indigenous peoples and the dominant culture, thereby nurturing Indigenous homeless youths' health and well-being.

Chronosystem relationships that affected Indigenous people led to intergenerational trauma whereby caregivers affected by the original trauma used the same abusive behaviours towards others that had been inflicted on themselves. Several youth who participated in guided oral storytelling described a parent having experienced some form of oppression based on their involvement with the settler state. Confirming parents' past traumatic experiences connected to colonial oppression, Yates spoke about his father's parents' experiences. *"Ya, I think his Dad mighta went to one of them schools they talk about. Not really sure. Granny I know for sure did. . . . She'd sometimes start talking about it. He'd tell her to shut up. I don't think he liked them stories—or maybe he'd heard 'em too many times."*

Researchers (e.g., Reading & Wien, 2009) note that when individuals receive subpar care which results from experiences such as social exclusion, poverty, and racism, they are negatively impacted. Specifically, when youth were expected to cope and develop in these challenging environments that arose through experiences connected to colonialism it negatively impacts self-esteem that is essential to positive identity development outcomes.

Often, youths' care providers had engaged in self-harm behaviours such as excessive alcohol or drug use to cope with mental health issues that resulted from their own early experiences. Sixty-four percent of youth statistical storytellers reported that their care providers engaged in excessive alcohol or drug use. These behaviours impacted youths' microsystem relationships. Of the youth statistical storytellers, 79 percent felt that their care providers' use of alcohol or drugs had shaped the kind of care they were provided with. Indigenous youths' guided oral stories give perspective to these statistics. For example, Fort described his mother as having a *short fuse* when she was *pissed* and relying on the *Old Man* to instill order to the family when *he got home.* Continuing, Fort told about an instance when the *Old Man's* efforts to create family

order were too aggressive and he ended up with a broken arm. Fort described his mom as being without compassion. *"It hurt real bad. She didn't even care. She just grabbed me. Said it was my own damn fault. Set it herself."* Courtney noted her home life was *pretty shitty.* She described her mother as an ineffective care provider. She said her mother was a *lousy* cook, unable to *help with school stuff, couldn't keep a job* and any money they *had was spent on shit.* Courtney noted her Mom *would get in a mood after she'd been drinking and would have a real hissy fit.* She also mentioned experiences of parental absenteeism when she referenced her dad's engagement in *benders* and the subsequent periods of absence that followed. Yates described his *Old Man* as a *real ass with a bad temper.* Descriptors used to identify the kind of care provided to Indigenous homeless youth by their primary care providers in their early years included *screwed up*, *useless*, and *"Ya, she was one mean bitch."* Sixty-four percent of Indigenous homeless youth statistical story tellers reported that the care they were provided with during their early years was poor. Only fourteen percent of statistical storytellers described themselves as having been provided with adequate care when they were younger. Indigenous homeless youths' early experiences were challenging and influential in guiding their choices going forward. Forty-three percent of the Indigenous homeless youth statistical storytellers stated that their decision to use substances was in response to life stressors including physical and emotional abuse. Substances helped them cope.

Researchers have noted that self-harm behaviours such as unhealthy relationships to drugs and alcohol are a consequence of horrific experiences suffered by Indigenous people in residential school or other forms of colonial oppression (Reading & Wien, 2009). For Indigenous people, their drug and alcohol use are outward expressions of the after-effects of trauma created through their involuntary participation in oppressive experiences they were subjected to, and

suggest that inner (mental) turmoil remains ever-present in their life. Sadly, when care providers—who are expected to provide a secure environment from which their child can explore the world, cope with stress, engage in caring relationships, and bolster self-esteem—cannot, it impacts their child's identity development outcomes.

Researchers (e.g., Blackstock, 2009; Collin-Vezina et al., 2009; de Finney et al., 2011) note that historically non-Indigenous people believed themselves to be more competent at child rearing than Indigenous people and thus removed Indigenous children from their biological parents' care at high rates. Furthermore, dominant research discourses perpetuate the belief that Indigenous children experience sexual abuse at higher rates than non-Indigenous children. However, Collin-Vezina et al. (2009) state that "Canadian child protection services show [child sexual abuse] is a less common problem for Aboriginal children and youth (0.53 by 1000) than for their non-Aboriginal counterparts (0.62 by 1000)" (p. 28).

Sadly, only 29 percent of statistical storytellers said they grew up primarily in the care of their parents. Forty-three percent of Indigenous homeless youth said they lived for an undefined period in foster care, and 21 percent said they lived with extended family such as an aunt, uncle, or grandparent. Indigenous homeless youth who lived in care described experiences of emotional abuse suffered in this setting. Two statistical storytellers expressed sentiments that foster families' capacity to provide care was lacking. *"Foster family wanted the money." "I nev'r b'longed and they made sure I knowed it. Like every day. Told me they'd send me back if I didn't do what they said—ever think maybe I mighta wanted to go back? When I finally got real tired of it all I just walked away, like for good."* Guided oral storyteller Dallas, who spent her time from age 12 onward in foster care, reported that her *"foster mom was a real piece a work. . . . Ya, and like my foster mom, when the money stopped coming in, she kicked me out. Said if she wasn't*

being paid by 'em no more then time I left." Pandora, who was adopted as an infant, made no reference to mistreatment by her adoptive parents. However, subsequent feelings of rejection as a result of her adoption to a non-Indigenous family impacted her mental health going forward. Pandora stated, *"I'd done nuthin' to her* (biological mother) *and every time I think about it, it pisses me off."* Fechter-Leggett and O'Brien (2010, as cited in de Finney et al., 2011) note that "former foster children have lower educational achievement; higher rates of unemployment and underemployment; are overrepresented in the homeless . . . suffer more mental health issues such as PTSD, depression and substance use than the matched comparison groups of non-foster children" (p. 366). These health and wellness outcomes may impact foster children's self-esteem, which in some instances could impact opportunities to develop positive identity.

Indigenous youths' care providers also suffered alongside the most extreme form of poverty where income inadequacy prevented them from affording the most basic necessities, including housing and food. Research has shown that poverty disproportionately shapes Indigenous homeless youths' families' lived realities. Gaetz (2009) states that Indigenous people are more likely than members of dominant culture to experience job discrimination, including included poor compensation for work tasks completed, which then impacts their family's socioeconomic status and thus housing options. Dallas emphasized the impoverishment her family experienced while she was growing up. *"No money. We couldn't afford anything, even food was tight. . . . We were dirt poor."* Income inadequacy is also the primary cause of lack of housing.

Often during Indigenous homeless youths' earlier years, their families were forced to couch surf or secure temporary housing in shelters or with extended family or friends. Yates described a time when the home they lived in was *dozed* and they were unable to find affordable

housing elsewhere. Eventually, he said, his family was able to get a *dive to live in.* Twenty-nine percent of the statistical storytellers reported experiencing homelessness when they were young. A statistical storyteller shared how he felt being homeless as a child. *"Me, being homeless, like when I was a kid, I was angry. I was like so mad at them* (care providers)*, like always. I would get so pissed at the world. And like one day I got so pissed that I finally did something about it. . . . Ya, that's right, I left 'em. I made my own choices like from then on."* Yates also shared how he felt about his childhood homeless experience. *"When I weren't worried 'bout friends—ya know, like if they found out—like I was, my family was f—ked."* Indigenous youth who described experiences of homelessness are seemingly out of place as part of the Canadian experience, especially because it is understood that Canada has one of the highest standards of living in the world. However, reflecting upon the experiences of colonial oppression and marginalization experienced by Aboriginal people, they continue to be positioned towards the bottom of most measures, including socioeconomic well-being, educational levels, employment opportunities, housing conditions, and per capita income measurements (Reading & Wien, 2009). Notably, Perry Bellegarde, elected national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, was quoted in an article written for *The Globe and Mail* (Mackrael, 2015), as stating that Indigenous people were statistically ranked only 63rd in the world on the human development index, whereas Canada as a whole ranked 8th. Furthermore, one in four First Nations children suffers poverty as compared to one in six non-Aboriginal children (Rothman, 2007). Sadly, unequal opportunities afforded Indigenous youth and their families were never more noticeable than in Indigenous homeless youths' self-described experiences of their early years. The extent to which discrimination adversely impacted them was disheartening.

Family tensions, conflicts, and poverty that Indigenous homeless youth described in their stories were intense. However, oppressive microsystem relationships were not limited to the home environment. Indigenous homeless youth described tenuous relationships with teachers and peers in the school environment. None of the Indigenous homeless youth in the study currently attended school, and none had graduated. Reflecting on the policies created by Nicholas Flood Davin in 1879 that led to the residential school system responsible for assimilating Indigenous children into dominant culture to "civilize" them, it is clear that these practices of assimilating diverse cultures into dominant culture through education persist to this day. Seventy-one percent of the statistical storytellers reported their school experiences as unsatisfactory. Only 21 percent described their school experience as satisfactory. Fort shared his synopsis of a teacher's attitudes toward himself and other Indigenous students who also attended his school. He said, *"Teachers got attitude. I don't think they like any of us* (us referred to Indigenous students)*. Called me a trouble maker like the rest of them. They don't see the shit them other kids do."* He also described derogatory name-calling inflicted upon Indigenous youth by other students. *"Called us chugs and Indians."* Dallas said that school *"teached me nuthin. No, yah, they teached me that I was a loser."* Courtney blamed cultural belonging for being ostracized. *"Kids at school never gotta come to my house to play after. They never asked me over neither. We aren't good anuf for 'em."* Statistical storytellers added: *"I hated 'em, hated school. Teachers sucked." "Did ya know that when I went to school, all of us chugs were put with kids who were dumb. Why'd they think we all dumb. Blanshard, he's super smart. Can build all kinds of stuff."*

Lastly, Indigenous homeless youth described reminders of their believed inferiority that made it challenging to create favourable comparisons of themselves with the out-group (non-

Indigenous group). Comparisons with the out-group do not reflect the reality of Indigenous homeless youth competencies but rather are reinforced through discriminatory behaviours towards them that afford Indigenous homeless youth lower social status. These kinds of attitudes impact opportunities to create positive identities, and in some instances may encourage members from the marginalized group to suppress their devalued selves (Roberts & Creary, 2012). Research conducted by Lam (2012) emphasized the role that external environments play in youths' processes of identity and cultural identity development as being significant. One statistical storyteller added comments to their questioned response connected to cultural involvement. *"Like being* an *Indian. Like I kinda get it now. Kids used to pick on Lampson all the time. Called him names, blamed him for stuff he didn't do. First, they left me 'lone. But like they eventually figured it out, like that I was the same. Then the same shit happened to me.* When addressing the question of involvement in cultural activities, some statistical storytellers added tart responses such as: *"What the f--k are you talking about?" "How would I know, we's always moving." "What culture? What?"* Only forty-three percent of statistical storytellers reported having been involved in cultural activities. With respect to a lack of positive references made about culture in the stories Indigenous homeless youth told, the youth appear to have revalued themselves by unidentifying themselves with their cultural (Indigenous) group and reweighting their status by assessing their value in relation to their new "in-group" (i.e., homelessness). Sadly, many Indigenous homeless youth are without opportunities to actively participate in the regeneration of their cultural community through engagement in cultural activities. This is concerning because it demonstrates the damage oppressive colonial practices have created to date that are leading a pathway toward Indigenous culture demise and white washing. As Côté (2011) writes, "Without a certain segment of the population contributing to the common

welfare—influencing cultural context—societies cannot maintain standards of sustenance" (p. 126). However, Indigenous homeless youth who participated in this research have participated in cultural resurgence through acts of remembering through storytelling that exposed exclusionary practices that disenfranchised and oppressed them and played a significant role in opening pathways to homelessness. Additionally, in spite of the challenging pathways homelessness has created, the youths' engagement in resurgence work suggests they are interested in supporting the larger collective cultural goal of cultural, political, emotional, and social reclaiming or rejuvenation (S. de Finney, personal conversation, June 30, 2021) that takes power away from those who believe it is theirs to hold. In the present, homelessness is a pathway that presents itself to the youth, and an opportunity to direct their experiences in the best way possible. Furthermore, resurgence work encourages Indigenous homeless youths' development of self-esteem by pushing aside diminished beliefs about themselves.

The South: Physical Well-Being

Moving away from the east I follow the sun into the southern realm. The sun nourishes life and our spirit. Unfortunately, Indigenous homeless youth in this research have received little opportunity to participate in culture, so they remain hungry for cultural teachings that provide meaning, purpose, and spiritual nourishment to feed their soul and spirit. However, Indigenous homeless youth described being able to engage in the strengths-based behaviour of self-care to nourish their body's physical health, while being wary of the ever-present risks associated with their chosen self-care practices. Self-care practices are represented on the Medicine Wheel as residing in the physical realm. Indigenous homeless youths' self-care practices were conducted without supportive adults guiding their way. Their engagement in physical self-care enhanced

their self-concept through meeting their basic needs. Self-concept is connected to self-esteem, which is understood as encouraging positive identity development.

Daily, Indigenous homeless youth were confronted with challenges to their health and wellness. Without secure resources for food, shelter, and personal self-care needs such as warmth and cleanliness, medical and emotional support, they were forced to source out strategies that supported their basic needs. In their stories, all of the Indigenous homeless youth storytellers reported having accessed government and agency services (outreach workers, shelter, harm-reduction, and food services) to support their physical wellness.

Some housed people believe that agency services encourage homelessness. These people are unaware of the complex social realities of marginalized groups, including mental health challenges and inadequate housing and supports for low-income Canadians or people in crisis. However, the Indigenous homeless youth who engaged in this research were not seeking an easy way out, but rather sought out services that promoted self-care and improved their standard of living while they were unhoused. Seventy-one percent of Indigenous homeless youth involved in statistical storytelling said that supportive services were useful. All statistical storytellers recommended agency services to peers who also lived homelessly. All Indigenous homeless youth who were involved in guided oral storytelling referenced accessing Our Place in Victoria. Our Place is described as serving meals to the homeless and providing hot showers, free clothing, counselling, and outreach services.

Indigenous homeless youth sustained their physical strength by eating well enough. These youth made multiple references to eating. Their stories and actions suggested they understood the relationship between eating well enough and physical health and the risks associated with not eating, or eating poorly. Fort said, *"I mainly eat at Our Place. Ya'd get sick if*

ya didn't eat." Pandora described past lessons learned when she lived with her adoptive parents. *"Ya, I take okay care of myself here—like pretty good. Like I don't starve here. I go with them and we eat there* (pointing to Our Place). *Mom always nagged me to eat proper. I think it musta stuck*. *I try to, even here, but I'm not always so good at it*. In contrast to healthy eating behaviours, Courtney and Pandora made references to youth whose ability to provide self-care was lacking. Courtney mentioned Walter, a very *skinny* peer in homelessness, and suggested he was starved. Pandora referenced a peer who ate food found in a dumpster. She said it made her *hurl*. In these instances, Indigenous homeless youth made connections between food sources and choices and health outcomes and believed some choices should be avoided.

Indigenous homeless youth accessed shelter services during extreme weather conditions (rain, wind, snow) in order to support physical self-care. Finding safe shelter posed a significant challenge to Indigenous homeless youths' physical self-care strategies. Forty-three percent of the youth who participated in statistical storytelling described tents or self-made shelters as their preferred shelter type. Only 21 percent said they usually slept in supportive housing or shelter spaces. Youth who participated in guided oral storytelling reported that they accessed shelter beds during the colder, wetter Victoria days when extreme weather conditions potentially threatened their physical health. Statistical storytellers also made reference to weather as a criterion necessitating indoor sleeping. Speaking of shelter services, statistical storytellers added: *"Like I use them, but only when I gotta, like if it's too cold to stay outside. Not gonna freeze my nackers off." "I stay in 'em in the winter sometimes. Summer we all tent with them* (pointing to friends standing outside at Our Place). *But if it snows, right, like I go inside."* However, a greater number of Indigenous homeless youth stated that they slept at a friend's or outdoors, especially in the warmer, drier months. Generally speaking, Indigenous homeless youth slept in locations

where they felt physically protected (both from weather and people of questionable character). Yates reported, *"Sometimes shelter can be sketchy. Gotta watch out there."* Courtney was also wary of shelter life. She said she *"went to Rock Bay just a bit ago. It ain't bad. Just the mat though. Ain't staying in the shelter. No, don't wanna stay there. Broughton* (a peer in homelessness) *told me they farm your stuff so ya gotta keep watch when yur there."* Johnson implied that life experiences while he lived in homelessness made him aware of persons of concern who were to be avoided when he stayed overnight at a shelter. *"Like sometimes I get a mat there* (Rock Bay). *I bin here long enough to know who to watch for."* Indigenous homeless youth reflected upon inherent dangers associated with sleeping in a shelter location and noted how conflicting personalities and unstable health of other shelter residents potentially led to a volatile atmosphere. Here, Indigenous homeless youth who assessed the safeguards against the risks made decisions about where to sleep that did not intentionally put themselves in harm's way. These attitudes and self-reflection counter the dominant popular, political, and theoretical discourses regarding youths' self-made decisions that are believed to be irresponsible or poorly thought out and focused on some form of desired deviant outcome (Kelly, 2000).

All of the Indigenous homeless youth who participated in this research described using substances. Forty-three percent of the statistical storytellers said they used substances to cope with the daily challenges of street life. However, because this research focused specifically on Indigenous homeless youths' strengths-based behaviours, I have not included their drug use and drug-related activities because I believe they do not model strengths-based behaviours. Relative to this research, for many Indigenous youth and their families who are impacted by colonized practices that have yet to end, drug use is an outward expression of ongoing internal trauma. Unfortunately, youth are often judged based on their age and the experiences they embrace

(Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015; Lesko, 1996) without consideration given to the circumstances that led to their drug use. For youth who have yet to create myriads of coping strategies to handle early-life and ongoing intergenerational trauma, as well as challenging relationships, substance use is sometimes the most readily available coping strategy. Regardless of the cause, drug use leads to self-harm. In Canada, researchers Wild et al. (2021) note that there is documented public support for harm reduction services to reduce self-harm outcomes. Unfortunately, their research also suggests that when people who use drugs are stigmatized by the outgroup, there is the potential to judge drug users as "unworthy of receiving effective interventions" such as harm reduction (Wild et al., 2021 p. 3). In the context of this research, I believe that when youth engage in strategies that lessen the harms associated with drug use, they are exhibiting a prosocial behaviour. Furthermore, research suggests that youth are receptive to strategies aimed at reducing the harmful effects of substance use (Slemon et al., 2019). Indigenous youths' self-care practices that encouraged responsible drug use demonstrated care for themselves and the broader society.

While existing research on drugs use notes its potential for poor health outcomes, and even death, some Indigenous homeless youth who used substances took advantage of prosocial resources provided through harm reduction or safe injection sites. Youth who accessed these services illustrated a desire to use safely (or safely enough) and to minimize risks to others, especially given that these facilities provide safe receptacles to dispose of needles and drug paraphernalia.

Johnson spoke about drug use in the homeless community. *"Ya, everyone uses. Ya I know about fentanyl. Bad shit. Sometimes, ya I go to the shooting gallery. They got Narcan there. Woulda saved Cook."* Yates added, *"the POD . . . sometimes I bring my cooker there."*

Indigenous homeless youths' use of harm reduction services, including a safe injection site, helped minimize the harmful effects of substances such as self-harm, death through overdose, and disease through the sharing of needles. Fifty percent of statistical storytellers said they used harm reduction services. Forty-three percent of these youth described harm reduction as very useful. Comments added by statistical storytellers regarding harm reduction services included *"I always use safe gear." "I use clean gear." "Me and Broughton go at the same time. I get me clean needles. So does he."* Statistical storytellers who were attempting to get clean described their use of legal opioid substitutes acquired from these sites to reduce withdrawal symptoms and improve their chances of recovery. *"I use suboxone." "I use methadone."* One statistical storyteller noted that he had acquired protection to reduce the risk of developing diseases connected to unsafe sexual practices. *"Last time I went there I got me lots of condoms. Might get lucky* (laughing)*."* The youths' attempts to move away from willful self-destructive practices helped promote a safer outcome when using. Through realizing the risks associated with drug use and tempering them with safe use practices, Indigenous homeless youth made decisions that promoted self-care.

Indigenous homeless youth consulted with professionals in order to receive additional support for their physical and emotional self-care needs. However, they described their experiences with professional counsellors as less than satisfactory. For example, Pandora spoke about her relationship to a professional counsellor she had consulted with. *"Like, ya know, like if you talk to them, they ask too many probing* (with laugher) *questions. They think they know all the answers. That's a joke."* Statistical storytellers also made reference to counsellor inadequacies. *"Don't need to tell me 'bout drugs. I know more'n them." "Counsellors—they are morons. I'm not 12 anymore. How'd they figure they knew it best? Sometimes I think if I did it*

their way, I'd get the crap kicked outta me. Like really, how's that gonna help?" Lynn-Callo (2008) noted that counsellors who interpreted Indigenous homeless youths' behaviours as individual disorders and attempted to resolve "diseases" actually reproduced and reinforced "dominant imaginings about homelessness and homeless people and thus contributed to [the production of] subjectivities, experiences, self-images, and behaviours" (p. 52). More specifically, counsellors who attempted to provide support they deemed necessary for challenging behaviours they presumed Indigenous homeless youth to experience, albeit through the lens of the dominant discourse, failed. Based on Indigenous homeless youths' lack of use of counsellors' services and their belief in counsellors ineffectiveness, youth actively discontinued use of these services for fear of further mistreatment or pressure to conform.

While describing professional counsellors as ineffective, Indigenous homeless youth described outreach or "street" support workers as an invaluable resource. Outreach or street support workers are lay counsellors who have often experienced adversities themselves. One of the Indigenous homeless youth statistical storytellers said that outreach workers are *"okay to talk to."* Others said: *"I think ya can trust Quadra"*; *"doesn't rat me out"*; and *"Buddy knows the hustle."* Outreach workers are noted for providing nonjudgmental support and emotional support and connecting youth to appropriate mental and medical health supports when needed by building trusting relationships (Evenson, 2009). Understanding that sustained mind and body health takes time to nurture, it is best achieved with trusted, supportive others working alongside. Outreach workers are particularly helpful because their messaging is devoid of judgment and blame regarding these youths' lifestyle choices.

In this research, some youth were able through their stories to provide examples of creating adequate physical and emotional self-care that boosted their self-concept and thus their

self-esteem, which led to opportunities to create positive identities. However, it must be understood that this was not a clear-cut, linear cause-and-effect process. Youth will continue to be impacted by their community and social environment (Norman & Reist, 2021) and thus will experience ups and downs, as well as structural barriers such as poverty and its ensuing effects that also impact health and wellness and thus identity development outcomes.

The West: Emotional Well-Being

Moving onward toward the west, the sun's warmth begins to wane. Youth draw upon prosocial relationships to create inner warmth, or emotional wellness. Having physically released themselves from the unhealthy relationships which devalued their sense of personhood and inhibited healthy behaviours, youth drew upon new and some preexisting prosocial relations to promote emotional health and healing. However, this does not imply that the entangled, toxic, and dangerous family dynamics they left have disappeared from their memories and no longer impact them; it only means that they are not physically participating in these relationships in the present (S. de Finney, personal communication July 1, 2021). For several youth, building and participating in prosocial relationships fosters belonging. Belonging is a basic human need that reduces pathological consequences (Maslow, 1968). Prosocial relationships are represented through the heart, which resides in the Medicine Wheel's emotional wellness realm. The heart pulsates with a steady beat when satisfaction is derived through relationships. Pitawanakwat (2006) notes that the heart helps us evaluate, appreciate, and enjoy our lives and bring joy to others. These positive attributes are accredited to a sense of belonging.

While we learned earlier that Indigenous homeless youth who were in need of support, including emotional support, consulted with outreach support workers, they also took charge of creating emotional support for themselves through friendships. Friendships are a type of

prosocial relationship that is particularly important when the outcome leads to increased competence, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging. In their study *Social Support and the Perception of Geographical Slant*, Schnall and colleagues (2008) reported that people who stood next to a friend perceived a hill to be less steep than did people who stood alone. Indigenous homeless youth who provided responsive social support to others whom they described as friends facilitated emotional growth for both themselves and the friends. Belonging created through friendships is linked to increased happiness, competencies, and health outcomes, which promotes greater self-esteem (Jakubiak & Tomlinson, 2020; Roberts & Creary, 2012), and positively corelated to positive identity development.

A sense of belonging created through friendships was particularly useful to Indigenous homeless youth because it helped them mitigate the effects of stress, loneliness, and isolation that were inherent in their previous relationships. Courtney felt that Fort had been instrumental in helping her get set up in homelessness. She described him as *solid*. Dallas acknowledged benefits she received from friendships that helped her stave off pending loneliness and isolation in homelessness. *"Like so I remember when I first stayed here. . . . It was the worst. Then I met May. I knew her before here . . . ya, she and me hung out at the Pit together when we had a smoke. Way back. She lived here for a bit now. She got me set up. She showed me how to roll."*

Dominant discourses discussed in western research perpetuate the understanding that without adults involved in Indigenous homeless youths' lives they would not be able to construct healthy friendships (Kelly, 2000). Thus, their poorly chosen relationships were believed to be with like-minded homeless, "broken," dysfunctional peers. This perspective implies that Indigenous homeless youths' friendships with peers in their homeless community increase their likelihood of further engagement in deviant behaviours. However, when this understanding is

embraced it fails to uncover the ways in which prosocial relationships encourage positivity that creates prosocial outcomes, which thus are not acts of deviancy. Dallas spoke of her engagement in supportive relationship building with others by sharing her street knowledge to help a peer who was experiencing street feet for the first time. Two statistical storytellers offered additional information about friendships they made during their experience of homelessness: *"She said I could hang with them. I think she knowed I was hurtin'. Sometimes it's pretty scary here." "He told me 'bout Our Place. Told me that's where to get food. Like that's where everyone's in the afternoon. Said he had connections, and would show me the ropes."* Lastly, two different statistical storytellers described care practices that were extended to their nonhuman relations (dogs) that helped them create positivity in their lives.

Of the Indigenous homeless youth who engaged in statistical storytelling, ninety-three percent said they made friends in homelessness, and these friends kept them from feeling lonely, offered them protection, and taught them things they needed to know to survive on the street (street smarts). Generally speaking, Indigenous homeless youths' self-selected relationships with peers who lived homelessly provided them with emotional and other supports that in turn promoted self-confidence and self-esteem that potentially influenced positive identity development outcomes.

Indigenous homeless youths' stories suggest that not all youth physically dissociate themselves from relationships they held when they were housed. Thirty-six percent of statistical storytellers said they maintained relationships with a friend or family member from their previous time spent housed. A statistical storyteller told about the importance of holding on to these friendships. "*I still see Merriman and Reynolds. They don't live here. They were my friends since I's a kid. Their dad used to take us all fishing. They'd always been nice to me."* Another

statistical storyteller added, *"Me 'n Monterey are still friends. We bin friends always. He still lives with his mom."*

Fort, Pandora, and Yates also described the important role that previous relationships served in the present. Pandora noted that her relationship with her brother remained important to her because she felt he understood her situation. *I know he wants me to go back home. Sometimes he gives me some coin for food. . . . They* (adoptive parents) *don't get what it's like, but he does.* Yates described seeing the *old crew sometimes* and described its positive effect on his self-esteem. *"One time when we were hanging out at Central, shooting hoops, I saw Mr. Walnut. He was my old teacher. Got him to join us for a little one on one. . . . Told me I was still good. Said I hadn't lost it but that I better be ready for next time. He's a cool dude."* Fort described the relationship he maintained with his grandmother that was built upon the sharing of traditional food (frybread). Fort described her as *a "cool broad."* These previously existing and ongoing relationships suggest that Indigenous homeless youth are capable of discerning the importance of engaging in relationships that create prosocial outcomes, such as happiness and understanding, which this research suggests support self-esteem and encourages positive identity development.

The Indigenous homeless youth who engaged in this research envisioned themselves as pushing against the structural factors and personal histories that shaped their lives and limited their choices. For youth who felt devalued, downtrodden, and abused in their previous relationships, some existing and some new relationships formed with members of their homeless community helped them to reframe their previous diminished personhood, which challenges information shared by researchers such as Hagan and McCarthy (1997) who describe homelessness as a descending life experience. Indigenous homeless youths' new friendships helped promote respect for themselves and others through belonging, which facilitated positive

growth of self-esteem. Research cited earlier (i.e., Santrock, 2019a; Tsang et al., 2012) states that youth with greater self-esteem are better emotionally prepared to accomplish tasks that encourage positive identity development outcomes.

The North: Mental Well-Being

As I step away from the West, I lean into the North. The North is the place where the sun rests and our bodies rest. The North is a time of self-reflection so that we may fuel our spirits. And, according to Pitawanakwat (2006), "wisdom also resides in the north" (n.p.). Engaging in processes that support mental well-being reconnects the circle of the Medicine Wheel and illustrates our engagement in balanced living, also described as "walking in a good way" (Dumont, 1989). With the circle completed it also creates opportunities to build momentum and begin anew. In the context of this research, Indigenous homeless youths' mental well-being was modelled through self-reflection. Self-reflection involves self-learning acquired through deep thinking that then leads to agency (Côté and Levine, 2016), which involves intentional action and responsibility. In this process, Indigenous homeless youth moved toward actions that aligned with their future goals and supported their self-esteem, which is described in this research as a root of positive identity development.

Indigenous homeless youth demonstrated agentive strengths-based behaviours through their engagement in self-initiated processes that supported their chosen life course pathways. Based on studies conducted in Western countries, Côté and Levine (2016) describe youth who engage in agentive behaviours as having a belief in their ability to control decisions that affect them, able to take responsibility for the outcomes their agency creates, and confident they can overcome many of the obstacles that develop along the resulting pathway. Bandura (2006) concurs, emphasizing that an individual's confidence in their agentive capacity is a significant

determinant of their engagement in a particular behaviour, because it means they perceive themselves as capable of managing outcomes that arise as a result. However, in the context of this research, it must be understood that obstacles to health outside of the individual's control also affect youths' self-esteem and thus positive identity processes. Researchers (e.g., Allan & Smylie, 2015; de Finney, et al., 2011; de Finney, personal communication, July 1, 2021; Reading & Wien, 2009) note that broader systemic challenges created by colonization, such as the Indian Act, forced residential school attendance, forced relocation, and forced separation from family that are intertwined into Indigenous health outcomes, affect identity development and cannot be overcome by individual acts of agency. Thus, youths' actions to create change to existing systemic problems—or their competencies to overcome a challenge that would result from such agency had it been explored—were outside the scope of this research. Instead, this research focuses specifically on youths' agentive behaviours whereby they create change to their personal behaviours and self-concepts and believe in their capacity to overcome the obstacles that arise as a result of their agentive decisions to effect these changes, which may ultimately encourage their development of positive identity outcomes.

Researchers Bishop and Willis (2014) suggest that youth are unable to "'properly' consider the future consequences of their actions" (p. 779) when they shift away from home and into homelessness. However, it must be understood that while homeless youth in general may not have much, it "does not mean we should ignore what they have: representations of the world and themselves, desires, knowledges, capacities, values, feelings" (Aldeia, 2013, p. 71). For the Indigenous homeless youth who engaged in guided oral storytelling, the most significant step they took to denounce the continued negative impact others had on their life was to walk away from the daily horrors they experienced. Fifty-seven percent of Indigenous homeless youth who

completed a statistical story described leaving home as a choice to discontinue hostile or unsatisfactory microsystem relationships. While people who live housed may question the merit of Indigenous homeless youths' decision to leave home, Indigenous homeless youth who participated in this research do not describe homelessness as a poor choice or pathway. Fort, for example, said, *"And like it's a helluva lot better than before,"* while Dallas noted, *"I got my sisters here. That's all I need."*

Through strengths-based agentive behaviours, some youth in this study released themselves from further harm and marginalization that was identified in their stories as originating from their home experiences. For example, Courtney, who described her mom as uncaring, *useless*, *an addict, a stoner*, and herself as affected by her mother's *poor choices*, left home so that she didn't have to *relive this dance over and over.* While their self-made decisions were accomplished at a costly price of walking away from home and family, their decision brought forth greater satisfaction and sense of self-worth. No Indigenous homeless youth who participated in statistical storytelling described feeling less satisfied with their current homeless lifestyle. In fact, Sixty-four percent of the statistical storytellers described themselves as more satisfied since they had been living in the homeless community. This understanding significantly challenges Western social norms that denotes homelessness as a personal and moral failure and beyond the boundaries of "normal" social enterprise (Bucholtz, 2002; Thistle, 2017) whereby relationships and happiness or satisfaction are an unlikely outcome. Twenty-one percent said that nothing had changed regarding their degree of life satisfaction. My research does not assign a value to the choices these youth made. However, it recognizes that others' actions adversely impacted the youth. Furthermore, while negative home experiences such as those experienced by

Courtney and described above were left behind, marginalizing experiences persist in homelessness that continue to impact youth in the present.

In the context of this research, the youths' stories tell of self-reflection toward potential future achievable options that will promote their life goals and circumvent lost opportunities. Pathways they were considering included some form of education, developing skills that would lead to employment, and securing some form of housing in the future. However, these pathways were not contemplated at the expense of their current homeless community.

Through engagement in agentive behaviours, Indigenous homeless youth secured employment that helped them stave off the effects of poverty. In the present, Indigenous homeless youth put pride aside and worked whatever job they could secure in order to meet their basic needs. Seventy-one percent of the statistical story-tellers were presently working. Fifty percent said they engaged in nontraditional employment. Nontraditional employment options embraced by them included binning, selling stuff, casual farm labour, construction, shop clean-up, panhandling, and squeegeeing. Nontraditional employment options promote Indigenous homeless youths' economic survival on the street, especially if traditional employment is unavailable or doesn't work with the constraints of their current living situation. Employment also encourages teamwork and belonging, a work ethic, and consideration of others' satisfaction. Sadly, prevalent social attitudes tend to devalue nontraditional employment options embraced by the homeless (Gaetz et al., 2013) and oftentimes discuss these negatively in the media (e.g., in news reports, on social media platforms), regardless of the positive outcomes they create for homeless youth. Prosocial skills through employment such as those described above are transferable skills that support Indigenous homeless youth in the present and which they can continue to draw upon in their future.

Personal goal setting Indigenous homeless youth engaged in included returning to some form of schooling. Some Indigenous homeless youth felt education would add value to themselves and could potentially improve their future employability. However, other Indigenous homeless youth questioned whether this was likely to happen given current racialized experiences they suffered. Fort said, *"I'm not afraid ta work. But, ya think it's easy getting a job? It wasn't easy before. I can do lots a stuff. No one hires the Indian. How do you think it'd be different, like if I went to school, like after that? It's almost too funny if I didn't need the f--king money. Shitty, eh."* Johnson noted, *"Like work, like getting work ain't no different than school. Like what I am. And now, like as soon as I said what I am, they get itchy feet. Ya know, they wanna get away from me, not give me the job. And you wonder why I do what I do."* Seventy-one percent of the statistical storytellers felt that even if they completed schooling their work options would not improve, suggesting that multiple other conditions influence employability. A statistical storyteller stated, *"Indians are lazy, right? Least that's what they say."*

Prevalent public assumptions that are reproduced in the media, through the creation of social policies, and in Western research presume that being housed is preferable to being unhoused. However, Indigenous homeless youth in this research did not share this sentiment and upon self-reflection did not make being rehoused a priority goal. Only twenty-one percent of statistical storytellers said that if it were possible to simply walk away from homelessness today, or in the future, they would. Sixty-four percent said they would not. These youth added such statements as "*Leave my friends, no way"* and *"If they come with me."* One statistical storyteller said that even if he left homelessness, he *"still wouldn't go back with them"* (referring to the family he had left in order to live homelessly). Indigenous homeless youths' future goals did not exclude holding on to some aspects of their homeless life. Johnson, who enjoyed working on

cars, thought that in the future he would *"have me a shop and be the boss. Ya, I like that idea. And I'll get my friends jobs—ya know, the ones that like to work on cars, right. And maybe I'll still live here, and maybe I won't. I don't know. Does it matter?"* Fort considered the value of living housed, but again friendships were reflected upon and would moderate the pathway he chose in the future. *"Ummm here for now but . . . maybe I'll have me a house one day. Bring my friends with me, too. Can't forget 'em. They need me, right?* Yates noted that if he made millions*, "I'm gonna get me my own house. I'll bring 'em* (friends he presently associated with) *with me."* Pandora originally stated in her story that she would probably go back to school one day. When I reached out to her to get final approval of her edited story for inclusion in this research, she told me she was presently completing final course work necessary for graduation and would be applying to an ECE program at a postsecondary institution. She no longer lived in the homeless community.

Indigenous homeless youth assert through their stories that they have the potential to regenerate their spirit through engagement with strengths-based behaviours in order to transform their life outcomes. Several youth in this research described homelessness as a place of transition, suggesting that they believed in their capacity to leave for somewhere different at some point in the future. Fort emphasized the transitional nature of the time he anticipated spending in homelessness. He said, *"Ummm here for now."* Some youth were living homelessly while they built upon their strengths-based behaviours and explored new experiences prior to moving forward. Thus, homelessness must be considered part of a continuum along the housing pathway in which youth take charge of shaping their life circumstances and trajectory.

Indigenous homeless youths' control over their actions and their belief in their competency to navigate consequences connected to their actions created by personal agency

positively impacted their self-confidence. Significant to this research, youth who embraced opportunities that supported their self-confidence gained in self-esteem, which, according to Western developmental theory, is believed to be at the root of positive identity development processes and the primary task during adolescence.

Summary

Homeless Indigenous youths' oral and statistical stories woven here reinforced their understandings of their strengths-based behaviours that encouraged prosocial outcomes, which supported their self-esteem and promoted opportunities to engage in processes that potentially led to positive identity development, supportive relationships, adaptive life skills and knowledge of local resources and supports, which they then made available to peers. Furthermore, several youth acknowledged an awareness of the impact systemic barriers and colonial practices have had on their family that have influenced their decisions going forward.

In the context of this research, each strengths-based behavioural theme demonstrated by youth aligns with a realm represented on the Medicine Wheel—spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental well-being—to demonstrate the relevance of holistic health outcomes to Indigenous health and wellness outcomes. Themes I identified in the Indigenous homeless youths' stories were resurgence, self-care, prosocial relationships, and agency. However, these realms and the corresponding strengths-based behaviours are interconnected and must be reflected upon as conjoined processes whereby strengths-based behaviours cross over and create benefits in multiple realms simultaneously. Furthermore, these were not the only strengths-based behaviours Indigenous homeless youth engaged in, but rather were the ones I felt were demonstrated within all the shared stories that supported this research. Lastly, not all youth gain from a strengths-based behaviour in the same way, reminding us that youths' relational experiences affect them in

unique ways. This research considered the holistic nature of identity, health and well-being and acknowledges that the Indigenous homeless youth who participated in the research were working towards achieving balance and attempting to "walk in a good way" as they strove towards positive identity development and transitions to adulthood.

Chapter 6. Conclusion and Implications

Tattered Feathers

> *A feather is fragile yet strong. If it becomes tousled or injured by wind, rain or natural happenings that occur, the strong bonds of the feather hold it together until the difficult times have passed. Should the feather become damaged, the other parts balance the extra work among themselves until the feather is rebuilt, helping others along the way. Every piece is important to making a feather work correctly, and the loss of strands can be difficult, but with the help of others the community as a whole can heal. Slight flaws in the structure of a feather are normal, the feather can sense and adapt to this difficulty. In times of hardship and damage a community and a feather both learn the benefits of working together.*
>
> Jessica Yarrow, "Feathers," in *Indigenous Arts & Stories, 2007*

The stories shared by Indigenous homeless youth in this research illustrate experiences of turmoil, mental and physical pain, failure, desperation, and discrimination that current research reports create a low sense of self-worth and thus poor self-esteem (e.g., Reading and Wien, 2009; de Finney et al., 2011). Allan and Smylie (2015) acknowledge that these experiences are connected to violence, "cultural genocide, appropriation of lands and social and economic oppression" (p. 2) that occur at the systemic level and have impacted Indigenous peoples' individual and collective health and wellness since colonial practices were first instituted over four centuries ago. Ongoing processes of colonization continue to affect Indigenous people to this day through racialized experiences whose tentacles reach into every aspect of our life, including how we define our health and wellness, which, relative to this research, impacts understandings of positive identity development. The intent of this thesis was to explore Indigenous homeless youths' experiences that create positive identity development. It leaned on tenets of Western developmental theory, Indigenous theory and methodology, Elders' knowledge and stories, storytelling, Indigenous understandings of holistic health, social determinants of Indigenous health and wellness, and relational systems of influence to understand impacts of

youths' past and present experiences relating to processes of identity development. However, a vital part of Indigenous re-search involves "writing in" our realities and experiences of marginalization and discrimination that give context to outcomes and that challenge colonialized stereotypes. In general, having housing is positively correlated to growth and development and ongoing physical, emotional, and psychological health (Norman & Reist, 2021). However, it is not a foregone conclusion that homeless youth cannot achieve positive identity outcomes based on their existing experiences. Indigenous youths' stories illustrate strengths-based behaviours that promote prosocial outcomes. From an Indigenous perspective, prosocial outcomes include holistic health outcomes achieved through balanced living in spiritual, mental, emotional and physical realms. Holistic health emphasizes the interconnectedness of these realms.

Below is an analysis of themes that arose from youths' stories, which I describe from the perspective of holistic health and wellness outcomes. Recommendations stemming from these key findings are also shared.

"Writing In" Indigenous Youths' Past Experiences that Create Spiritual Well-being: Resurgence

Of significance to the Indigenous youth who participated in this research is that it was their story, told with their slant, in their ways, for their purposes. Youths' stories were acts of resistance and resurgence whereby their past was brought to the fore and exposed. Their stories were about rewriting and "re-righting" their position in the world. Nick Estes, in *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, emphasizes the relationship between past and present, suggesting that an alternative future can be determined by understanding our past. Factors that impact relationships to family, friends, community environment, and, in the broadest sense, white patriarchal society

(Norman & Reist, 2021), which persist through neocolonial and neoliberal policies that govern people in Canada, continue to negatively impact Indigenous peoples' health and well-being. However, not all Indigenous homeless youth are affected by inequitable practices and policies in the same way. Furthermore, diverse experiences affected the youth and impacted the role their strengths-based behaviours played upon their experiences, resulting in unique outcomes.

Youth acknowledged that their decision to drift into homelessness was not a result of personal failure, laziness, rebelliousness, or lack of social discipline. Rather, their choices were a stance against the social and structural forces resulting from colonialism that have created inequalities for Indigenous people, such as family poverty, higher rates of foster care experiences, discrimination, and a lack of family connectedness and chaos that lead to emotional and psychological distress. Specifically, homeless youth were alienated from healthy relationships and were central to their decisions to drift away from home. These findings are consistent with those uncovered by Magnuson, Jansson, and Benoit (2021).

In this research, youth committed to participate in truth-telling storytelling whereby they exposed mistruths disseminated through damaging dominant discourses. Stories are a foundation for change, renewal, and resilience. Thus, their engagement in storytelling is resurgence work that supported a reevaluation of their present devalued identities by devaluing dominant cultural characteristics that have maintained dominant social hierarchies for centuries. The resurgence work committed to by the youth is an example of what Corntassel and Scow (2017) describe as the "'everyday'—those often unseen, unacknowledged actions that renew our peoplehood and generate community resurgence" (p. 55). Youths' work here was done without headlining, and it forms the basis for larger social movements that will be difficult to stop (Corntassel & Scow, 2017). Youths' stories contribute to their sense of self-efficacy whereby they see themselves as

capable of contributing to the body of research about homelessness in order to expose the challenges, relationships, and strengths they experience in their lives.

Crucial next steps developed by frontline practitioners to support Indigenous youth must involve Indigenous youth. Youth deserve the opportunity to unveil the truth about experiences that impact them—and they deserve to be protected from these experiences reoccurring. This requires conversations that contribute to a deeper understanding of our country's past and that lead to changes in attitudes and social structures in the present and future. Targeted, coordinated information sharing that promotes the broadest dissemination of knowledge would be best practice. As per the recommendations set forth in the Truth and Reconciliations Commission's findings (TRC, 2015), Indigenous children's experiences suffered during their attendance in residential schools and the outcomes that followed must be taught about in schools so that when young learners are adults, they see to it that these kinds of experiences never happen again. More specifically, any changes to existing practices that impact Indigenous people must take into account the impact of historical and ongoing injustices and the intergenerational trauma that has resulted from them. Furthermore, those who are responsible for promoting change must acknowledge and address their own racialized biases that impact the strategies they use to support Indigenous youth.

Strengths-based Physical and Emotional Health Outcomes: Self Care, Emotional Wellness

Through storytelling, the youth who participated in this research revealed control, pride in their expertise, wisdom, and abilities to solve challenges that arose in homelessness and that impacted their lives. Expressly, youth engaged in self-care practices that promoted physical and emotional wellness. In addition to resurgence work, youth described the nuances of the prosocial outcomes created by their strengths-based behaviours, whereby they provided themselves with

physical care and offered protection, guidance, and companionship to others, which led to a sense of belonging. Belonging was particularly important to youth because it was a focal point for potentially remaining in homelessness.

Youths' stories illustrated their achievement of socially accepted prosocial outcomes, albeit achieved through unique experiences that were conducive to homeless living. As we attempt to comprehend youth' realities and the strategies they embraced to promote positive identity development, we must acknowledge the impact that existing practices have had and continue to have on these processes. In this research youth demonstrated self-care strategies that included meeting their body's basic nutritional needs, physically protecting themselves from environmental conditions (extreme weather) and physical harm from others by seeking safe shelter (as defined by them), using substances responsibly, and seeking supportive others when they needed additional assistance. These attributes support thriving, which Western developmental specialists consider important to youth engagement in processes that support positive identity development.

As we engage with youth and consider next steps, I am reminded again that any steps for them must be made with them. This principle is consistent with research conclusions drawn by Wild et al. (2021) and Magnuson et al. (2021). Specific to this research, youths' stories suggest that drug use is a reality and is prevalent in homelessness; however, homeless youth are not without a social conscience to use responsibly. Beyond the usefulness that harm reduction services for homeless youth provide and that are developed in consultation with them, I acknowledge the significance of outreach support workers with lived experience as an effective support strategy for Indigenous homeless youth. In their research, Pauly et al. (2021) describe the relevance of involving outreach workers to encourage health promotion, peer education,

advocacy and support for them. However, this strategy also points to concerns regarding current educational programs that train professional counsellors and that interpret behaviours as individual disorders and attempt to resolve "diseases"—which then reproduces and reinforces dominant prejudices (ethnocentrism). In youths' stories, they described counsellors as unhelpful and outreach workers (those with lived experience) as more helpful. This finding points to some counsellors' potential biases about homeless youth that may reinforce the superiority of white, settler-society, ruling-class ideals that still have a foothold in mental health care. Given that counselling support does not transcend cultural influences or the influence of a counsellor's personal history or how they view and treat others (Nuttgens & Campbell, 2010), a human-centered approach that incorporates Indigenous practices could potentially be a more ethical, effective way to work with Indigenous homeless youth. However, this does not imply that Indigenous practices replace Western practices. Instead, these diverse practices must work together to value and respect diversity, make no assumptions of correctness, fit with the youths' worldview, and attend closely to their stories of oppression and subjugation by dominant culture. Thus, I am recommending that those who develop future counselling programs make them more accessible to Indigenous learners so that Indigenous people have greater access to counsellors who share their history and use traditional healing strategies. I believe involving individuals with shared lived experiences, who can act as positive role models, in leadership roles (e.g., in programs such as Solid Outreach, Pauly et al., 2021), would be best practice.

The Future Re-envisioned Through Mental Well-being Outcomes: Agency

Several youth in this research engaged in change and personal growth by setting goals through self-reflection on future possibilities, demonstrating agency. However, these factors interact in complex ways and are mutually conducive, so we need to create supportive

environments in which they can be fostered. In their work, Magnuson et al. (2021) state that it is unrealistic to assume that a homeless youth's future will follow a progressive pathway. Furthermore, they add that while homeless youths' goals illustrate hope, their pathway to achieve their goals is unclear and nonlinear.

In their stories, youth acknowledged that their present lives were not static. They envisioned possible positive changes. However, change did not have a predetermined pathway, and they acknowledged that let-downs were a possibility, but that to falter was not to be a failure. Finding work, or working, having children, and further education were all described as future possibilities they might strive towards. However, as a surprising twist, becoming housed was not a goal of significance for these youth. Youth prioritized belonging rather than being housed. This illustrates the significance of the relationships they had established in homelessness. Peers were truly valuable, especially because youth had been alienated from traditional social, cultural, and economic networks in their previous lives prior to homelessness. Thus, for these youth, home was not symbiotic with a better life, and they would not forego these newly established relationships in order to lived housed. However, both Norman and Reist (2021) and Shumka et al. (2017) point out that healing and well-being and being housed are positively correlated. Therefore, if it were possible to create change, preventing youth from becoming homeless would be the best possible outcome. However, this will not occur at present because massive system changes are necessary and are impeded by present neoliberal governments' policies and laws that support the settler-society ruling class. As a second choice, youth would do best with flexible supports, with supportive others to walk with them on their journey rather than lead their journey. Youth need to exercise choice regarding where to live and the type of housing that would best support their unique goals. The Housing First principle described by Shumka et al.

(2017) suggests that housing is significant to healing. However, these authors also acknowledge that marginalized people (in the case of this research, Indigenous youth) should be in control of their own lives, make their own decisions, and learn from these decisions (i.e., have self-determination). Given youths' reluctance to become housed, which they believe potentially excludes maintaining the relationships they have created, youth might benefit from a group housing option where they could live with some of their friends, and with supportive others close by. Furthermore, a wraparound services approach that provides culture-based services that focus on relational processes of caring, include supportive networks, provide meaningful community engagement, involve opportunities to learn from those with lived experiences, and offer services specific to Indigenous youth is recommended. This type of service approach that draws on the healing powers of culture would strengthen opportunities to create holistic health outcomes that support youth in adulthood and stages beyond with greater success than housing alone could do. Lastly, it may lead to new relationships that are healthy and without the conditions, power imbalances, or exploitation that may have existed in previous (and current) relationships.

Moving Forward

To support Indigenous homeless youth effectively, one must reflect carefully on the purpose behind the youths' behaviours rather than constructing their behaviours as deviant. This is especially important if those with privilege want to be part of the change that leads to an anti-oppressive, equitable society. Through the stories youth told, it is clear that their strengths-based behaviours, while often performed in noncompliant ways relative to those of the dominant culture, created desired prosocial outcomes that are no less admirable than those demonstrated by youth living in homes with caring families.

In today's world, where it is understood that little is static, homogenous, or definitively structured (Cote & Levine, 2016), policy makers and supportive others should not draw conclusions regarding Indigenous homeless youths' outwardly presenting behaviours. These youth must be given space to share their stories so that recommendations, policies, and practices put forward reflect their needs. Indigenous homeless youth possess and demonstrate multiple strengths-based behaviours, and thus are capable of being involved in discussions related to services and systems, such as those described above, that could potentially affect them.

Overall, the findings of this research suggest that Indigenous youth have complex histories, identities, social networks, and unique living circumstances, and regardless of these situations, they have the capacity not only to create positive identity development, as defined by Western developmental theorists, but also to disrupt damaging dominant norms that continue to devalue them, and to reimagine their futures on their own terms. Importantly, prior to developing and implementing policy, programs, and research or making decisions that affect Indigenous youth, future considerations must include the impacts of historical and ongoing colonization in order to support balanced mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual future health and wellness outcomes that promote positive identity development from an Indigenous perspective. Therefore, while we attempt to provide services and create policies that support youth, it must be understood that each young person engages in their own unique pathway to create prosocial outcomes that form the basis of self-esteem and positive identity. Everyone must be given equal respect if they are to thrive.

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Appendix A: Statistical Storying Questions

Code Number: _SS____

Part I: Participation Criteria Questions

C1 Are you between the ages of 18 and 24 years of age?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

C2 Do you self-describe as having Indigenous ancestry (First Nations, Aboriginal, Métis, Inuit)

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

C3 Are you currently homeless?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

Gender

A	Male	❑
B	Female	❑
C	Other	❑

Part 2: Social Determinants of Health and Wellness

1. How long have you been homeless?

A	Less than one year	❑
B	More than one year	❑

2. When you were growing up, who was your primary caregiver?

A	Parents	❑
B	An extended family member, such as an aunt, uncle or grandparent	❑
C	A family friend	❑
D	In foster care	❑

3. How would you describe the care they provided to you?

A	Good	❑
B	Adequate	❑
C	Poor	❑

4. When you were growing up were adults in your family ever worried about not having enough money to cover costs of living, such as rent, or food, or heating costs.

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

5. When you were growing up, did you feel your care provider used alcohol or drugs excessively

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑
C	Sometimes	

6. When you were growing up, did you feel your care provider's use of alcohol or drugs affected the care they provided to you?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

7. When you were growing up, how would you describe the care you were provided with?

A	Good	❑
B	Adequate/OK	❑
C	Poor	❑

8. What would you describe as the best reason you no longer stayed at home?

A	Relationships at home were hostile or unsatisfactory, so I left	❑
B	I wanted to be with my friends	❑
C	I was kicked out	❑

9. Prior to transitioning to homelessness, did you know others in the Victoria homeless community?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

10. Did you ever participate in cultural activities when you were younger? Some examples of cultural activities are ceremony, drumming, learning traditional language, fishing, hunting, or traditional crafts (weaving, beading).

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

11. Did you enjoy being involved in these cultural activities

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

12. Did you experiment with substances (drugs or alcohol) prior to becoming homeless?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

13. Why did you decide to experiment with substances?

A	Peer Pressure	❑
B	Cope with life stressors	❑
C	Other	❑

14. Are you presently attending school?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

15. How would you describe your school experience?

A	Good	❑
B	Satisfactory	❑
C	Poor	❑

16. Did you graduate from high school?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

17. When you left home, was the homeless community your first choice to live or was it a decision that evolved as a result of, for example, lack of affordable places to rent?

A	First Choice: Moved directly into community	❑

B	Evolved	❑

18. How has the experience of living homeless made you feel?

A	More satisfied with my life	❑
B	No change to my degree of life satisfaction	❑
C	Dissatisfied with my present life	❑

19. Do you think people who are housed unfavourably judge you and others who live in the homeless community?

A	Place unfavourable judgement	❑
B	Do not place judgement	❑

20. In your current unhoused living arrangement, would you say you have been able to make friendships?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

21. What is the most important role you assign to a friend?

A	Keep me from feeling lonely	❑
B	Offer protection	❑
C	Teach me things I need to know to survive on the street (street smarts)	❑
D	All of the above	❑

22. In your current unhoused living arrangement, do you maintain any of your previous relationships with friends or family who are housed?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

23. In your current unhoused living arrangement, where is your usual place to sleep?

A	Supportive or Transitional Housing	❑
B	Couch surfing	❑
C	In a self-made shelter (tent/tarps)	❑
D	Abandoned spaces (such as vacant building, park bench)	❑

24. In your current unhousing living arrangement, do you ever access any of the supportive services provided by a shelter, or drop-in center?

A	Yes	❑
2B	No	❑

25. What kind of services have you accessed?

A	Counsellors	❑
B	Meals, showers, free clothing, medical support	❑
C	Shelter sleeping services	❑
D	All of the above	❑

26. Were these supportive services useful to you?

A	Very useful	❑
B	Sometimes useful	❑
C	Never useful	❑

27. Would you recommend these supportive services to a friend who is also living homelessly?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

28. In your current unhoused living arrangement do you ever access harm reduction services (i.e. safe injection site)?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

29. Are harm reductions services useful to you?

A	Very useful	❑
B	Sometimes useful	❑
C	Never useful	❑

30. In your current unhoused living arrangement, what is your employment status?

A	Employed	❑
B	Unemployed	❑

31 What kind of employment do you typically work in?

A	Traditional employment	❑
B	Non-traditional (panhandling, squeegee-ing, binning)	❑
C	Don't	❑

32. Do you feel your current level of completed schooling is affecting your employment options?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

33. If you had a chance sometime in the future, would you like finish your schooling?

A	Probably Yes	❑
B	No	❑

34. If there was an opportunity sometimes in the future to do an apprenticeship program (on-the-job-training that guarantees work), would you?

A	Probably Yes	❑
B	No	❑

35. If it were possible and you could simply walk away from homeless today, or in the future, would you want to?

A	Yes	❑
B	No	❑

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster

Department of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria

INDIGENOUS YOUTH VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR

RESEARCH on INDIGENOUS YOUTH

HOMELESSNESS

Indigenous volunteers who are between ages 18 and 24 and homeless are sought to share their experiences surrounding homelessness. As a participant, you will be invited to share your story of your pathways into homelessness, your experiences in homelessness, and goals, going forward. This opportunity can be conducted through oral storytelling or by responding to a short questionnaire.

Your participation is voluntary. Your time commitment is limited to a single event. I do not anticipate it will take longer than two hours. By participating in this research, you will be helping to create a deeper understanding of youths' strengths in homelessness.

All bus fare costs incurred by you to attend this research experience will be reimbursed (two-way travel)

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a gift.

To learn more about this study, or to participate in this study,
please contact:

jtenning@uvic.ca or 250-661-1353 (phone or text)

You are welcome to encourage other Indigenous youth from the homeless community to participate

Thank you!

This study has been reviewed by, and has received ethics clearance through a University of Victoria Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix C: Oral Script Used With Participants Interested in Oral Storytelling

Understanding youth homelessness
This study is being conducted by **Jilleun Tenning,** an MA student from the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria in consultation with **Dr. Mandeep Mucina**, supervisor of this research project and Professor in the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria. If you have questions or comments, they can be directed to myself, Jilleun Tenning, at jtenning@uvic.ca or to my supervisor, Dr. Mucina, at mmucina@uvic.ca .

Purpose of research
The purpose of this research is to listen to the stories of Indigenous youth who are homeless such as yourself. Using your stories, and through an Indigenous framework that uses storying methodology and focuses on your strengths you will have the opportunity to inform the growing body of scholarship within the field of homelessness. Such research is intended to create a deeper understanding of pathways that lead to homelessness, societal stigmas and perceptions about youth who live in homelessness, and your goals, going forward.

What is informed consent?
You have received this Participant Consent Form because you have expressed interest in participating in this research through an opportunity to story your experience of homelessness. By signing this form, you are indicating your understanding of the purpose of the research, the nature of the storytelling process used in this research, and the procedures for protecting the confidentiality of what you share.

Eligibility criteria
To participate in this study, you must self-identify as Indigenous, self-describe as homeless and be between the ages of 18 and 24.

What is involved?
If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will be asked to share your story of homelessness. To help you story your experience I have some guiding questions. However, you are not required to follow this script and need only share what you feel comfortable sharing. I anticipate this event to be approximately 2 hours. I am aware that discussing these experiences may bring up negative or painful feelings. You do not need to share anything you do not want to talk about. For sharing story, and in recognition of your time and effort you will be provided with a gift for your participation. You may keep this gift even if you decide later that you wish your story removed from the data.

Voluntary participation
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time without explanation. Your decision to participate, or to decline to participate will not have any negative implications for you. If you do participate and wish to stop the event of storying your experiences of homelessness, you may do so at any time. If you have concerns for yourself and need immediate assistance, I am here to provide you with support. As well, I will provide you with a list of additional support services should they be needed at some point in

the future. If you prefer cultural support, I will connect you with a Coast Salish Elder. You may talk with them by phone, or by text. If you need to meet with the Elder in person, I give you the autonomy to make this request through your preferred processes (phone or email) and together with the Elder, you can decide where this can happen. If you've withdrawn from the research and wish to retract your story, please email, text, phone or reach out to me in person so that I may remove it from the data.

Recording of story
Should you agree to share your story, I am requesting your permission to audio record it so that I can transcribe it to add to the body of research currently available on Indigenous youth homelessness. No one other than myself will review the audio recordings, and the recordings will be stored in a secure and locked location. The recordings will be deleted once the final report is completed. Please indicate your approval for recording by initialing the "consent to audio-record" statement.

Anonymity and confidentiality
Though I will not disclose to others that you are participating in this research study, if you wish to be identified in this research, I will not deny you that opportunity. If you do wish to remain anonymous, I will remove any personal identifying remarks from the story. However, if you choose to remain anonymous, and if your story is known to others in the homeless or Indigenous sector, and if they read the research, it may be possible that they recognize you. Should I be asked by anyone regarding your participating in the research, I will not confirm with them this possibility.

In addition, I ask you as a participant of this research not to identify other people by names. However, if you do, any person who is identified by name will be given a pseudonym to protect their anonymity.

Withdrawal from the study
You may withdraw from the study at any point.

Dissemination of results
Summary data will be shared with interested participants, community mentors and Elders. It is also anticipated that the results of this study will be shared (in anonymous form) with others in an academic thesis. All original audio recordings used in this study will be disposed of once the final report has been accepted by the University of Victoria. I anticipate the possibility of publishing findings from this research, and presenting them to others. Therefore, electronic data transcriptions will be kept for five years after the successful completion of my program following which they will be deleted.

Contacts
This research has the approval of the University of Victoria, Human Research Ethics Office. If you have any concerns about this research, please contact them at the University of Victoria (250-472- 4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Appendix D: Oral Script Used With Participants Interested in Statistical Storytelling

Invitation to participate

This questionnaire, referred to as statistical storying is being conducted by **Jilleun Tenning,** an MA student from the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria in consultation with **Dr. Mandeep Mucina**, supervisor of this research project, and Professor in the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria. If you have questions or comments about this process or this questionnaire, they can be directed to myself, Jilleun Tenning, at jtenning@uvic.ca or to my supervisor, Dr. Mucina, at mmucina@uvic.ca .

Purpose of research

The purpose of this research is to listen to the stories of Indigenous youth who self-describe as homeless such as yourself. Through a process of responding to questions that focus on your past and present experiences and future possibilities that have been developed to focus on your strengths, you will have the opportunity to inform the growing body of scholarship on Indigenous Resurgence within the field of homelessness. Such research is intended to create a deeper understanding of pathways that lead to homelessness, challenge societal stigmas and perceptions about youth who live in homelessness, and uncover your goals going forward.

Participation

If you wish to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that I will provide to you in a brown envelope. A pen will be provided in the envelope. Your decision to complete and return this questionnaire will be interpreted as an indication of your consent to participate. The questionnaire should take you approximately 30 minutes to complete, although if you need longer, it will be granted. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. If, after reviewing the questions, you decide not to participate you are not obligated to do so. If you do decide to participate, please do not put your name anywhere on the questionnaire, so that all your responses remain anonymous. I can be present with you or can wait nearby so that you may return the questionnaire immediately upon completion. You can decide where you best work on activities like this—I will bring the questionnaire to you. Where ever you decide, I will bring you with a beverage and snack as a thank you for your time. Should you wish me present while you complete your questionnaire, I will accommodate your request. If I am asked to be present and you want to add verbal feedback or anecdotal remarks, with your permission I will record them for possible inclusion in this research. They will be anonymous. Should you decide not to hand the completed questionnaire back to me directly, I request that you place the questionnaire back into the brown envelope that is stamped and self-addressed so that I can receive it through the mail. There will be no follow-up contact. Just for taking a questionnaire, I will provide you with a gift to honor your participation in this research.

Eligibility criteria

To participate in this study, you must self-identify as Indigenous, self-describe as homeless, and be between the ages of 18 and 24.

What is involved?

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will be asked to answer questions relevant to your experiences of homelessness. There are 35 total questions about your experiences of homelessness. All questions can be answered by ticking a box that best represents your response to a question.

Voluntary participation
You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. Completion and return of the questionnaire by you, implies consent.

Because all questionnaires are submitted anonymously. I will be unable to remove your responses from the data pool once submitted as there is no way to identify your questionnaire submission.

Anonymity and confidentiality
The information shared to me through your responses to questions is confidential and used solely for the purposes of this research. If asked, I will not disclose to others that you are participating in this research study. The data gathered from all participants will be analyzed in a pooled aggregate format. Anonymity is guaranteed since you are not being asked to provide your name or other personal information.

Dissemination of results
Summary data will be shared with interested participants, community mentors and Elders. It is also anticipated that the results of this study will be shared (in anonymous form) with others in an academic thesis. All original questionnaires received for the purposes of this study will be disposed of once the final report has been accepted by the University of Victoria. I anticipate the possibility of publishing findings from this research, and presenting them to others. Therefore, electronic data will be kept for five years after the successful completion of my program following which they will be deleted.

Contacts
This research has the approval of the University of Victoria, Human Research Ethics Office. If you have any concerns about this research, please contact them at the University of Victoria (250-472- 4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Please keep this form for your records.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix E: Text/Email Sent to Potential Participants Engaging in Oral Storytelling

I am currently conducting research on homeless Indigenous youth between the ages of 18 and 24. While we may be acquainted, pleased be assured that joining the study is totally optional and that not-participating will not in any way impact of our relationship. This research will be conducted through story. I am asking you to give me two hours. This story will be about your journey into homelessness, your experience in homelessness and what you perceive as your journey going forward, that is, your future. I am not here to challenge your story. It is your truth. If you decide to participate, I will ask you to give me permission to record and use information relevant to my research goals. Regardless, for your engagement in the research, you will receive a small gift to honour your participation. If prior to defending this thesis you wish to withdraw there will be no penalty and you are welcome to do so. Please reach out to me if this is the case. However, I do hope that you are willing and can help me in adding to information currently available on Indigenous youth homelessness. Your help is much appreciated. You are also welcome to encourage other Indigenous youth who are homeless and between the ages of 18 and 24 to participate in this experience. If bus fare will be required to attend the research opportunity, you will be reimbursed.

Thank you.

Appendix F: Text/Email Sent to Potential Participants Engaging in Statistical Storytelling

I am currently conducting research on homeless Indigenous youth between the ages of 18 and 24. While we may be acquainted, pleased be assured that joining the study is totally optional and that not-participating will not in any way impact of our relationship. This research will be conducted using a questionnaire, and I'm asking you to give me 30 minutes of your time to complete it. This survey questionnaire seeks answers relevant to your journey into homelessness, your experience in homelessness and what you perceive as your journey going forward, that is, your future. There are no incorrect answers. If you decide to participate, I will ask you to answer 35 questions. If you choose not to answer a question, you will not be pressed to do so, or challenged to explain why you did not. Answers will help me develop a deeper understanding of your life experiences. If you want to add a written, or oral comment to a question, you may do so, and with your permission I will incorporate it into the research, if relevant.

For your engagement in the research, you will receive a small gift to honour your participation. However, because your responses are submitted anonymously, I will not be able to retract them. I do hope that you are willing and can help me to add to information currently available on Indigenous youth homelessness. Your help is much appreciated. You are also welcome to encourage other Indigenous youth who are homeless and between the ages of 18 and 24 to participate in this experience. If bus fare will be required to attend the research opportunity, you will be reimbursed.

Thank you.

Appendix G: Participant Consent Form

I agree to participate in this research study entitled **"Indigenous Homeless Youth Identity Development: A Strengths-Based Perspective."**

Name of Participant

____ _____

I give my consent to include my story or question responses in this research ___ *(initials)*

I would like to be identified by my name in the study: Yes. ❑ No. ❑

_____
Date

A copy of this consent will be provided to you.

Appendix H: Youth Support Services with Phone Numbers

Vancouver Island Crisis Line 1-888-494-3888 24 hr crisis information and resources line	**Métis Community Services** 345 Wale Rd 250-391-9924 Counselling, advocacy and other support for Métis people of Vancouver Island
Sandy Merriman House **809 Burdett Ave.** 250-480-1408 Support attending appointments & helping to find a doctor. Call/drop in to make an appointment	**Foundry Victoria Youth Clinic (Youth 12-24)** **818 Douglas St (3rd Floor)** **Outreach:** 250-818-6361 **Clinic:** 250 383-3552 Mon-Thurs 11-5pm, Fri 11-4pm Walk in primary health care, sexual health, mental health and substance use, counselling support/ care, lab and outreach services
Victoria Sexual Assault Centre **201-3060 Cedar Hill Rd.** 250-383-5545 Mon-Fri 9-5pm. Closed all stat holidays. Crisis Line: 250-383-3232 Crisis Line for people of all genders.	**Peers** **1-744 Fairview Rd. 250-388-5325** **Drop In Centre:** Mon-Thur 11-2:30pm. Provides daily lunch, educational workshops, recreational and social activities, access to harm reduction supplies, support staff, computers and household and clothing items.
Victoria Native Friendship Centre 231 Regina Avenue 250-384-3211 Aims to provide First Nations people with services and information designed to enhance traditional values and cultures. Includes a food box program, housing referrals, counseling, access to medical advice, and other referrals.	**Our Place-** **919 Pandora Ave** 250-388-7112 or 250-385-2454: drop-in direct line. Free counselling. Appointment-based and self-referral.

Appendix I: Statistical Storytelling Results

#	Question	Possible Responses	N=14	%
1	How long have you been homeless?	Less than one year	8	57%
		More than one year	6	43%
2	When you were growing up, did you ever experience homelessness?	Yes	4	29%
		No	9	64%
3	When you were growing up, who was your primary caregiver?	Biological mother and/or father	4	29%
		An extended family member, such as an aunt, uncle or grandparent	3	21%
		A family friend		
		In foster care	6	43%
4	When you were growing up, did you feel your careproviders worried about not having enough money to cover basic costs of living (eg. rent, food, heating)?	Yes	14	100%
		No		
5	When you were growing up, did you feel your careprovider used alcohol or drugs excessively?	Yes	9	64%
		No		
		Sometimes	5	36%
6	When you were growing up, did you feel your careprovider's use of alcohol or drugs affected the care they provided to you?	Yes	11	79%
		No	3	21%
7	When you were growing up, how would you describe the care you were provided with?	Good	1	7%
		Adequate/OK	2	14%
		Poor	9	64%
8	What would you describe as the best reason you no longer stayed at home?	Relationships at home were hostile or unsatisfactory so I left	8	57%
		I wanted to be with my friends	4	29%
		I was kicked out	2	14%
9	Prior to transitioning to homelessness, did you know others in the Victoria homeless community?	Yes	14	100%
		No		
10	Did you ever participate in cultural activities when you were younger? Some examples of cultural activities are ceremony, drumming, learning traditional language, fishing, hunting, or traditional crafts (weaving, beading).	Yes	6	43%
		No	4	29%
11	Do you enjoy being involved in these cultural activities?	Yes	5	36%
		No	4	29%

12	Did you experiment with substances (drugs or alcohol) prior to becoming homeless?	Yes	11	79%
		No		
13	Why did you decide to experiment with substances?	Peer pressure	2	14%
		Cope with life stressors	6	43%
		Other	4	29%
14	Are you presently attending school	Yes		
		No	14	100
15	How would you describe your school experience?	Good		
		Satisfactory	3	21%
		Poor	10	71%
16	Did you graduate from high school?	Yes		
		No	14	100
17	When you left home, was the homeless community your first choice to live or was it a decision that evolved as a result of, for example, lack of affordable places to rent?	First Choice: Moved directly into community	3	21%
		Evolved	9	64%
18	How has the experience of living homeless made you feel?	More satisfied with my life	9	64%
		No change to my degree of life satisfaction	3	21%
		Dissatisfied with my present life		
19	Do you think people who are housed unfavourably judged you and others who live in the homeless community?	Unfavourably judged	9	64%
		Did not judge	4	29%
20	In your current unhoused living arrangement, would you say you have been able to make friendships?	Yes	13	93%
		No		
21	What is the most important role you assign to a friend?	Keep me from feeling lonely		
		Offer protection		
		Teach me things I need to know to survive on the street (street smarts)		
		All of the above	13	93%
22	In your current unhoused living arrangement, do you maintain any of your previous relationships with friends or family who are housed ?	Yes	5	36%
		No	7	50%
23	In your current unhoused living arrangement, where is your usual place to sleep?	Supportive or Transitional Housing	3	21%
		Couch surfing	4	29%
		In a self-made shelter (tent/tarps)	6	43%
		Abandoned spaces (such as vacant building, park bench)		

24	In your current unhoused living arrangment, do you ever access any of the supportive services provided by a shelter, or drop-in center?	Yes	14	100%
		No		
25	What kind of supportive services do you access?	Counsellors		
		Meals, showers, free clothing, medical support		
		Shelter sleeping services		
		All of the Above	14	100%
26	Are these supportive services useful to you?	Very useful	10	71%
		Sometimes useful	4	29%
		Never useful		
27	Would you recommend supportive services to a friend who is also living homelessly?	Yes	14	100%
		No		
28	In your curent unhoused living arrangement do you ever access harm reduction services (i.e. safe injection site)?	Yes	7	50%
		No	5	36%
29	Are harm reductions services useful to you?	Very useful	6	43%
		Sometimes useful	4	29%
		Never useful		
30	In your current unhoused living arrangment, what is your employment status?	Employed	10	71%
		Unemployed	4	29%
31	What kind of employment do you typically work in?	Traditional employment	5	36%
		Non-traditional (panhandle/squeegie/binning)	7	50%
		Don't work	2	14%
32	Do you feel your current level of completed schooling affects your employment options?	Yes	3	21%
		No	10	71%
33	If you had a chance sometime in the future, would you finish your schooling?	Probably Yes	2	14%
		No	10	71%
34	If there was an opportunity sometime in the future to do an apprenticeship program (on-the-job-training that guarantees work), would you contemplate favourably?	Probably Yes	4	29%
		No	9	64%
35	If it were possible and you could simply walk away from homelessness today or in the future, would you want to?	Yes	3	21%
		No	9	64%