Young Indigenous Men's Work Narratives

by

Payden Spowart
B.A., University of Victoria, 2009

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Little is known about the unique experiences of Indigenous people in their work life journeys. In particular, there has been very little research with young males on this topic. In this qualitative study, eight young Indigenous men shared their stories regarding their search for and engagement in work, and completed an exploration of their *Possible Selves*. The research question was "what are the supports, challenges, and obstacles experienced as you search for and maintain work?" Thematic analysis identified four meta-themes related to their work life experiences: relational supports; work experiences; education; and culture and work. The results have important implications for theory, research and practice in regards to work and career development with young Indigenous men.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by thanking the young men who shared their stories with me; you taught me more than I thought possible. I would also like to thank our community partners: the Westshore Learning and Teaching Centre, the Saanich Adult Education Centre, the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, and the University of Victoria's First Peoples House, for welcoming and supporting myself and the research team in our work. Additionally, I would like to thank the Centre for Youth and Society for helping facilitate my research process and providing support and resources to myself and the team.

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I would like to thank all of my classmates I have had the privilege of learning with and learning from – you helped make the bad days good and the good days better. I would also like to thank my work colleagues. You have been supportive, encouraging, and patient with me throughout this process. The laughter has helped the most.

I would like to thank my family. To my parents and siblings, your encouragement, support, and belief in me throughout all the years have helped get me to

this point – thank you. To my good friend Dexter, you were beside me the whole time. Finally, to my wife, Jay, I am eternally grateful for everything you have done for me throughout this process and in my life; I have drawn so much strength from you throughout it all. From the countless edits to the support day in and day out, thank you.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the young men who have shared their stories with me and sought positive change for their communities.

Chapter I - Introduction

Employment is a major issue for young Indigenous[1] people. Statistics Canada figures show that, in the 15 to 24 year-old category, unemployment rates are 2 to 3 times higher for Aboriginal people when compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2011). The rate of unemployment for Aboriginal people living on reserve (23%) is almost double compared to those living off reserve (12%) (Statistics Canada, 2006). Further to this, Aboriginal men face increased hardships in the work force (Statistics Canada, 2011). Indigenous populations are underrepresented in vocational psychology research and there is limited understanding of the issues that relate to their career development (Juntuen et al., 2001; Turner et al., 2006). Hoffmann, Jackson, and Smith (2005) have stated that they are particularly concerned with career development for Native American males, and therefore urge researchers to further explore this area. These concerns have not gone unattended to; there is a growing body of literature that highlights the numerous strengths and successes of Indigenous people in Canada (Merrill, Bruce and Marlin, 2010; Coverdale, 2011).

The purpose of the present research was to explore the supports, challenges and obstacles that young Indigenous men experience through their work life pursuits. Eight individuals discussed their journeys, and shared what helped and hindered them along the way. To begin, I would like to locate this particular study within its larger research context.

[1] The term Indigenous, Aboriginal, First Nations, and Native American are often used interchangeably. For a more detailed description of terminology, see page 6.

Overview of Walking in Multiple Worlds

This present study is part of a larger project called "Walking in Multiple Worlds. Aboriginal Young Adults' Work Life Narratives" (WIMW). WIMW is a three year study funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) that is being conducted in two Canadian urban centres: Victoria, British Columbia and Toronto, Ontario. The research is led by Dr. Anne Marshall of the University of Victoria in collaboration with Dr. Suzanne Stewart, Dene, an Indigenous scholar at the University of Toronto. Over the past three years, the two teams have moved from the term Aboriginal to the term Indigenous, in an effort to stay consistent with terminology in the current Canadian research. The overarching question of this larger project is "What are Indigenous emerging adults' experiences of life and work transitions?" The researchers are interested in learning about the impacts of culture and community, and the supports and barriers that are experienced as young Indigenous people find and maintain employment (Marshall, Stewart, Coverdale, Spowart & LeBlanc, 2012). Specifically, the research question being asked is: *"What supports, challenges, and barriers do Indigenous young adults experience with regard to finding and keeping work?"* The project includes both individual and group interviews. In Victoria, the WIMW project team has partnered with several community agencies, including the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, the Saanich Adult Education Centre, and the Westshore Learning and Teaching Centre. Group and individual interviews, along with the Possible Selves Mapping process (Marshall & Guenette, 2008) have been used to collect data for this project.

A central piece of this project relates to Indigenous youth and community development. The research will add to the knowledge of the psychology of work in Indigenous populations, as well as the literature related to culturally appropriate procedures and methods. The results are expected to yield relevant and practical information and interventions for educators, parents, Elders, and career practitioners who work with youth and young adults. This will be achieved through the development of community workshops for local communities and policy makers, designed to facilitate the uptake and application of this research and to promote community empowerment and cultural respect.

Walking in Multiple Worlds utilizes a culturally informed narrative orientation to the interviewing methods. Indigenous people typically describe themselves as utilizing an oral-based story telling tradition (Medicine-Eagle, 1989; Stewart, 2008). Following this, it was deemed both culturally appropriate and consistent with Indigenous ways of knowing to use a narrative orientation to elicit information through the use of storytelling (Stewart, 2008). Relational and social constructionist career development theories were used to inform the conceptual framework of the study (Blustein, 2006; Blustein, 2011; Jordan, 2008; Schultheiss, 2007).

Preliminary data analysis from Dr. Marshall's and Dr. Stewart's teams identified five major themes related to the research question: work experiences, Indigenous culture, family and relational support systems, community connections, and discrimination and oppression. As my thesis was a part of this larger project, it was important for me to strike a balance between exploring new information and understandings, while building

on and extending the knowledge that has been already generated in earlier phases of the project.

Present Study

Within the larger WIMW project, my specific research question was: *"What supports, challenges, and obstacles do young Indigenous men experience with regard to finding and keeping work?"* I conducted eight individual interviews with male participants ranging in age from 18 to 33. During the interviews, I asked seven specific questions, all of which were from the WIMW project, and engaged each participant in the Possible Selves Mapping Process. As there is very little literature that has specifically focused on Indigenous males' work life experiences (Hoffman et al., 2005), and Indigenous men in Canada have faced increased hardship in the workforce (Statistics Canada, 2011), I elected to have a male only cohort, as their voices are largely absent from the literature.

Researcher's Self Location

As a qualitative researcher, I wish to acknowledge my own subjectivity in this research project; my lived experiences impacted the way that I interacted with the participants in the interview and influenced my interpretations of the data.

Over the past three years, I have had several opportunities to work with members of Indigenous communities. The most significant of those opportunities has been through my counselling internship and now employment with South Island Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health (ACYMH). Over the past year at ACYMH, I have worked with individuals, families, and communities across southern Vancouver Island. The multidisciplinary team of nine people includes counsellors, clinical social workers, child

and youth care workers, a psychiatric nurse, a psychologist, and a psychiatrist; it serves the local communities as far west as Port Renfrew and as far north as the Malahat, and includes the Sannich Peninsula. Perhaps the most unique feature of the team is that it is outreach-based. This means that the majority of our work is done in the local communities, both on and off reserves. I have had the honour of participating in Indigenous events and ceremonies, and working with Elders and teachers from the local communities. This work has deepened my awareness and understanding of issues facing both regional and national Indigenous communities. I have seen firsthand the struggles and successes that are experienced daily, and I can personally attest that employment challenges are present in the majority of my clients' or their family's lives. In my experience to date, finding and maintaining employment appears to be more challenging for those living on reserve compared to those living off reserve. This observation is consistent with a report from Statistics Canada (2006) that states that unemployment rates are almost double for Indigenous people living on reserve compared to off reserve. Financial burdens only seem to add challenges to and exacerbate mental health conditions. Lack of finances seems to increase levels of stress and decrease ability to access services, especially for those living in more remote communities not well serviced by public transportation.

As I have worked within several communities, I am very aware of the close-knit relationships that are integral to the communities, and am conscious that there is an increasing awareness, both on and off reserve, of my role as a Child and Youth Mental Health clinician. It was necessary to clearly define my role as a researcher as separate from my employment, and to remain within my role as a researcher while I conducted my

interviews in the communities. While I did not expect to encounter any dual relationships through my research, I was conscious of both the small size of the communities and the role that extended family played. When talking with Chief and council, Elders, and community members, I specifically discussed the dual role that I would walk during this process, as I did when I met with my participants

Definition of "Indigenous"

The Assembly of First Nations (2002) states that there is no one lexicon to describe Indigenous people in North America. The Canadian constitution states that *Aboriginal people* is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants (The Constitution Act, 1982). In Canada, the term Aboriginal refers to one of three groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (The Assembly of First Nations, 2002). In the literature, these more specific terms, along with Aboriginal, Indigenous, Native, and Native American, are often used, depending on the writer's focus and location.

It is important to note that I have attempted to use language in the most respectful manner possible in this thesis. When I have cited from authors, I have kept consistent their terminology for Indigenous, Aboriginal, First Nations, and Native American. When I write about my experiences and understandings through this thesis, I have chosen to move away from legally and politically entrenched words and towards the more inclusive and broader term Indigenous. This term acknowledges the inclusion of and relationship between: "strong families, grounding in community, connection to land, language storytelling and spirituality." (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 608)

Summary

This chapter introduced my research and described its place within the larger WIMW project. My thesis will include five additional chapters: a literature review, methodology, the participants' stories, the across-participant analysis and discussion, and a concluding chapter. In the following chapter, I will provide an overview of the relevant literature for this study.

Chapter II - Literature Review

In this chapter, I review selected literature that pertains to the current study. I begin with an overview of Relational theory, Social Constructionism and Social Constructionist Career Development Theory, along with an explanation of the psychology of working. Following this, I outline some current demographics, including employment participation and representation, taken from Statistics Canada. Then, Indigenous vocational research, including general and male-specific information and supports and barriers for career and educational pursuits are discussed. Finally, the concept of possible selves is reviewed, followed by a brief summary of the current Walking in Multiple Worlds project findings.

Relational Theory

Relational perspectives serve as a meta-framework for numerous theories and perspectives (Blustein, Schulteiss, & Flum, 2004; Schultheiss, 2007). This framework is particularly relevant in collectivist Indigenous contexts, as it focuses on the impact of connection. The framework understands relationships as a central human function, and underlines that interpersonal and intrapersonal struggles reflect natural human strivings for connection, affirmation, support, attachment, and mattering (Schultheiss, 2007). Relationships are needed at all points in an individual's life, and through building and maintaining positive connections, a sense of well-being and safety is achieved (Jordan, 2008). Blustein (2011) noted that people learn about themselves and the world around them through relationships, and that there is a sizable overlap between relationships and work. Individuals are rooted in family, social, and cultural relational contexts; understanding these contexts is necessary for learning about how plans for work are

created and implemented (Schultheiss, 2007). Schultheiss puts forward four tenets for understanding career development from a relational perspective:

> (a) the influence of the family as critical to understanding the complexities of vocational development, (b) the psychological experience of work as embedded within relational contexts (e.g., social, familial, and cultural), (c) the interface of work and family life, and (d) relational discourse as a challenge to the cultural script of individualism. (p. 192)

Blustein et al. (2004) argued that looking at the connection between interpersonal relationships and the career and work world is necessary for understanding individual and community career concerns. A relational perspective of careers provides a framework for understanding how people comprehend, construct, and act in response to the contemporary working landscape (Blustein et al., 2004). The authors stated that getting closer to individuals' experiences as they reflect on their work and careers provides a deeper understanding of the connection between relationships and work. Blustein and colleagues said that the goal of the relational perspective of careers "would be to construct generative discourses that challenge existing traditions of knowledge and suggest new possibilities for practice and policy. In effect, these novel perspectives present an opportunity to dignify the lived experiences of people as they engage in the activities and tasks of their lives" (p. 435).

Relational theory understands work as an inherently relational act that is embedded in external and internal relational contexts (Blustein, 2011). Blustein maintained that: "conceptualizing working as a relational act underscores that each decision, experience, and interaction with the working world is understood, influenced,

and shaped by relationships" (2011, p. 1). He put forward seven propositions of relational theory related to career:

> "Proposition 1: Work and relationships share considerable psychological space in our internal worlds and in our lived experience, with each context of life impacting on and shaping the other.
>
> Proposition 1a: Relational life has the capacity to influence working experiences in both adaptive and maladaptive ways.
>
> Proposition 1b: Working life has the capacity to influence relational experiences in both adaptive and maladaptive ways.
>
> Proposition 1c: Recursive relationships exist between relational life and work such that each domain of life experience overlaps and impacts each other.
>
> Proposition 2: The internalization process, whereby individuals differentiate and incorporate core themes, patterns, and experiences from early and contemporary relationships, plays a major role in one's experience of, and adaptation to, working.
>
> Proposition 3: Work and relationships take place in both the market place and in care giving contexts.
>
> Proposition 4: The process of making decisions and exploring work and training options is facilitated and/or inhibited by, and influenced by relational experiences.
>
> Proposition 5: The content of work-based decisions is facilitated by and/or inhibited by relationships, which function as a source of influence in the nature and expression of work-based interests and values in conjunction with individual difference factors and socialization.
>
> Proposition 6: Individuals derive meaning from their work in relational discourse and in cultural contexts.
>
> Proposition 7: Culture functions as a form of a holding environment for individuals as they cope with work-based challenges." (Blustein, 2011, pp. 9-11)

Use of this meta-theory allows for exploration of the intertwined nature of peoples' work and relational experiences (Schultheiss, Watts, Sterland & O'Neill, 2011, p. 334).

Indigenous ways of being stress the importance on community and connectedness; as

such, this framework can provide understanding and highlight important relational aspects and intricacies that are relevant in Indigenous people's work life transitions.

Social Constructionism

Consistent with an over-arching relational framework, this research is also influenced by a Social Constructionist approach. The underlying premise of Social Constructionism is that reality is created and maintained through cultural, socioeconomic, and socio-political contexts (Gergen, 1999, Whiston & Rahardja, 2005). Blustein et al. (2004) listed four key assumptions of Social Constructionism: (a) the position challenges the idea that all knowledge is unbiased and objective, and questions positivism and conventional empiricism; (b) the perspective acknowledges both the historical and cultural basis of knowledge and traditions; (c) knowledge is created through interpersonal relationships and interactions, not objective observations; (d) socially constructed views of the world will vary, lead to patterns of actions, and lead to new possibilities of discourse and action. Following this, Blustein et al. (2005) said that social constructionists maintain that reality is co-constructed through language in both social and cultural settings, and multiple perspectives exist, each influenced by culture, history, and context.

This perspective is noted to be particularly useful for understanding career development. Wiston and Rahdjya (2005) stated that qualitative career assessment is often focused on social processes and the influence of historical and cultural contexts. Adding to this, Blustein et al. (2005) maintained that Social Constructionism is highly useful for understanding career and work. Further, Blustein and colleagues observed that:

> Social constructionist research seeks to establish a more empathic and closer connection to participants and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences through first-hand accounts, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, interviews, and narratives… these inquiry tools help researchers to not only gain a more complex and realistic understanding of their participants' lives but also offer a means to join with participants as they construct meaning… 'joining with' offers a more equitable and empowering relationship between researchers and participants, while also stressing the importance of participants' active engagement in the process. (Blustein et al., 2005, p.356).

As a researcher, utilizing the Social Constructionism framework allows me to embrace both the societal and cultural components of the participants and their stories. Acknowledging that multiple truths exist, and that knowledge is co-constructed between people through their interactions and relationships has been central to my work. These concepts are also consistent with Indigenous ways of relating.

Psychology of working. Blustein, Kenna, Gill, and DeVoy (2008) stated that the field of career counselling lacked the means to adequately explore the lives of those who were oppressed, and the lives of those who had to work to survive. In contrast to many popular career development theories, the psychology of working perspective (Blustein, 2006) specifically addresses the need within the field of career counselling to look at and support those who have been typically left out of the research due to marginalization, racism, and other forms of social oppression.

Blustein et al. (2008) defined three human needs that can be satisfied through working: survival and power, social connection, and self-determination. Using this lens,

the first function of work is to provide people with the resources for survival and power – a person is able to meet their basic survival needs with the funds acquired from working and gain social power and resources, such as status, prestige, and privilege. The second function of work is to provide people with a way to connect to others – work serves as a place to build interpersonal relationships and give an organized means of people relating to their social contexts. The third function of work is to support and facilitate the need for self-determination by providing people with the opportunity to have extrinsically motivated actions become internalized as part of personal values, behaviours, and goals (Blustein, 2006; Blustein et al., 2008). Working includes a diverse range of actions and experience. For some, choice and preference are central themes in work, while for others, work is only a necessity for survival.

Employment and Education Demographics

Historically in Canada, Aboriginal people have had higher unemployment rates and lower employment rates compared to non-Aboriginal people continued (Statistics Canada, 2011). Although the underlying factors are complex and inter-related, researchers and scholars have cited the effects of colonization, lack of training opportunities, inadequate schooling (particularly on reserves), community expectations, parenting, substance use, and discrimination as contributing factors (Juntunen et al. 2001; Merrill, Bruce and Marlin, 2010) – for more details, see Indigenous Vocational Research section below.

Over the last decade, low employment rate trends have continued (Statistics Canada, 2011 & Statistics Canada, 2006). Employment for young Aboriginal people is considered a major issue by communities, individuals and governments; 2006 Census

figures demonstrate the reality of this concern (Statistics Canada, 2006). Unemployment rates are 2 to 3 times higher for Aboriginal peoples aged 15-24, compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts – provincial rates range from 12% to over 20%, compared to an average of 6% for non-Aboriginal people (Statistics Canada, 2006). Further to this, the economic crisis in 2008 led to decreased employment levels, increased unemployment levels, and a wider gap in these rates between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people over the age of 14 (Statistics Canada, 2011). The report *Aboriginal People and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey* (Statistics Canada, 2011), looked at data from Statistics Canada's 2008, 2009, and 2010 Labour Force Surveys. The report focused on off-reserve Aboriginal people's labour experiences, unemployment and employment rates, and educational attainment rates (Statistics Canada, 2011). It included statistics from the 10 provinces of Canada for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people over the age of 14. In 2006, there were 24,772,000 non-Aboriginal people, and 593,000 Aboriginal people living off reserve over the age of 14 in Canada.

This report indicated that in recent years, Aboriginal people, especially men, have faced increased hardship in the work force. Across Canada, Aboriginal people between the ages of 25–54 (core age group) had higher unemployment rates (12.3%) and lower employment rates (65.8%) compared to non-Aboriginal people (6.8% and 80.9% respectively). In 2010, unemployment rates in this core-age group (ages 26-54) were 13.3% for Aboriginal men, 11.3% for Aboriginal women, 7.9% for non-Aboriginal men, and 6.3% for non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada, 2011). In addition, between 2008 and 2010, Aboriginal men experienced the largest employment decline when

compared to both Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men and women. (Statistics Canada, 2011)

Similar employment and unemployment trends were also seen in the 15 to 24 year old, or Youth group As presented in Figure 1 below, for this group in 2010, employment rates were 45% for Aboriginal youth (7.5% decrease from 2008), and 55.3% for non-Aboriginal youth (4.7% decrease from 2008).

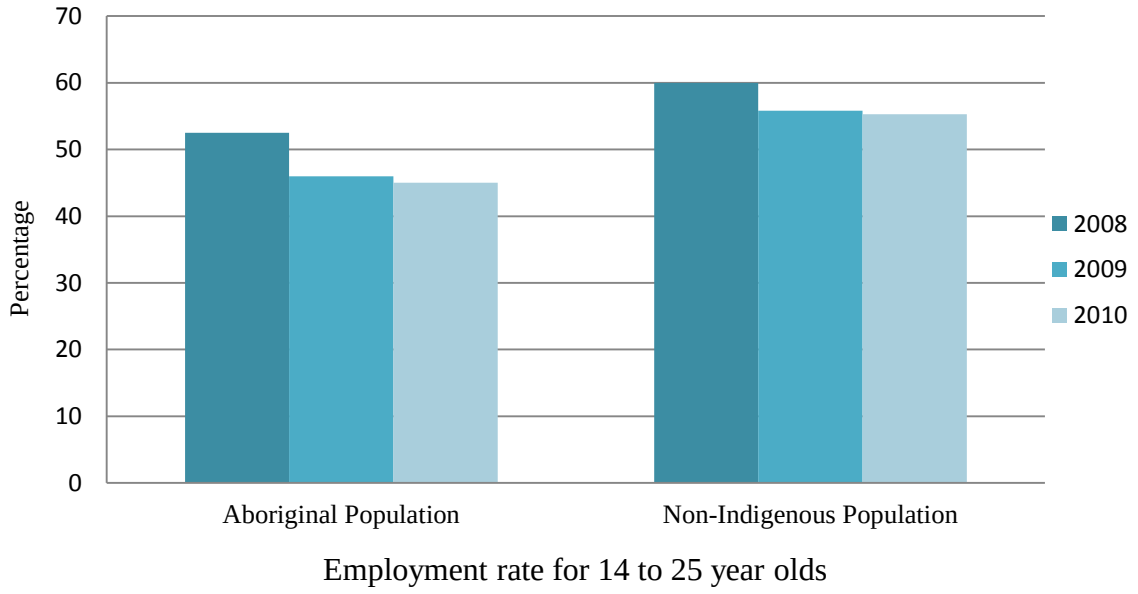

Figure 1: Canadian employment rates from 2008 – 2010. Data obtained from Aboriginal People and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2008-2010

Similarly, in Figure 2, we see that the unemployment rates were 21.1% for Aboriginal Youth (5.8% increase from 2008) and 14.6% (3.1% increase from 2008) for non-Aboriginal Youth (Statistics Canada, 2011).

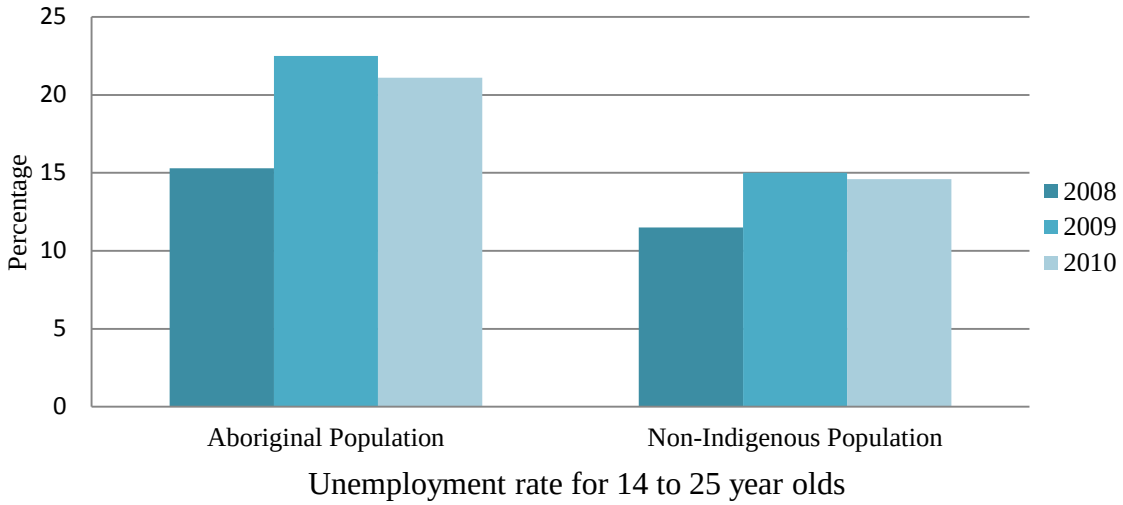

Figure 2: Canadian unemployment rates from 2008 – 2010. Data obtained from Aboriginal People and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2008-2010

These consistently lower employment rates underscore the importance of gaining more understanding about the influencing factors in order to be able to increase facilitating forces and decrease obstacles. This knowledge, in turn, can be used to develop more effective training and intervention strategies to assist these 14 to 25 year old Indigenous youth.

With regard to education, there are similar differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups. According to the 2006 Canadian Census figures, 34% of Aboriginal adults had not completed high school and 21% had a high school diploma as their highest educational qualification. This was compared to 24% and 15% of the general population respectively. Further, 44% of Aboriginal adults between 25 and 64 had completed some form of post-secondary education, compared to 60% of the population across Canada. Again, in 2006 8% of Aboriginal people and 23% of non-Aboriginal people had a university degree. This is compared to 2001, when 6% of

Aboriginal people and 20% of non-Aboriginal people had a university degree (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Maxim and White (2006) stated that Aboriginal people between the ages of 18 and 20 are more likely to not have a high school diploma when compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts (42.5% vs. 23.5%), and less likely to be attending any form of post-secondary education (35% vs. 53.9%). Encouragingly, school participation rates for the Aboriginal Youth group rose from 42% in 2008 to 45% in 2010.

The link between educational attainment and levels of employment has been well established (Ashenfelter & Ham, 1979), and we see this relationship in the census data. For the core-aged group, employment rates have consistently declined for Aboriginal people across three levels of educational attainment: less than a high school education; a high school education or some post-secondary education; and completion of post-secondary education. Their non-Aboriginal counterparts have not experienced such a consistent decline across these three groups (See Figure 3).

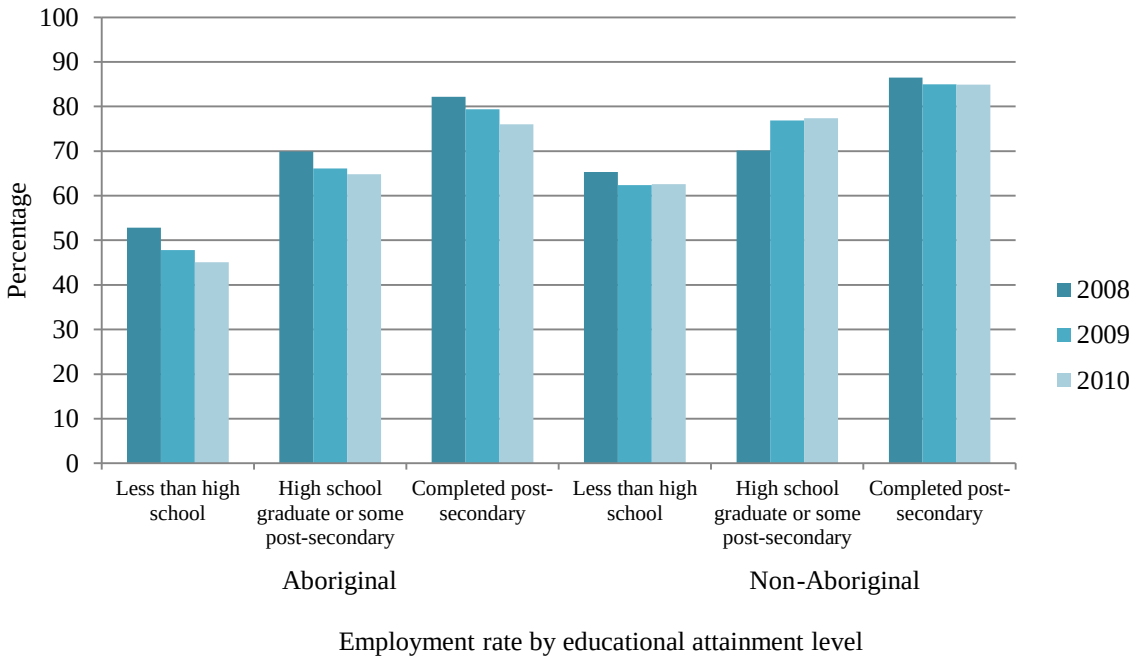

Figure 3: Canadian employment rates from 2008 – 2010 for 25-54 year olds. Data obtained from Aboriginal People and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2008-2010

Educational impacts on unemployment rates are generally similar to the above trends (See Figure 4). Most notably, Aboriginal people without a high school education suffer the highest unemployment rate, at 21.9% (Statistics Canada, 2011). Levels of education clearly impact employment rates. Aboriginal workers were hit particularly hard by economic downturn in 2008, and this was especially true for men and those with lower educational levels.

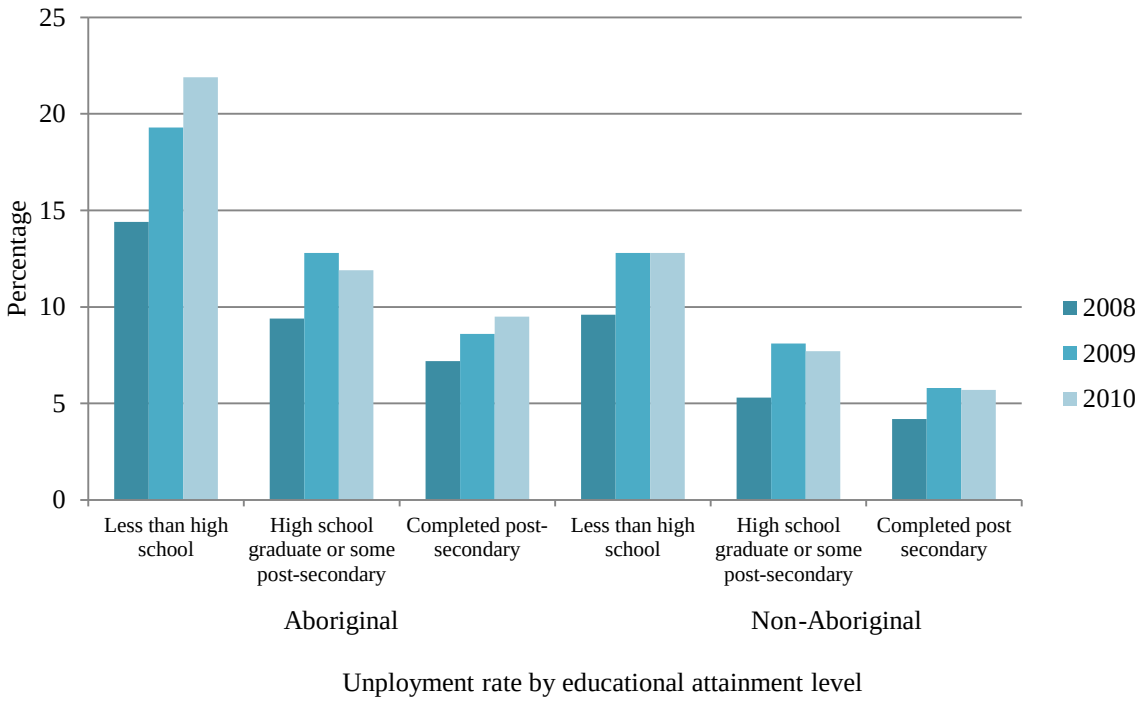

Figure 4: Canadian unemployment rates from 2008 – 2010 for 25-54 year olds. Data obtained from Aboriginal People and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2008-2010

The above census figures show a consistent and rather disturbing educational and employment picture for young Indigenous men. Rather surprisingly, though, there has not been great deal of research directed at work and vocational development for this population. The following section will highlight the current body of research related to this topic.

Indigenous Vocational Research

Numerous authors have indicated that the meaning of work and career actions is embedded in both social and cultural contexts (Blustein et al., 2004; Blustein el al., 2011; Savickas, 1995; Young, Vallach, and Collin, 1996). However, throughout the literature, it is widely agreed upon that there is a lack of research and literature focused on Indigenous career development. “Because American Indian populations continue to be

underrepresented in vocational psychology research, little is understood about issues that may be related to their career development" (Juntunen et al., 2001, p. 274). Merrill, Bruce, and Marlin (2010) stated that there is little literature devoted to the career aspirations of Indigenous peoples. Further to this, Turner et al. (2006) also asserted that there is minimal research on Native American career development, and that Native Americans report unique employment interests compared to other ethnic groups. Following these assertions, it seems necessary to expand upon existing Indigenous vocational research. In addition, most of the current research is non-Canadian. Bringing voice to the experience of the Indigenous people in Canada is of central importance to my research.

Juntunen et al. (2001) focused on American Indians' conceptualizations and experiences of career. Specifically, their study aimed to explore and understand the definitions and meanings of both career and career development for American Indians. This qualitative study included 18 American Indians, aged 21-59, who were interviewed and asked six questions related to the meaning of career and career planning: "What does the word 'career' mean to you?", "Do you see that as the same as 'job' or 'work'?", "What type of career do (did) you have (or plan to have)?", "What do (or did) you need to do to have that career?", "Do you know anyone who has that kind of career, and if so, who?", "Where do you plan to work in the future?"(p. 276). Using an analysis team, they identified and cross referenced core-ideas. They noted that for 16 of the 18 participants, career was identified as a lifelong pursuit, and included goals, planning, or activity; 4 of the 18 participants noted the direct link between career and promotion of traditional ways, and that meaning for work was derived from sharing traditional knowledge with

future generations; 16 of the 18 participants said that that success could be measured by a person's ability to contribute to the well-being of another person, including family members, the next generation, and their American Indian tribe. Juntunen et al. (2001) concluded that, for their sample, career seemed to be a valuable concept. It represented a lifelong endeavour that required planning, influenced personal and family goals, and had impacts on and was a part of personal identity. For those who pursued post-secondary education, all but two cited family as a support for career development and work life. Participants also said that educational achievement was a support for gaining employment. Juntunen et al. (2001) noted that although exploration of individual interests, skills, and goals can be important, career counsellors should take time to explore the role of community membership and the expression of the membership through career choice. In addition, the researchers also found that some participants experienced tension related to relocation and moving. In particular, for those living on reserve, leaving home to study was a major consideration. Upon completion of their education, many participants had or wanted to return to their home communities to provide help. Some, however, found it difficult to return to their home communities, especially if home was located on a reserve. Juntunen and her colleagues (2001) called for additional research directed at examining community connections and career decision-making. They concluded by saying that career was an important concept and activity for the participants, and suggested that the value of a career may be determined by the contribution that it makes to the individual's community. Ultimately, when looking at Indigenous career development, the role of the individual must also be looked at within the context of community.

Jackson and Smith (2001) conducted guided interviews with 22 randomly selected Navajo Indian high school graduates who were interested in or currently pursuing post-secondary education. Jackson and Smith sampled 10 males and 12 females with a mean age of 19.4, all who graduated from a high school on the Navajo Nation territory. The authors were interested in the participants' transition from high school to college and work environments, and wanted to gain a better understanding of why so few Navajo people complete a post-secondary education. Across the participants, the authors identified a number of themes. Several family related themes were found to impact the transition, including: (a) family pressure, to either stay home or pursue education; (b) family financial problems, which reduced the chances of pursuing post-secondary education and frequently led to individuals finding "unskilled labour to help resolve financial strain" (p.10); (c) family conflicts, which tended to be related to issues of divorce and alcoholism; and (d) family encouragement, which was tied to greater self-confidence being attributed to close family members who had graduated from college and/or who had found success in a particular career. Other themes that were found to impact the transition from high-school to post-secondary education included: difficulties adapting to post-secondary learning environments, positive and negative experiences with faculty members, vague post-secondary and career plans, lack of knowledge about post-secondary education to career transitions, and difficulties maintaining connection to homeland and culture during their post-secondary education. The authors concluded by stating that further research is needed to help support the high-school to post-secondary and employment transition for First Nations people.

Supports and Obstacles

Juntunen et al. (2001) spoke about the supportive factors and obstacles to career and educational development that their participants experienced. For participants with a high school education, the supportive factor identified was a high value placed on education by self and family, and one obstacle identified was lack of family support. For those that had a post-secondary degree, supportive factors that were identified included sobriety, family influences, family support, and being a provider; obstacles identified were discrimination, alienation from tribal community, and restrictions of living on the reservation (such as lack of opportunities) (p 279). Juntunen and colleagues stated that discrimination was experienced in both educational and work environments, which negatively impacted both career and academic experiences. In addition, the authors stated that lack of support could occur passively, when individuals close to the participants did not show interest in the career opportunities, and/or actively, when individuals who were close to the participants discouraged certain career pathways.

In their review *Considerations for Successful Transitions between Post-secondary Education and the Labour Market for Aboriginal Youth in Canada*, Merrill et al. (2010) identified eight barriers to successful transition into both post-secondary education and the labour market for Aboriginal youth in Canada. The authors drew from peer-reviewed journal articles, government and agencies reports, documents, policy and program reviews, Canadian policy research, and Indigenous related post-secondary research. The eight barriers outlined were: dissatisfaction with post-secondary experiences, historical, social and personal, family and community, financial, cultural, geographic, and education-labour force linkages. Each will be discussed briefly below.

For the first barrier, *Aboriginal people's dissatisfaction with post-secondary experiences,* Merrill and colleagues asserted that lack of sensitivity regarding Aboriginal culture and people within the schooling context has led to a feeling of disrespect, and that the lack of a culturally appropriate learning environment is often cited as a barrier to positive academic experiences.

The second barrier discussed was *historical* impacts. The legacy of residential schools is often linked to current day barriers for Aboriginal people in post-secondary contexts. The transgenerational trauma experienced, and how it was intertwined with the educational system still has effects on today's education participant rates, family value placed on main stream education, and experiences of discrimination.

The third barrier was *social and personal,* and here the authors described a complex cycle that many Aboriginals face that has negative impacts on future employment success: lower education levels serve as a large barrier to work placement; low social economic status negatively impacts individuals' well-being; and poor self-concept can lead to feelings of powerlessness and frustration. The authors go on to say that the overall lower education of the Aboriginal population is one of the greatest barriers to successful future employment outcomes.

The authors identified the fourth barrier as *family and community*. They wrote that family and community has been cited as a barrier to education and employment success for Indigenous people and noted that "dysfunctional communities, lack of role models, language differences, peer pressure, and lack of family and community support" negatively impact success (Merrill et al., 2010, p. 34). At the same time, they also stated that positive family events and systems, including cultural, ceremonies, and strong family

ties were helpful. Both positive and negative family issues present an ongoing impact for those living away from their home communities.

The fifth barrier was *financial*; finances are a commonly cited obstacle for Aboriginal students; despite funding assistance that is available and helpful for those who can receive it, the constraints on who can access the funding and the level of funding limit access and does not meet the needs that continue to grow. Qualification restraints including: age, institution choice, band control of funding allocation, and course load further impact financial support. The authors argue that lack of funding is one of the largest, if not the largest, obstacle to post-secondary access of Aboriginal students in Canada. Often, lack of funding leads to a decreased ability to support other urgent costs, such as housing, daycare, and travel to home communities. In turn, financial strain often leads to Aboriginal students picking up part-time or full-time work, which decreases the likelihood that education will be completed.

For the sixth barrier, *cultural*, the authors stated that cultural differences, discrimination, and racism are a commonly cited barrier that Aboriginal individuals encounter in both their transitions to and experience in their school and work environments. Lower rates of educational success for Aboriginal students is linked to inappropriate cultural content, teaching methods, and assessment. Often, mainstream education does not take into account culturally appropriate ways of learning, including the oral translation of knowledge, traditional knowledge, and the holistic worldviews of Aboriginal peoples. Transition into employment is also complicated by cultural differences. For many Indigenous communities, cooperation, interdependence, and communal responsibility conflict with common individually-oriented career expectations

including gainful, competitive employment and leaving home to seek employment opportunities. In addition, the authors stated that: "stereotypes, presumptions, and different values and attitudes, including some that may be embedded in rules, restrictions, and structures, may lead to misunderstandings between Aboriginal people and their employers or other workers in forms of rules, restrictions, and structures that do not appeal to Aboriginal people" (p.38). The authors suggest that it is useful for sites to have awareness of this and discussions of cultural differences in an effort to facilitate more compatible opportunities, and argue that role models and mentors are highly useful to support individuals entering and engaging in both schooling and employment.

The seventh barrier is *geographic location*, which can be yet another obstacle for both Aboriginal students and workers. Rural and/or on reserve, compared to urban and/or off reserve, individuals can face particular challenges in their transition. Many individuals have a strong desire to work in their home communities and the authors state that research has pointed to living preferences, culture, identity, and tradition having strong influences on this desire. Fewer employment and educational opportunities exist outside of larger centers, which add to the existing geographic tension for those from smaller communities.

The eighth barrier, *education-labour force linkages*, represents an additional barrier experienced in the transitions from post-secondary education to the workforce that Aboriginal individuals face. There is often a mismatch between educational attainment and specific job requirements; the obtained degree or diploma is inadequate to gain preferred work placement. The authors noted that that 42% of Aboriginal individuals have jobs that match their educational training, compared to 48% of non-Aboriginal

individuals; 35% of Aboriginal individuals have a full-time job for which they were overqualified, compared to 32% of non-Aboriginal individuals; and 24% hold jobs for which they are under-qualified, compared to 20% for non-Aboriginals. Merrill, et al. (2010) stated that although post-secondary education may not prepare all students adequately for the reality of future employment, Aboriginal individuals, especially those living on reserve, are especially impacted.

Young Indigenous Males' Employment Expectations

Minimal literature exists that specifically addresses the employment experiences and expectations of young Indigenous males. Using a qualitative lens and semi-structured interviews, Hoffmann, Jackson, and Smith (2005) explored the perspectives of barriers to chosen careers for 29 Navajo Nation high school students: 14 female and 15 male. The authors identified a number of barriers to career development and achievement in the combined gender sample, including: difficulties in school, lack of finances, and negative support from family and friends. Several strategies for overcoming barriers were identified, including: seeking academic help from teachers, seeking monetary and emotional support from family, working harder in school, and securing financial assistance in order to eliminate schooling barriers. The authors also identified a number of complex themes that they said spoke to a certain level of naïveté regarding the process of achieving a career goal. This included: ease of getting a job, normally only one identified barrier to preferred career, lack of concern regarding barriers, and pressure to conform to perceived social pressure (pp. 36-40).

Hoffman and colleagues also spoke to specific concerns regarding the male Native American students, and stated that, compared to the females, the male group had

more problematic future employment expectations. They found that male Native American students more often believed jobs were readily available post-graduation, and that little training would be required to obtain jobs. When compared to their female classmates, males listed a fewer number of different career possibilities: the most expected type of work was trades-related, including mechanics, iron workers, welders, carpenters, as well as engineering. Professional careers including veterinarian, computer technician, and musician were also mentioned, but to a lesser extent. Male Native American students saw few, if any, barriers between their current state and their future career, however, most could not identify how they would achieve their goal. In addition, many displayed ambivalence towards their future desired career. The authors noted that the males seemed to have a less developed employment expectation when compared to females. Hoffmann, et al. (2005) stated that their findings pointed to the need for increased support for career pathway exploration and addressing career challenges.

Possible Selves

The concept of *possible selves* has been investigated in work and career contexts. Markus and Nurius (1986) described possible selves as "cognitive manifestations of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears and threats... they provide the essential link between the self-concept and motivation" (p.954). They are conceptualized as self knowledge about future possibilities: who or what an individual hopes to become, expects to become, and fears becoming. Possible selves are considered to be connected to the present self, yet unique and separate from them as well; past selves serve to influence current selves, which serve to influence future selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986).

Markus and Nurius (1986) described three main functions of possible selves. First, they serve as self-knowledge about past behaviours and as means-ends patterns for new behaviours. Second, they provide a person with context and additional meaning for present behaviours. Third, they are made up of personal knowledge that is susceptible to changes in their environment. As possible selves are representation of possibilities, they are sensitive to situations that lead to new or different information about the self (Markus and Nurius, 1986). The example provided by Markus and Nurius (1986) demonstrated this idea: receiving a poor grade can provide temporary fuel to the activation of an "academic failure" possible self, and this activation will impact the person's current self-evaluation of their own intelligence. Similarly, Oyserman and James (2011) stated that possible selves "provide a goal post for current action and an interpretive lens for making sense of experience and so should influence both well-being and motivation" (p. 117). They went on to say that when a possible self and current self feel connected, and the required actions to attain the future self feel congruent with the current self, an individual will likely interpret future challenges as motivation for pursuing the possible self.

Marshall et al. (2011) observed that researchers have utilized possible selves to help facilitate exploration of an individual's life and career choices. Findings indicate that, by exploring possible selves, a person actively engages in a meaning-making process which concretizes their hopes and fears for the future. In addition, this exploration provides an opportunity to explore and highlight steps that have been and can be taken to achieve or avoid a specific outcome, or possible self. Marshall and her colleagues (Shepard & Marshall, 1999; Marshall, 2002; Marshall et al., 2011) have conducted several studies and concluded that exploring possible selves helps facilitate

career decision-making and transition. From their research, they have further developed exploration tools – the Possible Selves Mapping Process exercise, as well as a training DVD and manual (Marshall et al., 2011). These tools allow for exploration of possible selves, in which people can "become active participants in a meaning-making process that illuminates their hopes and fears for the future" in addition to creating specific plans for working towards their goals (Marshall et al., 2011, p.50). The authors argue that the PSMP allows for rich and detailed data that would otherwise not be obtained through conventional interviews, and provides participants with an opportunity to develop thoughts, ideas and options that may not have been concretized before. Incorporating the PSMP allows for deeper exploration of young Indigenous men's work narratives, while giving each participant an opportunity to gain better insight into their vocational development.

Previous Walking in Multiple Worlds (WIMW) Findings

As introduced in Chapter 1, in the WIMW project, Marshall and her colleagues have been exploring Indigenous emerging adults' experiences of life and work transition. Findings to date from the Victoria and Toronto WIMW project studies have contributed to and influenced this present study. Across the two sites, five major themes have been identified: work experiences, Indigenous culture, family and relational support systems, community connections, and discrimination and oppression (Stewart and Marshall, 2012). Recently two Masters theses have been completed as part of the project. In the Toronto location, Overmars (2011) conducted individual interviews with five Indigenous women between the ages of 27 and 30. She identified three interrelated meta-themes: career journey, community, and importance of education, and concluded that her

participants conceptualized career as a journey, while education and community are essential components of this journey. Coverdale (2012) from the Victoria location conducted four group interviews with a total of 25 participants aged 17 to 29, and identified four meta-themes related to her research question: relationship, work, education, and culture. She noted that relationships were particularly relevant to the participants as they progressed through their work life experiences; work, education and culture were all interrelated, and these three domains existed and operated within a larger relational context. Coverdale also noted that younger participants more often conceptualized work as a means of survival, while older participants spoke about the merging of two cultural worlds: work and community. These findings served as a guide for my research, particularly the data analysis, as outlined in the next chapter.

Summary

This chapter outlined the selected literature that informed my current research. I reviewed Relational Theory, which understands relationships as central to human functioning (Schultheiss, 2007) and Social Constructionism, which contends that reality is created and maintained through cultural, socioeconomic, and socio-political contexts (Gergen, 1999, Whiston and Rahardja, 2005). Current demographics, including employment, unemployment and educational rates were then disused. Indigenous vocational research was then presented, included the supports and obstacles that Indigenous people face in their vocational and educational pursuits. A review of possible selves and the Possible Selves Mapping Tool followed (Marshall et al., 2011). Finally, I presented the current Walking in Multiple Worlds findings. A gap in the literature was identified related to the experiences of young Indigenous men with regard to work and

career development. My intent was to address this gap by asking: *What supports, challenges, and obstacles do young Aboriginal men experience with regard to finding and keeping work?* The following chapter outlines the methodology I utilized in this thesis to answer my research question.

Chapter III – Methodology

In this chapter, I outline my research approach, design considerations, procedures, and analysis. I finish by discussing the trustworthiness of the study, and my researcher location within this research.

Qualitative Approach

As the purpose of this study was to bring forward Indigenous male young adults' voices and experiences to vocational research, a qualitative approach was selected to obtain this in-depth data. Kenny et al. (2007) maintain that previous research with young adults and post-secondary students across socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic groups suggests that qualitative research is useful for capturing multiple aspects of phenomena. Blustein et al. (2005) supported qualitative research within the study of career development as it offers insight and important implications for future practice and assessment.

Jackson, Drummond, and Camara (2007) stated that qualitative research is primarily concerned with using a humanistic and interpretive approach to understand human experience. Marshall and Rossman (2011) argued that qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, grounded in lived experience, and is used as a broad approach to study social phenomena; in addition, they state that qualitative research is engaged in natural settings, uses multiple methods that are respectful of the participants, pays attention to context, is ever changing, and interpretive in nature. Denzin and Licoln (2003) stated that:

> "Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible.

> These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations… Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring them." (pp. 4-5).

Adopting a qualitative approach provided me with the flexibility to obtain and capture rich data, which in turn helped me to bring forward and articulate the stories and voices of the young men in this study.

Relational and Social Constructionist Theoretical Orientation

My theoretical frameworks have influenced my specific methodological choices in this research. Relational theorists argue that relationships provide instrumental support for work based transitions (Blustein, 2011). Many Indigenous communities and members acknowledge the sociocentric nature of their people, and promote relationship to family, community and Nation as highly important (Krimayer, 2000). Blustien (2011) and Schultheiss (2007) both argued that relational perspectives allow for evaluation of the interaction between work and relationship. Their perspectives informed my approach to data analysis and to understanding the participants' work life stories, and allowed for detailed exploration of relational influences of vocational development.

According to Whiston and Rahardja (2005), Social Constructionism theory focuses on societal and cultural influences, and is useful for exploring careers. Cohen, Duberley, and Mallon (2004) observed that Social Constructionism illuminates the relationship between careers and the social contexts in which they are entrenched. Blustein et al. (2005) noted that an underlying premise of Social Constructionism is that reality is constructed in both social and cultural contexts, and that multiple perspectives

exist, each influenced by culture, history, and context. They also stated that Social Constructionism focuses on evolving relationships, and as such, is highly useful for more deeply understanding what constitutes career and work. As a researcher, utilizing the Social Constructionism framework allows me to embrace both the societal and cultural components of the participants and their stories. Acknowledging that multiple truths exist, and that knowledge is constructed between people through their interactions and relationships (Wiston and Rahdja, 2005), has been central to my work.

Narrative Method

A narrative method was appropriate for my research for a number of reasons. A narrative orientation allows for depth and details to emerge through co-construction and meaning-making, and is sensitive to the context and the construction of narratives embedded in the lived experience of the participants (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995). Barton (2004) stated that a narrative orientation allows for the study of epiphanies, rituals, routines, metaphors, and everyday experiences.

Indigenous people typically describe themselves as people who use oral-based information translation, specifically through story telling (Medicine-Eagle, 1989). Stewart (2008) argued that using a narrative orientation allows researchers to remain consistent with Aboriginal oral traditions and storytelling as ways of knowing and communication. Echoing this, Barton (2004) stated that narrative inquiry is culturally appropriate and useful for exploring the lived experiences of Indigenous people. She goes on to say that "as a methodology congruent with Aboriginal epistemology, narrative inquiry could be about witnessing an insurgent effort by Aboriginal people to reclaim confidence in their identities, regain a political voice, and heal from colonial injustices of

the past" (p. 525). The narrative method that I employed in my research allowed for the participants' lived experiences to be brought forward through story, all the while remaining respectful of traditional ways of preserving and passing on knowledge.

Design Considerations

Context. This study took place in the capital region of Victoria, British Columbia, located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. Victoria is on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people, which is made up of nine Nations, and is home to an estimated 15,000 Indigenous people from all over Canada (Coverdale, 2012). The capital region district has a population of almost 375,000 people (BC Stats, 2013), and a total employment and unemployment rate of 61.2% and 5.4% respectively in December 2012 (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Participants. Throughout my search for participants, I worked with community members and community agencies, an approach that is consistent with Indigenous traditions. I received help from the University of Victoria's First Peoples House, the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, research team members, and work colleagues and contacts during my search. Our research team members have partnered with local Indigenous services agencies that have work training programs, and with career development programs throughout Victoria. I sent out recruitment posters (See Appendix A) and recruitment letters (See Appendix B) to both the Friendship Centre and the First Peoples house on several occasions, and put posters up in the Victoria community. In addition, members of the research team passed on the information about the study to Indigenous community members and contacts that they knew. Prospective participants had to be male, between the ages of 18-35, have completed some high school, and have

had work experience. During the recruitment phase of the study, I connected with 10 potential participants, though it was not possible to schedule interviews with two of them. My final sample had eight males ranging in ages from 18-33, with the majority of the men being younger than 25. All participants had previous work experience, and self-identified as Indigenous.

Family and tribal affiliation is normally an important part of Indigenous people's identity. However, in the interests of maintaining confidentiality, and because most of the participants came from and are currently living in small communities, I have not identified their specific Indigenous tribal or community affiliations. Five of the eight participants said that their Band was located on Vancouver Island (for example, from the Coast Salish or Nuu-chah-nulth territories), one identified as Haida, one identified as Métis, and the other said that his family was from the North West Territories. Some further details about each participant are described in Chapter IV.

Preparation

This was my first in-depth exposure to qualitative research experience. Familiarizing myself with the process required considerable effort, and continues to be a steep learning curve. Throughout my study, I met with my supervisor on an ongoing basis to review progress and plan future steps. I enrolled in two graduate level research methodology courses, one that was specifically focused on conducting qualitative research. These courses helped build my foundational understanding of research, and were a necessary undertaking.

Before I began interviewing participants, I reviewed the original WIMW research proposal, related research presentations and theses, and relevant literature. I familiarized

myself with the interview questions (See Appendix C), and reviewed the PSMP outline (See Appendix D).

Prior to meeting with my first participant, I completed a practice interview with a colleague to familiarize myself with the process and gain feedback on my approach to the interviewing. In addition, I had conducted the Possible Selves Mapping process with individuals and groups on a number of occasions prior to meeting with my first participant. This allowed me to engage in interview the process comfortably and competently.

Following each interview, I wrote down my holistic impressions of the interview to help me engage in reflexivity. This allowed me to think about my interactions with each participant and the research process, and provided an opportunity to reflect on how I could tailor how I was working with participants. Further to this, I attended regular research team meetings, which focused on consultation and developing research skills. This team is comprised of my supervising faculty member, PhD and Master level graduate students, and undergraduate students. The team utilizes what Marshall and Guenette (2011) call *within team knowledge transfer and exchange*, or a cascading model of mentorship. I had the opportunity to learn from senior members and to teach to junior members of the team. This allowed me to expand and solidify my working knowledge of both qualitative research and my project. As several of my teammates were also involved in the Walking in Multiple Worlds project, we were able to share ideas and encourage each other throughout the process.

In addition, I talked with work colleagues and other researchers in my graduate program about my process, what my research entailed, and the intent of the interviews to

help deepen my own understanding of my project, and improve my articulation of my research questions, purpose and findings. This continual dialoguing has been an ongoing effort throughout my thesis, at the recommendation of Dr. Marshall in my qualitative research class (personal communication, 2012), because it helps researchers familiarize ourselves with both our research and with the process within the research. Finally, I kept a research notebook, in which I wrote questions, observations, comments, and personal reflections about my process.

Procedures and Data Gathering

Interviews were scheduled for about 90 minutes each. I contacted each of the 10 potential interviewees by email, and sent them a list of our questions (See Appendix C), as well as a recruitment and consent document (See Appendix B & E). This allowed for anyone who was interested in participating to get a better idea of the procedure and the types of questions that I would be asking. I asked individuals to inform me if they were interested in participating, and set up an interview with each participant who chose to and was able to proceed. We agreed upon a time, and a safe central location to conduct the interview. Five of the participants were interested in conducting the interview on the University of Victoria campus, while the remaining three chose to have the interviews at a local Indigenous agency. Upon arrival, I welcomed each participant and reviewed the purpose of the study, the interview questions, and the informed consent. I gave them each a thank you card and a $20 honorarium for choosing to share their story. Then, I asked each participant if they had any questions and if they were ready to sign the consent form before we proceeded. After this, I started the audio recording and began the interview. We generally spent about 45 to 60 minutes going through the questions from

the semi-structured part of the interview, and about 20 to 30 minutes working through the Possible Selves Mapping Process. Upon completion, I thanked the interviewee, and invited closing comments. I informed each individual that I would send them a short story – a "ghostwriting" (Rhodes, 2000) interpretation of their story, in an effort to help ensure that my understanding of the participant's experience captured what we talked about. In addition, I offered to send a copy of their map to them if they wished. Following each meeting, I jotted down my holistic impressions of the interview in my research journal.

Individual interview questions. In the first part of the interview, the seven questions that I asked each participant had been developed by Dr. Marshall and Dr. Stewart in the WIMW project (See Appendix C). These questions served as my guide for my interview, and the semi-structured process provided a framework that was structured enough to cover the topics of interest yet open enough to allow for detailed exploration of the participants' particular work life narratives. I worked through each question, one by one. If the participant had already addressed a question earlier, I still presented it. This was done to ensure that every participant was given the opportunity to speak to each point. I told each participant that I would do this at the beginning of each interview, so they were not surprised. The questions asked were as follows:

1. Tell me about your story or stories of finding and keeping work.
2. What are the supports, challenges, and obstacles you have experienced or are experiencing now?
3. Have any of your work experiences included Aboriginal or First Nations culture? If so, please explain and give examples.

4. Has any of your work been with Aboriginal service agencies or Band offices? If so, please describe that work.
5. How have parents/guardians, Elders, and other community members helped you with your schooling and/or with finding work?
6. What is the most important thing you have learned about finding and keeping work? What would you change if you could?
7. What are your next steps? How do you see your future now?

At the conclusion of these questions, I asked if the participants had anything else to add that would provide me with a clearer understanding of their experiences.

Possible selves mapping process. The Possible Selves Mapping Process (PSMP) (Shepard & Marshall, 1999; Marshall, 2002; Marshall & Guenette, 2008; Marshall et al., 2009) is an exploration tool that has been developed to assist participants in describing their work and life narratives. The PSMP is based on Markus and Nurius' (1986) concept of possible selves, and allows an individual to explore future selves –hoped for, feared, and expected selves. The mapping process allows for a conversation about how a person can move towards a hoped for self, or move away from a feared self. The research team has developed and adapted different forms of this "visual data collection instrument", and Marshall et al. (2011) stated that "it has been highly useful for engaging participants in qualitative interviews" (p. 52). Several iterations and revisions of the PSMP have been created by the research team. More recently, an adapted map containing only hoped for and feared selves was created to facilitate the ease of delivery. Marshall et al. (2011) also argued that the PSMP provides a deeper look into the multifaceted and interconnected experience of career development that would otherwise be missed by a self-report or

interview alone. Coming into this research project, I had had multiple experiences facilitating the PSMP, in addition to completing a Possible Selves Map for myself on numerous occasions.

Typically, the PSMP used by the team involves seven steps:

1. Creating a Brainstorm Map of hoped for and feared possible selves
2. Grouping and naming these possible selves
3. Debriefing the Brainstorm Map
4. Identifying most hoped for and feared selves
5. Transferring brainstorm information to the Possible Selves Map
6. "Things to do right now" – describing actions to achieve hoped for selves and avoid feared selves.
7. Reviewing overall impressions, thoughts, and goals

I was interested in looking at hoped for selves and feared selves specifically in the context of future work-life experiences, thus, I conducted the PSMP after the open questions in the narrative portion of the interview. I wanted to gather additional information and provide the opportunity for my participants to gain an increased awareness and deeper understanding of their own possible selves However, I recognized that the full 7-step PSMP usually takes up to an hour, and I did not want the interview process to be too long. Thus, I opted to modify and collapse some of the steps into a shortened version.

I began by reading a standard (abbreviated) PSMP script (See Appendix D) to each participant, in which I asked individuals to first list their hoped for work-related selves, and then their feared work-related selves on separate maps (See Appendixes F &

G). Next, I had individuals rank their list, from most hoped for/feared self to least hoped for/feared self (See Appendix H for example). Once done, and if there was time, we reviewed the map, and I asked them to consider how capable they felt of accomplishing or preventing general and specific possible selves, how likely they thought the possible selves were of coming true, and what plans they had to move towards or away from stated selves. These questions are designed to deepen self-understanding and highlight future outcomes, as well as to explore and consolidate ways in which they can increase the likelihood of possible hoped for selves, and decrease the likelihood of possible feared selves. After the discussion, I provided an opportunity to reflect on the process, and asked them to conclude with any additional thoughts or questions, as well as clearly state their next steps.

Data Analysis

My analysis was a multidimensional, ongoing, and iterative process involving: transcribing interviews, transcript coding, and theming; reviewing Possible Selves Mapping outcomes; developing written narratives, or ghostwritings, for each participant; revising my thematic organization; and reviewing and incorporating my direct observations from my interviews, my interview notes, and my research journal reflections. The detailed steps are described below.

After the interviews were completed, I followed our research team's steps of analysis, similar to Lawrence (2010), Creedon (2011), and Dorris (2012):

1. Making notes after each interview and/or listening to audio interviews and recording holistic impressions.
2. Transcribing audio-recorded interviews as close to verbatim as possible.

3. Within-participant analysis – identifying and highlighting core information for each participant related to the research question and previous results.
4. Ghostwriting a brief story about each participant and member checking for accuracy.
5. Across-participant analysis – rereading all transcripts and identifying broad themes and labelling text segments with code words or phrases within the larger project.
6. Examining codes for overlap and redundancy and then revising to a final list of codes.
7. Identifying main themes across all participants and more specific sub-themes along with supporting participant quotes.
8. Creating an across participant table of themes and sub-themes.
9. Analyzing PSMP data for common and unique possible selves categories.
10. Integrating and linking findings to the literature and previous results.
11. Producing results in a scholarly thesis with appropriate examples and quotes.

Ghostingwriting. Rhodes (2000) has developed a process called *ghostwriting* that is used to create a living document that recounts the story of the participant, and incorporates the involvement of the researcher; the researcher creates a text based on the transcription and interpretation of interviews that is a representation of the experiences and ideas of the person interviewed. The authored story is more than just a recounting of the events that the participant has experienced, it is an account of the bidirectional process in which information and interpretation was shared between the interviewer and the interviewee (p. 512). Following Rhodes' process, I began by revisiting each

interview in my mind, and recreated the story that each participant and I shared. Incorporating my holistic summary and transcripts, I pulled out what I thought were the relevant quotes of each interview as a basis for the ghoststory. I highlighted the core answers to the research question and the individual's experiences that I understood to have been the most salient for the individual. Once I had all of the quotes, I assembled them into a first person story, as if the participant was sharing a summary, in their own words, of their experiences of finding and keeping work. When each story was completed, as a form of member checking, I sent each individual their respective transcript and ghoststory, and asked for feedback as a way of checking my understanding of the story that we shared together. Of the eight ghoststories and transcripts that I sent out, two participants did not respond, and one person requested slight grammatical changes to his story. The ghoststories are a form of *within-participant* analysis and credibility confirmation, and are presented in Chapter IV.

Thematic analysis. My across-participant narrative interview analysis was guided primarily by the process of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is separate from a theoretical or epistemological camp or orientation, and is thus compatible with a variety of theoretical paradigms, including Constructionism. They state that thematic analysis is a flexible method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes. In their approach, a *theme* captures something significant in the data, and represents a patterned response or meaning in a data set. They go on to say that a theme's *keyness* is dependent on whether or not it captures something related to the specific research question, and is not something that is necessarily dependant on a quantifiable measure. When conducting

analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that it is important to be aware of the specific approach that is being taken: a bottom up approach, or inductive approach, in which coding is completed without attempting to utilize a pre-existing coding guide and the process is not driven by the research's theoretical interest; or a top down approach, or theoretical approach, in which existing frameworks drive the coding and analysis – the latter providing a more detailed analysis of a specific aspect of the data. As my research was part of a larger project, other researchers had already started to find patterns in the meta-themes across participants. I acknowledge that I utilized these previous findings, and that they helped guide my analysis – thus my approach was more theoretical than inductive. Five major themes that had previously been identified by Stewart's team were: work experience; Indigenous culture; family and relational support systems; community connections; discrimination and oppression (Stewart & Marshall, 2012). During my analysis, I kept these themes in mind as strong possibilities; however, I ensured that I remained open to other possibilities that could exist. In this way I hoped to capture both similar and unique stories that existed within my participant group when compared to our earlier WIMW project results. In addition, the PSMP data was more specific to each participant and thus warranted a slightly different analysis process than the narrative data (see below).

I followed Braun and Clarke (2006), who outlined six steps to conducting thematic analysis: *familiarising yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes,* and *producing the report.* For the first step, they argue that immersing yourself in the data is absolutely necessary, and they recommend actively engaging with the data multiple times. This can

be accomplished by searching for patterns or meaning during multiple audio and transcript reviews. After each interview, I listened to the audio recording, and spent time jotting down my holistic impressions of each interview in my research journal. I completed this directly after each interview, in an effort to write as much from recent memory as possible. After I conducted the interviews and made my notes, I moved to the transcription phase. While transcription is a way to become familiar with your data and is a process of data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Kvale, 1999), time constraints prevented me from writing all of the transcription myself. I was able to transcribe my first interview; all subsequent interviews were transcribed by a hired research assistant. Once the transcripts were complete, I checked them against the audio recordings, which helped to ensure accuracy and served to increase my familiarity with the data. I then printed the transcript, with the text occupying the first of three equally divided columns on the printed page of my transcript.

The second step of my thematic analysis was *generating initial codes*. In this phase, codes which identify features of the data and are the most basic unit of information that can be assessed in a meaningful way, are generated. Saldana (2009) states that a code is "often a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). During this phase, I read through my transcripts slowly and thoroughly, line by line, and assigned a word or short phrase that was representative of data that I was reading. Through this process, I was keenly aware of the specific interview question that I was asking, my theoretical framework, my central research question, and what stood out for me, in an effort to contextualize my data and keep my research project at the forefront

of my mind (Saldana, 2009). I achieved this by having a small cue card in front of me while I coded, reminding myself of these pieces. I wrote down my initial codes in the middle of the three columns on my page (See Appendix I for sample page**)**.

The third step, *searching for themes*, involved a re-focusing and taking a broader look at the themes. Codes were analysed and sorted into potential groups of overarching themes. As I came into this project with existing themes, I spent a considerable amount of time refining and wrestling with this process. I wanted to remain open to alternative interpretations of my data, and not attempt to just slot a code into a theme if it seemed "close enough".

The fourth phase is *reviewing themes*, which is a two part process. First, I read all of the codes that I had put under each potential theme, and considered if there was a coherent pattern. If there was not a coherent pattern, I considered the codes that did not fit, and assessed if I should fit them into another existing theme, rework one of my themes, or create a new theme. If one code seemed to fit for more than one themes, I rechecked the code, and considered the context of the code to help assess its fit. If there was a coherent pattern of , I moved onto the second stage, where I considered how each theme fit in relation to the data set, as well as whether my candidate themes "accurately" reflected the meaning of the data set as a whole. After this, I re-read my entire transcript to make sure that the themes worked in relation to the whole transcript, and to find any additional codes that had been missed before. Recoding is something that is expected in qualitative research, as coding is an organic and ongoing process (Braun and Clark, 2006).

The PSMP data were analyzed and used in a slightly different manner than the narrative data thematic analysis process described above. Due to the particular abbreviated PSMP format used in this study, the PSMP data were more participant-specific and less in-depth than the narrative data. Thus, the analysis was "contained" within that portion of the transcript and limited to a more concrete content focus. To distinguish this process from the more in-depth narrative thematic analysis, I have used the term *category* to identify PSMP findings (rather than *themes* and *subthemes* used for the narrative findings). The PSMP data are presented separately from the narrative data, and are parallel and complimentary rather than incorporated.

The fifth phase was *defining and naming themes*. This marked the process of capturing the "essence" of what each theme meant and determined the aspect of the data that each theme captured. By giving name to a theme, I was able to identify the general "story" of each theme, and consider how each theme fit into the broader picture in relation to my research question. For example, Supporting Others, addressed participants experiences of give back to family and community members. As some themes had already been defined by the WIMW teams, I considered if there were more appropriate names or extensions that could better capture my data.

The sixth and final phase is *producing the report.* Themes are to be written up and presented in a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting way. In my across-participant analysis presented in Chapter V, I organized the full list of narrative themes in a table, described themes and subthemes (and PSMP categories), and included relevant in-text quotes, to present a compelling and detailed illustration of the story that I am attempting to tell about my data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1981) suggest that truth value, consistency, neutrality, and applicability can be used to understand the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) went on to further refine these categories: truth value could be understood as *credibility*; applicability could be understood as *transferability;* consistency could be understood as *dependability*; and neutrality could be understood as *confirmability* (Krefting, 1991; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Krefting (1991) stated that *credibility*, or truth value, speaks to "how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings based on the research design, informants, and context" (p. 215). She outlined several methods for improving *credibility*, including: prolonged and varied field experience, reflexivity (thinking about how my background, perceptions, and interests influenced the process), member checking (checking in with participants about the research process and analysis), and triangulation (convergence of multiple perspectives and data).

Krefting (1991) maintains that *transferability*, or applicability, speaks to the degree to which the findings can be applied to situations, including locations, groups, and contexts. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that transferability can be understood as how the study's outcomes will be useful to others in a comparable context. Krefting (1991) recommends that *transferability* can be optimized by nominated samples (star participants), comparison of sample to demographic data, and dense descriptions, methods, and data.

Dependability, or consistency, for Krefting (1991) relates to whether the results of a second study completed with similar participants and contexts would be consistent with

the first. Guba (1981) observed that variability in qualitative research is to be expected, and as such, consistency should be defined in terms of dependability, or that variability is traceable and can be ascribed to a particular source. Explaining some of the sources of variability may include differences in researchers' insights; participants' levels of commitment to the project or mood during the interview; or participants' life situations. To address dependability, Krefting (1991) recommends dense description of research methods, peer examination, triangulation, and attention to coding.

Krefting (1991) states that *confirmability*, or neutrality, which speaks to freedom from systematic bias in procedures and results, is another component of trustworthiness. Qualitative researchers aim to increase the closeness between the researcher and the participant, which increases the worth of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that *confirmability* should be the criterion of neutrality, and this can be achieved when truth value and applicability are established. To address *confirmability*, Krefting (1991) recommends triangulation and reflexivity.

Throughout this research, I have spent time addressing the trustworthiness of the process by engaging in several of the suggestions outlined by Krefting and others. Through extensive use of my research journal, where I documented my thoughts, feelings, and ideas about my process and the data being collected, I continued to engage in reflexivity throughout this study. Creswell and Miller (2000) noted that it is necessary to be aware of personal beliefs and biases, or subjectivities, throughout the research process. Keeping a log of my process and referring to it throughout this research has been particularly helpful as I tried to make sense of the participants' stories and my reactions to them.

Creswell and Miller (2000) also state that triangulation requires the researcher to incorporate multiple sources of data as they systematically create themes. I utilized transcripts, ghoststories, Possible Selves Maps, my research notebook, and other findings from the Walking in Multiple Worlds project to addresses triangulation. Member checking was also incorporated as much as possible. I reviewed the participants' Possible Selves maps with them to ensure understanding, and emailed out ghoststories to be reviewed.

Being part of a larger project allowed me to work with other researchers and refer to previous findings within the project. I have had ongoing meetings with the Victoria research team throughout my project, in which I discussed and compared my findings with other members' findings. Also, I had an opportunity to compare my results with results from the Toronto team. All of this, along with reviewing relevant literature, allowed me to compare my sample to the larger pool of information and have peer examination, which also resulted in another point of triangulation (Krefting, 1991). While I had hoped to have a greater number of participants to increase the depth of my data, having the other WIMW data to work with helped with credibility. In addition, having been involved with *Walking in Multiple Worlds* as well as working in the local Indigenous communities for the past two years has allowed me to have a degree of prolonged and varied field experience as well. Creswell and Miller (2000) observe that while there is no defined length of time one must spend in the field, increasing time allows for a more pluralistic perspective to be heard from participants, and a better understanding of the context of participants. Finally, throughout this thesis, I have aimed

to communicate the details of my process and outcomes as fully as possible, by presenting a dense description of methods and data procedures to the reader.

Researcher Location

As a researcher, I understand that the analysis strategies that I chose to follow impacted what and how I explored and shared the stories of each participant. Throughout this process, I attempted to respectfully bring forward the voices of each participant, and attempted to highlight both the challenges and successes that each participant experienced. I recognize that the stories that were shared were created in response to specific questions that I asked and the way that I interacted with each individual, and that they do not capture the full life experience of each participant.

Much of my daily life over the past two years has been spent working as a counsellor within the local Indigenous community. I have had a chance to work closely with many groups, and have had numerous opportunities to develop specific cultural competencies and awareness. As a young male in my own process of navigating my academic and vocational pursuits, I could relate to a common shared experience with the participants. At the same time, I recognize that I come from a different culture with different worldviews and ways of being. As such, I have found this process to be like looking at a Venn-diagram; I can and cannot relate to many of the experiences shared with me. At the end of it, there was a common ground that I was fortunate to experience. The process has forced me to rely on a process of reflexivity – something that I have had lengthy experiences with through my journey towards becoming a counsellor. It has been important for me to continue to remind myself of what stories I attempted to elicit from each participant, and how I impacted and interpreted the stories that were shared.

Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology and method of my research. I described my research approach, design considerations, procedures, analysis, trustworthiness, and researcher location. The following chapter includes each participant ghoststory.

Chapter IV – Participant Stories

In this chapter, I present the individual participant's stories. I elected to utilize a technique called "ghostwriting" (Rhodes, 2000) to recreate and convey the shared meaning between each participant and myself. Each ghoststory includes quotations, in *italics*, from each participant. Whenever possible, I used as much of the participant's own words that I could; some quotes have been edited to improved readability and maintain anonymity. Every story is unique, and is focused on the elements that each participant brought forward. In the ghoststories, I included an overview of each participant's work experience, and focused on their responses to the research questions. At the end of each story, I included their top three hoped for and feared selves from the Possible Selves Mapping Process. Each story and the included quotes vary in length, which reflects the duration and detail of each interview.

W.R.

I got my first job while I was in high school. At that time, *my dad passed away from cancer* and *we were like lacking a lot of income at that point*. I chose to start work in the summer *at a fish plant, two hours from town* so I could help *support my family, buy my sister and I some nice clothes*, and *get some job experience*. I needed to *support my family*. It was pretty easy to get that job. I got it because *my dad had worked there before and then my older brother worked there* too.

It was tough at the plant at first. Being a younger worker, *everyone was older than me*, and *had more experience*; *it'd be really challenging when you're learning the job and everyone's been doing it for a really long time*. *And you're trying to learn up all*

these different things: how the place works and how to do your job properly. Pretty *overwhelming.*

A big support for me was that I was always telling myself *that this is what I'm doing to make money,* money for *my family.* My brother was *there for support* as well. *I could go to his office and everything*, it made it a lot easier having him there. *He helped me to get to know some of the workers* and how to do the job. *It was just a good support structure right there at work.* My dad was a big support earlier on in my life, *he helped guide us*, what we should and shouldn't do, instilled a good *work ethic. I learned from them,* my brother and my dad, and *understood how I could get the job*, even before I was in the work force. *Both my parents were really helpful* all throughout. They *wanted us to be successful*, and tried to help us get there.

I also had a bit of a different potential job experience. I played video games at a very high level, and *a sponsor decided to look at my team and talk to me, mostly me because I was the captain of the team. He said that he could sponsor us to fly us to videogame tournaments in California and Sweden,* they had big cash prizes. I decided to *go to university* instead. *I was already in debate if I wanted to go to university at that point, I was kind of afraid if I took a year off and second year came around, would I be in a larger debate?* So, I let go of the professional video gamer dream.

I haven't necessarily done work with my Aboriginal community, but I have done a little bit of volunteering, helping with *events for kids.* It is something that *interests me,* but that will be down the road.

It has been hard finding work. I looked at some of the local places at the beginning of the university semester, *figured maybe I could get a job*, and *went in with*

my resume. Writing that thing *was the most difficult part!* The places said *they weren't hiring,* which was *discouraging*. It made it hard to keep looking after being shut down; I had *a lack of motivation actually to go to those places again*. *I wouldn't think it would be too hard to keep the job once I got the job.* It's just the finding it in the first place. I had a similar experience in high school. I felt *pretty good* about the resume I made, *handed it out to a couple places, and I didn't get any call backs on those.* It was tough.

Going to university will help me *get a better job*, and *having my tuition and funding paid for through being First Nations* has been very helpful. *I'm not too sure what program I necessarily like,* or *what it will be like after university. But that's quite a few years from now. I'm not yet sure of what career I want or what I want to do,* but *I'll figure that out* along the way.

My top three hoped for selves are: *to be at a point where I am happy, successful and to spend a lot of time with my family, wife and kids; to have a job where I don't become too absorbed in, and have some leisure time for myself, family and other friends away from work;* and *to have a job that is enjoyable and relaxing, but also being challenging and expansive learning can happen.* My top three feared selves are: *to not have much money to support my family and to not support my own and others recreational needs; to become too self-absorbed in my work, where I don't spend time with family and friends;* and *to become very secluded and stuck in a small area of the world, to not experience other areas of the world*

G.T.

I guess for me as long as I could remember, I've always worked; I've always had some kind of income. I have had many different jobs, including being a *dishwasher*,

being a *cook*, doing *demolition*, *carving*, being a *youth activity coordinator and youth mentor*, doing *research*, working at an *indigenous foster home*, being an *indigenous program assistant*, to name a few. Lots of these I have done throughout my schooling. When I look at my work experience, *the majority of my jobs come through connections like friends or family.* Now, I am working on my Master's in Social Work, and I have a few Indigenous-related part time jobs on the side.

When I think about what has supported me through my work, *being connected to my community and family* has been very important, *like that's when your greatest support comes in.* My whole family has *supported me 100%. Like, my family being my mother, my aunties, my uncles, my cousins. I got a big family and they all supported me, and looked out for me, and just sort of cheered me on the sidelines. Without the support of my mother man, I would have not made it. Like I literally would have been on the street.* Also, *I've been very fortunate to have a lot of mentors. You get to see how they have survived and how they have made it through here. You kind of want to emulate that work ethic that they carry and walk with it. Plugging into my Native community* has been necessary.

Also, *being aware of your own identity is a really big piece. By identity, I don't just mean that you're Native, but knowing what community, what family, who you're related to, all the details of the components.* I think that b*eing rooted in your own identity is one of the greatest supports that you can have. And you can't get there without meeting and being with your own family, your own people, interacting with your own community, your own culture.* I have had the chance to work in my own community

through my degrees, which has been very meaningful and important. Now I ask myself '*How can I best serve my community and my people, where do I fit in on all that?'*

In terms of the challenges, it's always been a struggle; it's *hard enough to get work in here, let alone being Native.* I have experienced a lot of racism out there, especially in my restaurant work. *The cooks were racist, the pay was bad, they were just overall abusive. Like I experienced a lot of racism in that job. I'm pretty sure they did bad things to my food,* and *those attitudes are there before you even say a word.* Now, university and college is *more like a fantasy camp cause it's not real. The real world is out there, you go out there and it's completely different.* Here at the university, *they don't have as much ignorance, or they admit their ignorance and admit that they're learning.* All that racism, discrimination and ignorance *really kind of wears you down and makes you mad, makes you bitter.*

In my experience of getting work, it was tough, you were kind of stuck; *it was more about not having another option. Like if you're a cook you're kind of limited to that.* Finishing my grade 12 and going to college opened doors. *The barriers and obstacles now are easier to remove, because I have options* through my education.

Now, *I have a stronger identity, I have resources, I have people behind me. It's just a matter of me making that move and just kind of finding that direction.* You know, *I've always said from the get go, as long as I'm working with other Natives, I don't care what I'm doing.*

My top three feared selves are: a*ngry, living away from the island, and no options*. My top three hoped for selves are: *PhD, movie director, and clinical social worker.*

S.C.

I'm in my first semester of my first year at college; *it's been hard work, but pretty good.* Throughout my life, I have had two jobs. *When I was 13, I worked for my grandpa, for a month or so, and I was cleaning the stock house for his store.* He owned the general store in a *small Aboriginal community* in the Northwest Territories. He hired me so *I could get a little bit of work experience* as well as *earn some money* when I was up there for my summer break.

My second job was at fast food place; *it was a go in and almost get hired on the spot thing.* The main reason that I chose to go there, was because *my best friend was already working there, and she was saying 'oh I think you should apply'.* It was great to have a friend working there already, *both for getting the job, and on the job*. During my training, *we watched a multicultural awareness video, and there was a little spiel on Aboriginal people.* I felt like it was kind of a *token gesture, I'm pretty sure I'm sensitive to my own culture; it didn't really seem like they cared too much about my culture, they just had to follow their rules* which annoyed me. *The job was ok, sometimes I would be really busy, and other times it would be dead*, which was tough. I was there for about five months, and then I got laid off. *It was really weird they had me sign something and they were not clear about it, they made it sound like I was fired*. I didn't like losing that job, *it didn't seem fair and it was confusing.* What made that job tough is that *there were a few people that I didn't like working with, there was a lot of, I think, the stoner types, and smokers, and I don't like that like I'm not going to do drugs at all, I don't really think it's appropriate if someone shows up to work stoned or anything. It's like, 'really? Can it wait until after?' I was like 'okay I'll tolerate your presence but I'm really not making*

any effort.' I didn't agree with what they were doing, and that *made it hard to work with them.*

I have definitely learned a few things about getting and keeping a job. For me, I found that *knowing somebody who works there already can help a lot.* Family support was a big help as well. My *grandpa was always telling me things about how to be a good worker* and was always saying things like '*show up on time, be presentable, work hard.' My parents really helped with my resume early on, just writing it, and what to put, and where to put it, and that kind of thing*. And *they have been really supportive without too much pressure. Not really pushing me in any direction, they're just like 'figure it out, and then we'll help'.* In terms of moving forward to get a better job, *I really need an education*. My parents have also been really helping with that piece; both *financially* and by *helping me navigate the process, just giving a lot of advice.* It would be hard to do it without them.

I've learned that you *need to be persistent* when looking for work. *It's been important to just go in and ask for the manager, and ask if there are any openings; make more than one appearance because that's how they know you're still interested.* Also, going to a job resource centre can be useful, *they show you how to find a job, and tell you some things you need to know. Really, you have to get out there because many jobs just aren't even advertised.*

It terms of looking for other employment, *it has been very difficult, especial since I don't have very much work experience on my resume.* It's hard to get a good job without much experience. Currently, I am looking for another job. *A friend of mine, she keeps trying to get me to apply for a job where she works*, it's at another fast food place,

and I don't really want to work there. *I like to sell things that I believe in*, and I just can't get behind the product; *it's kind of a pride thing*. *Even though I don't really want to apply, there's a good chance of getting hired, and then I would have more to add to the resume,* then I could *move to something better.*

Looking ahead at my future, it's tough, and *I'm not too sure, there are three separate things I want to be doing, anthropology, psychology, or law school,* and *I don't know which one.* There are a lot of *options at university that are interesting to me,* and the good thing is that going to school *will help me towards a future career,* even though *I'm not even sure which track I'm on*. My parents *have been supportive* throughout it and it *would be hard without them*.

My top three hoped for selves are: *finish college, start a career,* and *have a stable income*. When I thought about my feared selves, I was only worried about *no job* in my future.

B.H.

I just recently moved to Victoria, and I am currently *looking for work*. I came to Victoria because *I just needed to get out of the reservation. Too much drinking,* it was *just hectic.* I have been applying for a bunch of jobs down here, but nothing has happened yet; *I thought I was going to at least get a fry-cooking job or something,* but it has been tough.

Most of my work came through my *band office,* and I started there when I was about *15*. *They'd set me off on little jobs. First it was public works, and cleaning up graveyards, and whatnot. Then I actually got into a few different things, odds and ends. Then more came because I got familiar with everybody* and *they realized that I was a*

good worker and it just kept going. *It's such a small community and everyone knew what everyone was doing. If they were hiring people you'd just go up there*; *community contacts* were really important. I also got some great training from the band which helped me get other jobs, I *got my First Aid,* and *I ended up getting GPS* (Global Positioning Satellite) *training from the band.* I *got gear supplied from the band office* as well. *And that was a big help – we didn't have to go buy it ourselves.*

I *learned a lot* through one job that I got through the band office, it was *CMT work, working with Culturally Modified Trees*, trees that our ancestors used to make things. They would peel *bark for cedar strips, regalia and stuff. It's really neat how they could have figured that out,* to see *what our ancestors had to do*. We were marking the trees and *keeping them alive for the next generation*. We also made some of *our own CMTs. So 10 years from now, someone's going to come look at the tree that I peeled or that I took a plank off of. It was really meaningful and a great learning experience.* I learned a lot about *my ancestors*, and I took that with me.

I also had a chance to do some carving. *I was good friends with most of the carvers* where I lived. *I'd help them rough out masks, I'd sand for them, paint for them. I'd even do some carving. Got into that for a few years, just passing time, hanging out, learning stuff.* I'd *wing out a piece and then I'd go sell it to tourists, and most of my friends, we were all down there together, learning and going at our own pace. I invested quite a bit of time, a bit of money. It all paid off in the end.* It was different, because *for most of my life, I wasn't living that close to my culture. I liked it a lot. It's, like, great being one with the culture*.

I know that *family and friends* have been really important to me when I have been working and trying to find work. I had *lots of family and friends* back home. They provided a lot *support throughout it all,* especial *my sister,* she has *helped a lot* and been *very supportive. We got an apartment together down here. I haven't started paying rent yet because I haven't had any good jobs or anything like that.* That support is really important, especially when you are *in between things*. Also, *it's good to have friends to fall back on. They always give you something to do. Like sometimes if you need some money they'll give you a job,* they are like '*show up, ready to work early in the morning'* and I get to *put some money in my pocket*.

I've had some trouble too. I had difficulty maintaining a job when I moved to another town up North. *I wasn't situated good enough so I didn't follow through on all those plans* that I had for myself, no *stable base* you know? It was hard, *especially when you're all on your own, responsible for yourself.* You need *guidance*, that's really important.

My biggest pieces of advice would be *stay in school*; *put yourself out there*; and *find something you like to do, stick with it, and if you don't like it after you've tried and tested it, then find something else you like to do and try and test that. If you're just not going to like it then don't stick with it. But if you do like it then give it your all.* Throughout it all, I learned that it was really important to *show that I was devoted and wanted to work*; people will see that, and it helps, especially in a small community.

My focus now is *mainly school, I've been trying to catch up. I've had lots of dead end jobs once in a while* and I want that to change. Having an education will be a *big help. Once I get myself seeded here in Vic*, I'll *hunker down and get my education*

because there's not much you can do with just your grade 11. I guess I could go to trade school or something and get funding from the band. But I'd like to get my grade 12. Even if it was like a dogwood or something like that. I'd always wanted to have my grade 12. I have a few friends down here and they tell me about job opportunities, but I know I need school.

My top three hoped for selves are to: *find employment*, *get my grade 12*, and *find a job that suits me.* My top three feared selves are: *becoming like my parents, no employment (on welfare),* and *not getting an education.*

W.L.

Most of my work experience has been in the *service industry, grocery stores to coffee shops, and a couple things in between*. I left my job at a coffee shop *because I'm in six classes* right now. An important thing to know about me is that I am *Métis.* It is something *that I am very proud of*, but I find that not a lot of people know what that means. *Everyone seems to have the idea that anyone who's Indigenous looks a certain way.* I have had to educate a lot of people who were *ignorant of my history.*

When I look at my work experience, there are a lot of things that are currently *helping me move forward*. *Obviously there's family;* they have been a huge part of the *whole thing*. There has been *a lot of support from the elders* at my university, especially from an amazing *Métis elder.* We will have a good *discussion* which gives me *peace of mind;* it's a nice *half an hour break during the week.* Not only that, but *they hear about everything, so it's really good to have that connection because they tell me about what is happening*, both in and outside of my university.

Another form of support has been my schooling. Just learning about who exactly Indigenous people are, who are the Métis, what is their role. It's just very good for diffusing those tensions I have experienced; *knowing the history means I can put it into much layman's explanation*, like *"here's the reasons why I can…"*. It has really helped me *educate people*, and combat the *ignorance* that some of my co-workers have had.

I'd say Indigenous scholarships and bursaries are huge, because it means I don't have to work as much, so it just takes off that added pressure. It really shifts it from needing to work, to wanting to work for simple luxury items, which I can do without, but it's nice to have.

One of the main challenges at work has been *dealing with people who are ignorant*. There's obviously the *stereotype of who Indians are* and *it is deeply entrenched. There's just not the amount of knowledge about who Indigenous people are that there needs to be.* This has been especially true for me because *I don't look dark,* so people ask *how can you be a First Nation?* Which I then have to break down my history: *"Well I'm not First Nations, I'm Métis." And it's like even explaining to people what Métis people are. Just dealing with people who are ignorant of the lineages of people, it's an annoying thing at work, like why do I have to explain who I am*? You know, *it gets tiring dealing with that. I found at every job there's often a person who gives me a hard time like 'Oh you look white so why should you get these things'*, or *'you get your tuition for free'*, or *'you can get jobs in the government just because'*. I find that there *is a pressure in the job to deal with these people* and inform them but *it's frustrating to have to explain*. *I really don't want to work with these people if they're just going to be*

trying to bring awkward conversation to things like that. It can be called discrimination; it comes across as being hostile and there seems to always be a grudge in there.

For me, *I guess there hasn't really been too many obstacles to gaining work so far. Because I'm Métis, I get placed in another category sometimes, so I can actually not be eligible for certain jobs because I'm not in that pool of candidates; I don't always fall under the same rules as everyone else.* That hasn't happened too often, mainly at *hiring fairs* for Indigenous students. Once I do get work, *that's when the hassle begins.*

Looking forward into the summer, I'd *really like to do cultural foods of the prairies or something like that, but with relation to urban populations of Indigenous people. Because of urban population, some Indigenous people don't have that connection to the land. So focusing on Indigenous food in the city would be one thing I'd really like to work on. I'm hoping I can do a community internship like that, working at an organization which focuses on urban populations of Indigenous people, so I can give back to my community.*

I'd like to *finish my undergrad, and then I'd really like to do Indigenous Governance, specifically Plains urban populations of Indigenous people. Because that's where I come from. I don't really have that connection to a reserve or to a road allowance or something like that, but I feel like urban issues are something I can relate to,* and I want to work on issues that are *important to me.*

My top three hoped for selves are: *be able to have a job which educating people about Indigenous people is the point; be a prof at a university;* and *always be able to learn more about Indigenous people.* My top three feared selves are: *not accepted into a*

graduate program; *no possibility of learning more about Indigenous people*; and *working in a place which is not involved with Indigenous people.*

A.E.

I've always had a little trouble finding work, and *I haven't actually had a job in a little over a year now.* I have had a *few jobs* throughout my life though. For my first job, I worked at a local restaurant; I did *dishwashing, food prep, and cleaning. I got really tired of the job. I wasn't getting raises or promotions, I was doing split shifts, I was only getting part time when I asked for full time,* and *I was getting paid less than minimum wage.* Eventually, *I got fired because I stopped showing up for my morning shifts. I just didn't enjoy it,* and *worked too hard* for what I was getting paid. After that, *I went to a fast food place, where I was working for over two years, most of which was on graveyard* shift. *It actually wasn't that bad depending on the coworkers they gave me*. It was *frustrating there,* because *once I got someone trained up nice and good, they took them to the day shift,* and they got *promoted ahead of me*. Eventually, *I got fired and was never given a reason.* I think that the *district manager was in a bad mood, because three people got fired that day.* Even *the assistant manager, who is a friend of mine, got fired. I was pretty mad!* The last job I had was at a maintenance services company. *It was basically just property maintenance, like landscaping, tile cleaning, building repairs and stuff. We did get a lot of work done, but our boss unfortunately ended up having to lay us all off because he ran out of money. We got our paycheque on Friday, showed up for work on Monday, and he told us that he had to let us go. I wish we knew, because we just blew through our paycheque that weekend*. A unique part of that job was that *he was trying to keep all us employees Aboriginal. Because he himself was Native right. He*

would bring up little traditional *stories at the end of the day when we were all driving back;* try to *teach us about culture. I liked that.* Lastly, *two months ago I did a work experience* at a grocery store, because *I was told it would look good on my resume;* nothing paid or permanent though.

I have had a few supports along the way, and *I've always gotten my jobs through someone else.* For the local restaurant, *a friend said they were short on dishwashers,* and helped me *get started there*. Also, my uncle was the manager at the fast food place. *When I was looking for a job I asked him, are you hiring right now? Do you need workers? And he said yeah come drop off a resume. I just showed up and got a job. First time going into that store! He helped me get the job* and helped me *get trained on graveyard* shift, which is *the shift I wanted.* He *supported me at work. Part of the reason I tried to work so hard there was because I figured if I look bad then it doesn't really look good on him for hiring me right? I didn't really want to screw around too much.*

I've actually had a lot of help from the people at an Aboriginal agency. My mom used to work at there, so she used to send me a bunch of job postings as well, and *got me in there in the first place.* Once I was there, there was *a lot of help*. They *keep sending me job postings. They helped me update my resume and everything. I got a bunch of free courses so I have a bunch of certifications I didn't have before, which helped out my resume. Most of the places tell me you have to apply online and stuff, so I had some people teach me because I'm not really that good with computers. They got me hooked up with all the gear I needed, shoes and gloves and everything.* My maintenance service job *actually came through the centre. I don't even remember applying for it*.

There have been a lot of challenges as well. *Just finding work* is a big challenge. *I've been applying for all sorts of jobs and not a lot of interviews are coming my way. It's been over a year and even in that amount of time there has only been a very small handful of interviews, which didn't go well obviously. I do not know what is preventing me from finding work. I just rarely get even call backs.* One thing I think may be stopping me is that *several of the people who applied for the same job already have experience with the job*. It sucks, *but it's kind of hard to get that experience if no one will hire me. If I knew what was preventing me from getting a job right now I'd go and change it, but I honestly can't figure it out. It's kind of discouraging. Some days it's just like, 'I'm just going to sleep all day, what's the point I'm not going to find a job.'*

And recently that feeling got even worse what with my little sister just turned 17 just had a baby. So my litter sister just had a baby, and tomorrow my younger brother and his girlfriend are moving out of the house. Everyone is doing something right now and I still have no progress. I guess I've moved out a few times, I moved back into my family's house when my parents separated. I did this so *I could help my mom pay for bills and everything. That was what I was doing, getting her money for rent, groceries, helping with the phone bill. Then I lost my job and I became another mouth to feed. And now it's been a year since I've been able to help again. I don't understand why a lot of people are allowed to hold their jobs. I have seen people who for some reason they think they should be paid just for showing up. It drives me crazy to see that these people can have their jobs and I can't find work.*

A piece of advice that I would give is that *if you can find a job when you are young that you like, work hard at it and just keep it for as long as you can. The longer*

you hold it the better it will look on your resume. If you hold like one or two jobs, those people are obviously going to give you great references

Next for me, is *find a job; Someone hire me! I'm not too picky on the positions or what the job is. I'll learn it, I'll do the job. If it works out then I will be really happy with it, if I'm not very good at it then I don't know, I'll try again in a different position. I'm not saying I'm a fast learner, it does take me a while to get things. But when I do get it, it is fairly decent work.*

I want to *make sure that I prove to them that I can do a good job for them, work hard, show up on time, don't be late. Don't be one of those guys who show up hung over. And then I don't know, just small steps from then. I want to be helping my mom for awhile, while saving for myself* and *looking for an apartment that is affordable.* I'm thinking *I'll take a bartending course and I'll work at the bar.*

My top three hoped for selves are: *finding a career path that will work for me, a higher paying job than I have previously ever had*, and *a job with great hours that really works with the schedule of their employees*. My top three feared selves are: *never finding a job, not finding a job I can be happy doing*, and *finding a great job that I like but losing it.*

G.W.

I have had a *few different jobs* so far. I started *delivering newsletters from my band to the whole reservation, and sometimes the trailer park too.* I *started that when I was 8, and stopped when I was about 13*. Then, I worked at a local fast food place, which would have been about *five years ago*. I had a *bunch of responsibilities* there; I *cleaned the building, did dishes, cooked,* and *did food prep. I got the job because my*

older brother used to work there; *him and my mom helped me find the job and get it.* I was *there for about a month for a summer job.* I *got bored* and *quit*. *But now I think I should've kept it, because it's been hard to find another job* that *worked for me. Half a year ago now, I was at Tim Horton's for about a week.* I *hated the work environment,* so *I quit.* I also had a couple of *random jobs*, like I *worked on a farm with my nephew and cousin, catching chickens*, which *I did twice*. Also, *sometimes I would help my dad clean when he did his janitorial work at the Big House.* When working, s*ometimes it will take me a week to catch the hang of things*, but when I do, I'm *good at the work I do*, which makes me *proud.*

I have had *a couple of supports* along the way. There has been *lots of family support. Family has helped me find work, my dad, my mom, and my brother.* When I was working or going to school, *my dad would wake me up sometimes in the morning, or he will tell me what programs there are that I can do that will help me get to a job or get to programs I needed.* I had some *personal troubles*, so that *daily help* was huge. Also, *my girlfriend supported me a lot* too. She *made sure I got up every day, made sure I don't get into trouble*, and *supported me towards school and a ready to work program.*

My *community has been really helpful, they helped me get my* Learners driving permit *last year. They will help you with your resume, your cover letters, or if you want work experience or anything. They will help with your homework and all that.* Lots of the help has been *through the band office.*

There have been *a lot of obstacles to go through with finding a job*, it seems like *everything* has made it hard. *It's hard to find work, because it's been too long since I stopped seriously working.* I also *stopped school*, which has made it *hard to get a job, it*

really messed things up. And when I first tried going for my FOODSAFE I missed that because I was babysitting for my sister and looking after my family.

Also, my *mom passed away*, and that *cut me down from trying to find a job*; *I started not doing much* with my life, *all I did was sleep.* She was *the glue of the family.* Then *there's my dad's health issues that make it hard for him to find a job, his whole body is just not well,* which led to *financial hardship for the family*. So now, *me and my younger brother have to go try to find a job because of how hard it is to keep food and bills under control.*

Right now, *I'll just try to find any job so I can make money and support my family*. *It's hard to find a job lately. I tried a couple places, but I don't really know how to do a resume yet, and I don't even have a printer*. I know that *I have to get an education and stay in school. I have given up a few times already. I started hanging around with a bad crowd and everything.* I really *want to go to college*, but I *need a job first*.

I'm doing this work employment program so I can try to find a job I can keep. I have a *work experience next week,* and I will be *doing dishes and cooking*. Hopefully *I'll be getting FOODSAFE sometime soon, so I can get hired somewhere.* I'm looking at *cooking because my dad used to do that,* or I'll *work at a grocery store or do some janitorial work, which I enjoy because it helps calm me down. I really want a job*.

My top three hoped for selves are: *computer software or game making*, *janitorial work with big buildings or grocery stores or restaurants*, and *a chef or cook*. My top three feared selves are: *lawyers and court stuff*, *working that'd mess with my family*, and *jail.*

C.T.

I got my first job *the summer after turning 14* at my *stepmom's café in Haida Gwaii*, which is where *my dad, my uncles… my Haida family, are from.* I worked as a *dishwasher there for two summers.* For my second job *I worked for my uncle doing construction and renovation*, which I did for *three years*. *It was a good experience* working for him. *He taught me a lot of thing so when I buy a house I don't need to hire someone to fix the plumbing or fix the drywall. I know how to do it. It was good pay, good work, and gave me good work ethic*. It *meant a lot to be working with him.* I stopped that when I *went to school* (post-secondary). *I did a half year of a music program, but it wasn't really a fit, it was way too classical, and was not what I was expecting. I'm going to go back but it's not where I want to be right now. And I did welding and stuff like that and other things in post-secondary from high school and I haven't really used those because I'm not really that into it.*

Recently I have been employed with a local carver, so I have been doing carving with him. He does a lot of poles. He liked my work, I needed money, so now *I am his apprentice, which* means *I do whatever he tells me to do*. *As of right now, it lasts as long as I show up and do the work he wants me to do, which is as long as he is doing art, so hopefully his entire life! I can attach my boat to his wake and hopefully ride on that too, because he is quite established, and I hope to make a living out of it. I have been carving my entire life, it never really left me. My dad and my uncles are really into it. It's like always been there,* so it's really *meaningful* to be taking my life *in that direction.* I will get to help with a *piece for a big blanket for the Truth and Reconciliation project,* he asked me to be a part of that too, and I feel honoured to be a part of that. Before this,

most of my work has been to *make money for something else*, you know, a *means to an end; to travel* and *buy stuff*. It's different with carving, *it's very meaningful.*

Thinking about my supports, *family has been my number one* support, for both *getting a job* and *keeping it. Most of my employment has been through family, so it has been very little going out and getting my own work.* Most of *my support has been through family*. I did lots under *my own* steam, but without family, *I couldn't have gotten to where I am.* Throughout it all, *my mom has been housing me and feeding me, like that's pretty much been her biggest contribution besides also being a mother. And just I would praise her support above everybody else's because she is a single mother taking care of me as well as working*. She has been a great *role model* and has *been a constant pillar of support for me. She even gives me rides to work sometimes! My dad has always been a support, but he is up in Haida Gwaii. He supports my art all the time and whatever else I do.* And the extended *family I have here support me as well* and so do *friends; I have a lot of cousins my age and a lot of friends who are really interested in Native art and they also give me support.*

The work I'm doing right now is traditional Native art; *being immersed in that aspect of the culture has been really awesome. That's really just one of the big draws for me, the cultural aspect. It's all been a part of my life and that validation has been really good. Just knowing that I am good at it and it is something that I love to do, it's empowering in itself.* I feel lucky that *I love it and I just happen to get money out of it.* Also, *there is also cultural validation from family because they love the work that I do and they support me in that way too. So the family and the friends are also a really great support culturally.*

An Aboriginal agency *has been really great for support and resources; their 'Ready to Work' program was great.* It *helped me with the resume building*, getting *FOODSAFE* and *WHMIS* (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System), you know, *those things that look good on a resume.* They *helped us find jobs, get employed, get ready for rent, how to keep your house and keep your money, stuff like that.* It was *a lot of really good information and support. Things you need to know to be independent.* Through it all we were *bonding with each other,* and *supporting each other. It was that perfect point in my life*, I got what I needed, when I needed it, and *everybody else who was in the program needed that stuff.*

A big challenge is my *location*, which has *limited my job scope*. There is a *grocery store* close to where I live, *but everything else is at least a 40 minute commute, which is a pain.* Another thing *that has stopped me is lack of interest*, especially in *retail. It creates a total mental block* from even trying. *Not having a car sucks!* Also, *the Haida band hasn't really been part of my employment so far because they are way up in Haida Gwaii. And here it is Coast Salish so I'm not really affiliated in that way.*

What I really hate is just the *way the job force is* and that *I have to work for my food. This place was so bountiful before people came here, you didn't need a 9 to 5 to get food. I'm sick of seeing some of my friends turn to work zombies, they don't have time for anything else but work. It's just work in itself just zaps people of their life. That's never appealed to me. It's not something that really bothers me right now because I am doing my own thing,* you know, *I apply to self-creative jobs where I don't have to do that crap, I stay away from that. But I feel sorry for my people who I know and the people on the*

street you can see it happening to. It's just such a tiered system that people lower down and suffer. People on the upper regions don't. It's just very unfair and unjust.

Looking forward, *I am currently in the process of getting grant money and starting my own business so I can be my own self-employed artist and make my own stuff.* Also, *I've got a romantic fantasy about my music band taking off; we're getting a lot of gigs, to the point where we are refusing to play smaller gigs so can get to the festivals and get our name out.* Throughout it all, *I am putting all that I can into my art work which is going to be one of my fallback points because I love it so much! In terms of that I would hope that I would be an established artist in the future. If not a super famous musician. There is the dream right, there is the dream and then there is a reality and I am trying to prepare for both.*

If I was to give a piece of advice, it would be that *persistence is a key to finding work and it goes hand in hand in keeping work. You have to stay at it*. Having a *positive mental outlook is a big part of it I think, and being in the right head space*. *You have to find something you are passionate about, and stick with it! It's your own blood sweat and tears, sometimes literally when you are carving!*

My top three hoped for selves are: *music*, *art*, and *good pay*. My top three feared selves are: *forced work*, *dead end job*, and *dictated hours*

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the ghoststories of each young man, which highlighted their work life experiences and captured some of their possible selves. These ghost stories bring forward the unique experience of each individual participant. The following chapter will describe the commonalities of their experiences that exist across the group.

Chapter V – Across Participant Analysis

In this chapter, I present the across-participant findings. Many sources of data were used, including: the interview transcripts, ghost stories, across-participant analyses, field notes, and Possible Selves Maps. I introduce the narrative data meta-themes, themes, and subthemes in Table 1 (PSMP categories are presented separately). Then, I discuss each theme and subtheme, and incorporate relevant literature. Participant quotes, shown in *italics*, are also included throughout the discussion – I modified some quotes to improve readability and maintain participant anonymity. Each participant's voice has been brought into each theme discussed, however, not all supporting quotes were included due to space limitations. All eight participants spoke to the across-participant meta-themes; the inclusion criterion for an across-participant theme was that it had to be discussed by at least six of the eight participants; more specific subthemes were discussed by at least four participants. Across the participants, four meta-themes were identified: (a) Relational Supports, related to: finding work, keeping work, life support, and supporting others; (b) Work Experience, related to: search, working, future plans, and challenges; (c) Education, related to: academic aspirations and challenges; and (d) Culture and Work, related to: connection to culture through work, motivation for future direction, and validation (see Table 1). It is important to note that several of the themes and sub-themes are inter-related, however, they were placed with the meta-theme or theme that seemed to be the most appropriate based on the context of the participants' experience.

The chapter ends with a short discussion of the findings from the Possible Selves Mapping Process (PSMP) related to work-related hoped for and feared selves. The PSMP categories overlap somewhat with the meta-themes and themes described above.

Table 1: Across Participant Meta-themes, themes, and subthemes.

META-THEME - RELATIONAL SUPPORTS				
Theme	**Finding Work**	**Keeping Work**	**Basic Needs**	**Supporting Others**
Subtheme	Community connections Encouragement and support Getting gear and training	Support at work Ongoing support		Looking after the family Mentoring
META-THEME - WORK EXPERIENCE				
Theme	**Search**	**Working**	**Future Plans**	**Challenges**
Subtheme	Ongoing pursuit Training and Resources	Job types Improving skills and abilities Financial gain	Indigenous related work Uncertainty	Discrimination Limited options Geographic location
META-THEME - EDUCATION				
Theme	**Academic Aspirations**	**Challenges**		
Subtheme	Continuing education Financial support Shifting priorities	Difficulty with school Unsure of direction		
META-THEME – CULTURE AND WORK				
Theme	**Connection to culture through work**	**Motivation for future direction**	**Validation**	

Meta-Theme 1: Relational Supports

My discussion about the findings of the meta-themes begins with Relational Supports. Kirmayer, Cori & Margaret (2003) noted that Indigenous people are defined by their web of relationships, including family, kin, and clan. When considering work life transitions, Schultheiss (2007) wrote that relationships are central to human function, and are integral components in how people obtain and maintain employment. Juntunen et al. (2001) and Jackson and Smith (2001) noted that relationships were of key importance to their participants as they navigated their transitions. Similar to these findings, all of my participants spoke at length about the importance of their relationships with others as they navigated their work life transitions. Not surprisingly, this reflects pillars of Indigenous culture, including interconnectedness, connection to community, and relationship with future generations (Coverdale, 2012). The participants' relational network included immediate family members, extended family members, community members, and employees of both community agencies and post-secondary institutions. Four themes related to Relational Support were identified across the participants: Finding Work, Keeping Work, Basic Needs, and Supporting Others.

Finding work. All participants indicated that finding work was positively impacted by their relationships. Support came from family, friends, community, and agencies, and was a necessary component throughout their search for work. The participants indicated that the relational support helped with finding work in three specific ways: learning about and securing job opportunities through community connections, receiving encouragement and support, and obtaining necessary gear and training.

Community connections. All eight participants said that they had found at least one job through their relational network, and over half of the participants worked for or alongside their family, friends, or community members for their first job. Participants spoke both generally and specifically about how finding work was influenced and impacted by those around them:

> *Most of my employment has been through family.*
>
> *The majority of my jobs have rarely come through resumes; it's always come through connections like through friends or family.*
>
> *It is pretty easy because it's such a small community and everyone knew what everyone was doing. If they were hiring people you'd just go up there.*
>
> *It has been very little going out and getting my own work kind of thing… it was all through family.*
>
> *My best friend was already working there, and she was saying 'oh I think you should apply', and I did.*
>
> *I find it a lot more difficult to find a job if you don't know anybody.*
>
> *I got the job because my brother worked there, and my dad had worked there before. I learned from them how to get the job.*
>
> *I've actually had a lot of help from the people here at the community agency.*
>
> *They keep sending me job postings.*

The experience of searching for work was positively and significantly impacted by the participants' community connections. Participants realized that their relational connections helped them find and, in some cases, gain employment, and would be an integral part in their future search for work. Several participants also spoke about the necessity of networking, and how actively expanding their relational circle would be a key component in their search for work across their lifetime. Connections and

networking have long been identified as important by work and career researchers (Blustein, 2011; Schultheiss, 2007); the present participants are in agreement.

Encouragement and support. Participants spoke about the sometimes daunting task of finding and securing a job. Alongside their difficulty, the young men said that the encouragement and support that they received, particularly from their family, was immensely important. One participant who was struggling with finding a job at the time of the interviews said that his sister was providing *encouragement and support* while he was looking for a job in a new city. Another participant stated that a mentor at his university had *always be on the sidelines like, you know, cheering for me*¸ as he had been contemplating different job opportunities and attempting to find a summer work program. A third participant described how he felt supported by both of his parents as he was searching for a job, as they offered to help him in any way possible. These findings are similar to those of Juntunen et al. (2001) and Hoffman et al. (2005), who identified the importance of emotional support during vocational and educational pursuit. Also, Jackson and Smith (2001) found that encouragement from family members led to greater self-confidence for those pursuing work.

Getting gear and training. Participants spoke about the prerequisites that existed for obtaining certain jobs: training and gear. Training included specific certifications, including courses such as FoodSafe and First Aid, as well as job search and resume building skills. Specific gear included work-related safety equipment and clothing for manual labour jobs. Lack of gear and training was a barrier to employment that several participants experienced; the associated cost limited the number and types of jobs for which they could be apply. Obtaining either or both gear and training was seen by

participants as an important step towards getting a job. They also spoke about the help that they received along the way from their relational network, including getting particular certifications and learning how to build resumes and apply for jobs. One participant said that *The* community agency *has been really great for support, and their* training program *was great because it helped me with the resume part of it* and another said: *The band is really helpful because they helped me get my L last year, and they will help with resumes, your cover letters, or if you want work experience or anything, even FoodSafe.* Specific gear was needed by participants who were involved with manual labour or outdoor jobs. One participant who was unable to afford his gear said that, *I came to the* community agency *and they got me all hooked up with all the gear I needed: shoes and gloves and everything.* He went on to say that: *I actually got a bunch of free courses so I have a bunch of certifications I didn't have before.* Another participant said that his band office provided him with outdoor gear at a reduced cost, so that he could start a new job. Community support is often cited as a key support for Aboriginal youth (Merrill et al., 2010); for these young men, such supports provided necessary and tangible work gear and training needed before they could enter the labour market.

Keeping work. Participants described how their relational supports helped them face the challenges that they experienced before, during, and after their workday. The support that their relations provided was seen as an integral component that helped them keep their jobs. Most commonly, support at work came through other co-workers, often family members, who were present at the work site. While off duty, individuals spoke about their wider network that supported them.

Support at work. Seven of the eight participants talked about the benefit and importance of having supportive co-workers. For the men, these co-workers offered encouragement, guidance, and motivation. Many of the participants had the opportunity to work alongside family members, while others worked with friends and other community members at their job. One participant said that: *the boss was generally really nice because my older brother was close with the managers there, and when my brother worked there, he was there sometimes for support*. Another said: *The manager was actually my uncle. So part of the reason I tried to work so hard was because I figured if I look bad then it doesn't really looked good on him for hiring me right? I didn't really want to screw around too much… Actually, he was a great help.* One participant summed up his experience of working with his friend by saying: *It can totally make work more enjoyable when you're working with some people that are fun to be around.* For participants, a close friend or family member made the job more manageable and enjoyable. They learned how to navigate elements of their job, received support from and were motivated by their close connections, and took pleasure in working with a friend or family member.

Ongoing support. Six of the eight participants talked about the ongoing support that they received outside of work hours. They spoke about the necessity of the continued support outside of the work domain, as it helped them to maintain employment. Support came from family members, friends, partners, Elders, and other community members. Experiences ranged from specific task-oriented help such as: *My girlfriend supports me a lot, she makes sure I get up every day, and makes sure that I don't get into any trouble* to broader and more general support: *encouragement from my*

family and friends and relatives, I wouldn't have been able to do it without them for sure.

Other participants echoed the need and utility of ongoing support and stated that they received support from their relational connections throughout a variety of contexts:

> *Obviously there is family, and I'd say the support has been from the Elders here at the University.*
>
> *Being connected to your community and family, that's kind of where your greatest support comes in throughout it all.*
>
> *Those consistent faces and those other friendly Native faces really kind of helped me continue to come back and excel…*

Ongoing support outside of work helped participants to engage in their work, and was seen as a necessary component in their continued efforts to maintain employment. While not specifically addressed, Hoffman et al. (2005) noted that family support was often sought to help overcome perceived barriers to employment. More research is need in this area is needed to better understand the role of ongoing support.

Basic needs. Participants consistently reported that their families provided tangible life supports on a day to day basis, which included housing, food, and financial assistance. These supports were necessary for most as they navigated everyday life. For many, this ongoing type of support extended beyond the teenage years and into their present lives. Four of the individuals had moved out of their family's home to pursue education or employment, and all of them returned home as they were not financially capable of living independently or because they lost their job. One participant who had moved back to the city after losing a job elsewhere said *I remember coming back here and not being able to find any work. And if I didn't have my ma, I would have been out on the street… without the support of her, I would have not made it.* Even when working a full time job, financial constraints still existed for many of the young men. One

participant spoke about his struggles to feed and house himself, despite having employment. He said that he was appreciative of the ongoing support that his closest family member provided: *my mother has been like housing me and feeding like that's pretty much been her biggest contribution besides also being a mother… she has been a constant pillar of support for me.* Similarly, Hoffman et al. (2005) said that family financial contribution was a commonly noted support for pursing employment and academic pathways. Because many Indigenous people in Canada endure financial hardship (Statistics Canada, 2011), additional financial support is critical for those struggling with employment and financial hardship. Merrill et al. (2010) stated that financial difficulty commonly results in limited access to postsecondary education and can lead to students having to drop out and obtain full time employment in low skilled labour jobs to alleviate financial burden. The participants in my study also spoke about how family members helped them with their basic needs during schooling, citing that parents and other family members helped with tuition, housing, and food.

Supporting others. Six of the eight participants spoke about giving back to people around them. Two primary ways that this occurred was through direct financial support to immediate family members and mentoring to family, friends, and community members. There does not appear to be as much research related to this theme in the literature – it is an area that requires more in-depth investigation.

Looking after the family. Participants spoke about the financial constraints and hardships that they and their families had experienced in the past and present. Gaining employment and contributing financially was often seen as a way that the individual could help support their immediate family members. One participant began his first job

when his father, the family's primary earner, passed away. He stated: *My dad passed away from cancer, and then we were lacking a lot of income… so I had to, I wanted to get a job.* The participant's desire to help support his other family members, including his mother, older brother, and young sister, was highly important to this individual, and was the primary motivating factor for him to obtain his first job. Another participant stated that: *I moved back into my family's house when my parents separated, so I could help my mom pay for bills and everything.* For these young men, they responded to an acute event, and chose financial contribution as one way of supporting their immediate family.

Others spoke about their ongoing practice of supporting the family financially. One participant recalled how he supported his mother from a young age: *I've always contributed rent, I've been paying rent since, I don't know how long, but ever since I was making money I was always giving her money.* Another spoke to how he helped his chronically ill dad by helping him with his janitorial work, as a way to support the family financially through a more indirect method. One participant summed up his experience with this when he said *It* w*as really good being able to be there for other people in my family.* Across the participants, there was a common thread of the importance of helping their families. Juntunen et al. (2001) noted that for the participants in their study, being a provider for their family was often positively experienced as it made work worthwhile.

Mentoring. Most participants had experience with giving and receiving work-related guidance. Many of the men reflected on pieces of advice that that had received from an older family member, for example *my grandpa was always telling me to show up on time and to work hard*, and spoke about their desire to pass these messages on to those

younger than them. Additionally, they wanted to and had passed on lessons that they themselves had learned in their process. Participants had encouraging words and teachings that they had shared or wanted to share with siblings, cousins, nieces, and nephews. One participant's advice was: *If it's a job you aren't going to work hard on, you should go find a job you love doing and go for that one*, while another encouraged his relatives to not take it personally when they struggled with gaining employment. Commonly, participants said that they would use their own personal struggles as teaching points to guide those close to them towards a better path, highlighted by the quote *Just put yourself out there mainly. Cause that's what I didn't do and I stumbled on work just once in a while. And mainly stay in school. Don't follow in my exact footsteps.* These young men exemplified the oral translation of knowledge that is a key component of Indigenous ways of being (Medicine-Eagle, 1989; Stewart, 2008; and Merrill et al., 2010), and gave back to their relations through mentoring.

Meta-Theme 2: Work Experience

The second meta-theme identified was Work Experience. Participants were eager to share their experience of finding and maintaining work throughout the interview. Across the group, there was a wide range of work experiences and levels of engagement; some participants only had one or two jobs, while others had several jobs across a variety of fields. Themes discussed by the young men included: searching for work, the experience of working, their future plans, future work-related plans, and the challenges they experienced related to finding and maintaining employment.

Search. All of the participants spoke about their experiences of looking for and securing work. For the majority, searching for work was a time consuming and often

difficult task. Most of the participants said that the steps and effort required to get a job were immense, and a few stated that the search for work presented more challenges than working at the job itself. Participants stated that their search or searches required persistence, specific skills, and know how. This is consistent with findings from Juntunnen et al. (2001) and Hoffman et al. (2005), and echoes the often-cited observation that "looking for work is a full-time job".

Ongoing pursuit. Across the participants, five out of eight said that they were actively looking for a job at the time of the interview. Of the remaining three, all were attending post-secondary education and of these three, one was unable to secure a job for the semester, one was planning on working during the summer, and one was considering potential jobs opportunities for when he graduated. Every participant spoke about their experiences of looking for and securing a job, and through this, there was a commonly shared story: getting a job can be very difficult and requires ongoing effort. One participant said that:

> *It's probably been my second week, third week now, just being down in Victoria handing out resumes and looking for jobs… I've probably shot about 30 resumes out. Still waiting for that phone call… I kind of thought I'd have one by now*, while another said *I've had a little trouble finding work, I haven't actually had a job in a little over a year now*.

Other participants shared similar stories of their ongoing pursuit:

> *There was some times where I eventually printed my resumes and edited it, and it was pretty good I felt. So I handed it in to a couple of places. And I didn't get*

any call backs and *I had gone to* a coffee shop *down by Caddy Bay, which is like really really close. And they said they weren't hiring.*

These young men knew that getting a job required consistent effort over time. Participants stated that despite the frustration that they experienced, they knew that they needed to continue searching for work. One participant summed up his experiences with looking for work as he said that *persistence is the key to finding work* Almost all participants spoke to this, and it was evident that continued effort was an important component for those who had searched for and gained employment.

Several of the participants also commented on the competitiveness of the job market. They found that their limited work experience or not having a high school education was a major barrier to finding new employment. One participant, who had been searching for work for several months stated that: *It's not good… especially with not very much working experience.* For some, they found or are finding that obtaining their first jobs is a major challenge. This is not surprising, given the current unemployment picture for entry skill level workers (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Training and resources. Participants spoke about the prerequisites to obtaining certain jobs that existed. Five of the participants said that they had received or are receiving some training and certifications, such as FoodSafe, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) training, and First Aid, to make themselves more marketable to future employers and to enable them to apply for certain jobs. One participant stated: *The free courses and certifications obviously helped my resume* and another said *I got a bunch of free courses so I have a bunch of certifications I didn't have before, which you know, obviously helped out my resume.* These participants credited

community agencies with providing programs that offered specific trainings and job search skills. One participant said that *I'm doing this* getting ready for work program *so I can try and find a job I can keep.* Resume building was an area that many of the men said was a challenge. Some received help from family members and friends, others utilized employment programs, while others were still figuring out how to create a resume. One participant said that: *hopefully when I get my resume done I can get a job. We have no printer and I don't really know how to do a resume yet*. Without a resume, participants recognized that their chances of obtaining a job through formal means were almost impossible. Receiving support with obtaining specific trainings and certifications allowed the men to continue forward in their search for employment.

Working. The participants spoke about the ranges of their work experiences and the benefits they received from their day to day work. Throughout their stories, the participants spoke about job types, improving skills and abilities, and financial gain.

Job types. Each participant gave a detailed account of the types of jobs that they held in the past or had currently. At one point or another, six of the eight participants had worked in the food service industry, three had worked for their band or band office, three participants had manual labour jobs, two had janitorial specific jobs, and two had sold Indigenous art work. Five had one or more unique jobs, including being a youth program coordinator, a worker at a foster home, and a research assistant.

Improving skills and abilities. Participants described the onsite training that they received at their jobs. Through their day to day work experiences and formal onsite training, they gained and improved their skills and abilities. Several were eager to share what they had learned at various jobs sites, and took pride in the development of their

various proficiencies. One participant spoke about the global positioning system (GPS) training that he had received – *we got trained with the handheld one and the one you use on your back… it was really cool.* Another participant talked about his construction job and what his uncle had taught him onsite: *He taught me a lot of things, like when I buy a house I don't need to hire someone to fix the plumbing or fix the drywall, I know how to do it.* A third participant was excited about the FoodSafe certification that he would be receiving at his new job: *I start next week to be doing dishes and cooking. So hopefully I'll be getting like FoodSafe sometime soon.* Participants knew that the transferable skills and formal certificates gained through employment would increase their marketability to future employers, and that certain skills could be utilized across their life.

Financial gain. Financial gain was a consistently cited reason being employment. Blustein (2006) stated that one of the fundamental reasons for working is to meet financial needs, and this characterizes *working for survival*. All eight participants said that at one time or another, the main reason for working was to earn and keep earning money. There were a range of reasons provided as to why money was needed including: covering living expenses; supporting their family; and paying for education, travel, and luxury items. Participants spoke at length about the monetary benefits that they received from working.

> *Pretty much by the time you got all trained up and stuff, most kids had to go back to school. I decided to stick with it a little bit longer, make a couple bucks… It was nice to have money in my pocket.*
>
> *As long as I could remember, I've always worked, I've always had some kind of income… I was really poor so it was nice to have any kind of income.*
>
> *It was really hard work, but it paid really good.*
>
> *I'll just try to find a job that is the smallest job I can do to make money.*

> *I choose to work because I want to get new skis or I want to get a new bike or something like that.*
>
> *It was offered to me by my uncle because I was going to Thailand and I needed spending money.*

Money was not the only reason why people worked; however, not surprisingly, it was a key motivating factor why the men participated in the work force. Ultimately, financial gain and working are linked. Securing money through work helped the participants meet current and future financial needs. For this participant group, wages were not a determining factor in job selection, and would take anything that they can get.

Future plans. Participants also discussed their future work-related plans. Several of the young men spoke directly to this desire, and were actively making plans about how they would help their people. There were varying degrees of certainty related to their next steps and future employment. Some had a specific route, plan, and jobs in mind, while others had much less concrete plans. Similarly, Juntunen et al. (2001) found that future planning was an important aspect of what career meant to Native American adults. Across the present participant group, it was most commonly reported that pursuing Indigenous-related work was most desired. Juntunen et al. (2001) also observed that young people desired to return to and support their home communities after they completed their education.

Indigenous-related work. Half of the young men said that they were interested in and hoped for indigenous-related work in their future. Of these, three had a particular job in mind, along with a specific plan of how they could achieve their goal. One participant who was enrolled in a Masters in Social Work degree wanted to complete a clinical practicum focused on counselling *the survivors* and the *children of residential school*

survivors. Two others also shared their hopes for future work: *I am currently in the process of getting grant money and starting my own business so I can be my own self-employed artist and make my own stuff* and *I'm hoping I can do my community internship working at an organization which focuses on urban population of indigenous people*. This commonality regarding working with Indigenous communities was highlighted when one participant reflected on their previous work experiences and future direction: *I've always said from the get go, as long as I'm working with other Natives, I don't care what I'm doing.* These findings echo Juntunen et al. (2001), who stated that many of the participants in their study had a desire to provide help to their home communities through their future employment. These authors urged career counsellors to not only explore individual interests, skills, and goals, with young Native people, but to take time to explore the role of community membership and the expression of the membership through career choice.

Uncertainty. Participants also spoke about a sense of uncertainty that they experienced when considering future jobs. Even for some of those who did have specific work plans, there was an element of reservation that was present, as explained by one participant who said: *there is the dream and then there is a reality and I am trying to prepare for both*. Some individuals had more general but not fully fleshed out plans: *There are three separate things I want to be doing, I don't know which one yet* and *I'll probably try to find a job, at a grocery store, like Thrifty's of Safeway or something like that. Or Wal-Mart. Any place that I can find that involves cooking or like janitorial work.* Another felt much less clear about what their future employment would be *I'm thinking where do I fall in all this, how can I best serve my community and my people,*

where do I fit in all of this? Participants also shared that in the past and currently, they had little to no idea about what job they would head towards. Being unsure of future employment was highly stressful, especially for those who experienced financial pressure. Uncertainty is an on-going theme in the lives of most emerging adults (Arnett, 2004), and work uncertainty seems salient for these participants.

Challenges. Throughout their stories, the young men shared some of the challenges and obstacles that they have had and continue to endure in their work experiences. The most frequently cited obstacles were discrimination, limited options, and geographic location.

Discrimination. Five of the participants said that they felt that they had experienced discrimination at one point or another while they were working or searching for work. Some participants had this experience in very specific industries or jobs, while others had a broader and more pervasive experience of it. One young man stated that he felt that most people do not understand the pervasiveness of discrimination and racism that Indigenous people face in the workplace and said: *one thing that's clear in working life for Aboriginal people is that there's always that something that everyone else won't realize cause they just have no conception of it.* It was important for this young man to bring to light his experiences as he saw ignorance and discrimination as central obstacles that he and others faced in their work experiences.

Another participant spoke to how he also thought ignorance fostered the discrimination he experienced at the hands of his coworkers and employers:

> *Keeping work's not really the problem, it's just been dealing with the people at work and what they were saying… It's dealing with ignorance… It seems to be*

> *more from specific people rather than jobs as a whole. I found there's often at every job there's a person who gives me a hard time like 'oh you look white so why should you get these things?' But it is kind of a pressure in the job to deal with these people, cause I really don't want to work with people if they're going to be trying to bring awkward conversation to things like that.*

This participant took pride in using his educational background and life experience to educate people, but found it frustrating that he had to take on that role in the first place.

A third participant shared about his understanding that a combination of discrimination and minimal local opportunities lay behind the difficulty he had with finding work: *It's hard enough getting work in Victoria, let alone being Native*. He went on to talk more specifically about a major industry that he had been a part of during his earlier employment history:

> *In the cooking industry, I can tell you right now, racism is one of the biggest barriers you have to deal with. Nobody wants to hire a Native, and nobody would say that. The cooks were racist… they were just overall abusive. I experienced a lot of racism in that job… Those attitudes, those layers are there before you even say a word. But those I see as barriers, kinda like that false identity created by the mainstream population. It's kinda like onions, they don't really know what's under there.*

Participants clearly stated that discrimination exists, has negatively impacted their work experiences, and is a significant experience that they and people that they knew endure. This situation has also been highlighted by previous researchers, who have found that cultural differences, discrimination, racism and the impacts of colonialism are

experienced by Indigenous people within the work environment and the educational system, and are major barrier to success (Coverdale, 2012; Juntunen et al., 2001; Kirmayer, Brass & Caroline, 2000; Hoffman et al., 2005; Merrill et al., 2010). This area needs further research.

Limited options. Like the participant above who spoke to the challenge of a lack of local opportunities, other participants also shared their experiences with limited job options, either currently or when they first started looking for work. Gaining employment was very important to them; however, finding a job and being hired could be a major challenge. This experience reflects the findings from a recent Canadian Labour Force Survey (Statistics Canada, 2011). Across the young men I interviewed, there were three explanations for why getting a job either currently or in the past was difficult: lack of previous work experience, lack of education, and lack of job availability. One participant shared his frustration with an ongoing cycle that he has endured of wanting a job, but not having the necessary experience to be competitive enough to get hired: *I've been applying for all sorts of jobs and not a lot of interviews coming my way… it's kind of hard to get that experience if no one will hire me…it's kind of discouraging.* Another participant stated that in his previous field of work, he struggled with both a lack of employment opportunities and not being hired at places that were looking for employees: *I guess the biggest barrier was not having options… there's not many cooking jobs that were available or there's places that just wouldn't hire me.* A third participant summed up his experiences with trying to find a job: *It's hard to find work… a lot of obstacles to go through with finding a job.* All participants were motivated to work; however, many were faced with limited options and availability of attainable or suitable jobs. Despite

this, participants were able to identify resources that would help, including seeking support from family and furthering their education.

***Geographic location*.** Participants also spoke about geographical locations as a potential barrier, which echoed Merrill et al.'s (2010) observation that geographical location impacts education and employment experience. Several of the young men said that there were less diverse opportunities in their smaller home communities when compared to larger cities, and that certain jobs required a great amount of travel to the work site. They said that location limited the number of and types of jobs that were available and considered by them. One participant spoke about how his access to certain jobs was affected based on where he lived and on his transportation limitations: *The grocery store was the closest place… everything else you have to bus commute at least 40 minutes.* Another participant recognized that he needed a job, and that he would have to ride the bus for four hours each day to get to and from work: *I got a job at a fish plant, two hours from town. So I lived in one town and in the mornings had to wake up at roughly 3:00 in the morning and took a bus to Tofino.* Often, public transportation had to be utilized to get to and from the work site. As access to public transportation is limited in small communities compared to metropolitan areas, getting to work in smaller communities presented additional challenges. A participant stated that he had to get up earlier so he could get to work on time due to the bus schedule that serviced his location *the buses were either an hour early, or half an hour late. So it was the hour early*.

Geographic location has particular implications for many Indigenous people seeking employment, especially for those still living on reserve. Connection to land,

family, culture, and housing play important roles when considering where to live. Many of the men recognized this interplay, and how it influenced their pursuits.

Meta-Theme 3: Education

The third meta-theme identified was Education. Participants described their experiences of past, present, and future educational experiences and plans. Across the eight participants, formal educational levels ranged from grade 10 completion to enrolment in Graduate school. Two themes were identified: Academic Aspirations and Challenges.

Academic aspirations. Every participant spoke about the importance of education and said that it is a necessary and valued component of their pursuit of future employment options and opportunities. Similarly, Juntunen et al. (2001) stated that education at the high school and post-secondary education levels was seen as a major support for future employment. For the present participants who had not yet completed high school, they stated that it was incredibly hard to get anything more than entry-level jobs, and that completing high school was a priority. For those attending post-secondary education, their schooling was seen as a way to open up opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable. Those pursuing education also spoke about financial support and shifting priorities as important elements of their academic pursuits.

Continuing education. Across the eight participants, there was a wide range of academic completion and types of education pursued. Each participant who was currently enrolled in schooling had hopes of completing their respective schooling, whether it was at the high school education level or post-secondary education level. One participant reflected on his continued dream of completing high school:

> *I'd like to hunker down and get my education because there's not much you can do with just your grade 11. I guess I could go to trade school or something and get funding from the band. But I'd like to get my grade 12. Even if it was like a Dogwood or something like that. I'd always have my grade 12… something good to put on my resume*

Another participant reflected on his journey to obtain a high school education: *I was always chipping away at upgrading because I didn't have any high school education, and I wanted it.*

Others spoke about their current journey and future plans for college and university:

> *I'm going to college this year if I can.*
>
> *I'm taking an arts and sciences degree from* a college *in January.*
>
> *I'm doing a Political Sciences degree right now.*
>
> *My next step is to finish my degree.*
>
> *I guess my next step would be to just finish my undergrad – that's the immediate one. Then I think my goal after would be to go for a master's degree. And I'd really like to do Indigenous Governance, specifically the Plains urban population of Indigenous people, because that's where I come from.*

Across the participants, it was clear that educational pursuit was a priority. Most had dreams about furthering their education beyond the current level that they were trying to complete, ranging from completing a post-secondary diploma to completing a Doctorate degree. This focus on the importance of education is encouraging, given the strong correlation between higher education completion and increased access to employment opportunities (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Financial support. Several participants spoke about the academic funding that they received to pursue their education. Many Indigenous people in Canada are eligible for educational and training funding. This, however, varies based on ancestry (status vs. non status, First Nations vs. Métis) and funding streams (Nations vs. Government), and can range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand (Coverdale, 2012). One participant reflected on how the funding enabled him to dedicate his energy to pursuing his degree and said: *I'd say that scholarships and bursaries are a huge support because it means I don't have to work as much, so it takes off the added pressure.* Another said: *I went to school for a year without working but I had Band funding. Like, they give you a small amount of money, just enough to get by on.* The funding provided a great sense of relief for many of the participants, and allowed several to entertain the idea of and pursue post-secondary and graduate level schooling.

In terms of accessing the funding, one participant stated: *I went to the band office once to get help with a scholarship letter for being First Nations* and others spoke more generally about getting funding from their band. One participant said: *My mom is currently paying for my schooling*. Other participants also spoke about the financial support that families provided, which allowed them to pursue their education. One participant said that he had to work to supplement his income, however, he maintained that without external support he would not be where he was today.

In addition to the relief from financial pressure that the participants experienced as a result of band funding, bursaries, scholarships and other financial support, funding also ensured less debt upon graduating for these individuals – this would also help reduce future financial hardship. Across participants, it was noted that pursuing further

education would have been much less feasible without the financial support that they currently received, similar to findings by Merrill et al. (2010) and Hoffman, Jackson and Smith (2005), who stated that finances were a major barrier to post-secondary education, and that securing financial support through band funding, scholarships, bursaries and family funding enabled many to pursue further education.

Shifting priorities. Several participants also spoke about the pull between continuing with a particular job or further pursuing education. They wanted to pursue further education even if that meant stepping away from a job or potential opportunity. One participant stated: *The work was pretty interesting though. I learned a lot and it's good work, but I had to go back to school* while another said *It's good pay and a lot of people want good pay, and I could continue working there, but I had to go back to school in September so that's when I left the job.* A third participant abandoned his lifelong dream of being a professional video game player to pursue a university education.

Stepping away from a job is not always a realistic option, however, and participants indicated that the prospect of financial instability was a challenge that was considered when making the decision to either stay with their job or leave to pursue further education. For those with financial supports, leaving work or reducing hours to continue with education was not only a priority, but a realistic option as well. Only one participant who was currently taking a post-secondary degree had part time employment. He spoke about the effort it required to juggle several roles, and recognized that while being employed was very meaningful to him, it lengthened the time it would take to get through his degree.

Challenges. Academic challenges among Native youth are well documented within the literature (Merrill et al., 2010; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Juntunen et al., 2001), and the young men spoke about a variety of difficulties that they experienced throughout their education pursuits. Difficulties with school and unsure direction were the most commonly cited educational challenges.

Difficulties with school. Participants spoke about some of the challenges that they have faced and continue to face in their academic pursuits. Graduating from high school was the most commonly cited challenge, and at the time of the interviews, three participants were still making efforts to do so. The young men cited several specific historical and present reasons for their challenges with completing high school. This included family turmoil, drug and alcohol use, mental health concerns, and academic struggles. One of the participants described his continued difficulties with school: *I had troubles during school. I've been trying to catch up. Got a few years behind… I wasn't doing the greatest in school,* and recounted his current efforts to get his grade 12 education. Another said that:

> *I guess around 17 I was doing really horrible in school, cause I got a lot of stuff at home. And so I got into some program, I remember it was for, basically it was for kids who they thought weren't going to amount to anything… and then I dropped out of school because I wasn't going to pass.*

The challenges with graduating from high school are not unique to this participant group; educational completion rates for Indigenous people in Canada are lower than the national average (Statistics Canada, 2011). Encouragingly, these participants had high hopes about their educational future, and stated that education was a priority.

Unsure of direction. Another challenge that was discussed was the difficulty with choosing future directions. Jackson and Smith (2001) noted that their research participants had "limited understanding of postsecondary education and its relationship to specific careers." The present participants spoke about multiple options, and the daunting task of selecting an educational direction. One individual said:

> *I'm not even sure what track I am on, I'm still in the process of figuring it out… three that I've really been looking at are anthropology, psychology, or law school;* and *I like science but there's a lot of other stuff I like too… it's really difficult to decide*.

Another participant who was enrolled in his first semester of university said that:

> *I'm not too sure what it would be like after University. But that's quite a few years from now. And the plan isn't there yet for what I want to do after University 'cause I'm not yet sure of what career I want or what I want to do. Or even what program I necessarily like.*

A third participant said:

> *I did a half year at the Conservatory of Music, but again it wasn't really a fit. It was too classical and even though I was in the jazz program it felt like classical, and was not what I had expected*.

Many participants spoke about the multiple directions that could be taken, and the uncertainty that came along with the variety of choices. There would also financial implications related to prolonged schooling or changing programs, given the increased costs with lengthening educational enrolment. Of the two participants who had a more specific plan about how their academic career would progress, there was still recognition

of the multiple academic directions they could pursue after the completion of their current level of schooling, which was accompanied by a sense of ambivalence about committing to a final decision. Despite the challenges that were present, all participants spoke about the necessity of education, and their commitment to pursuing further education.

Meta-Theme 4: Culture and Work

The fourth and final meta-theme discussed is culture as it relates to work. Throughout the interviews, the young men discussed how culture had played a role in their vocational pursuits. Most frequently, they talked about their experiences with culture at work, and the personal validation that engaging with their culture brought them. Similarly, Merrill et al. (2010) stated that "Aboriginal people's cultural backgrounds influence their workplace experiences; they want to feel that their cultures, beliefs, and ways of thinking and problem solving are respected and valued."

Six of the eight participants indicated that one or more of their work experience included culturally connected components. These employment opportunities included work for their band office, Aboriginal sector work, culturally traditional work, and work for or with Indigenous communities. For those who had experience with practicing or learning about their culture through work, these were highly positive experiences and often were seen as key experiences in their work life that shaped future aspirations. Similarly, Juntunen et al. (2001) stated that work that included promotion of traditional ways and sharing of traditional knowledge was highly valuable, and that career counsellors should spend time exploring career choice as it relates to culture and community membership.

Connection to culture through work. Participants spoke about how work was a major way in which they connected to their culture. This is consistent with Blustein (2006) who observed that "working links us with the broader social contest, often providing people with their major or even sole connection to their culture." Practicing or doing culture through work was a highly positive experience that served to strengthen the connection of the participants to their own culture. For some, it was one more way that they connected to their culture, but for others, it was the first time that they felt a deep connection to culture. One participant reflected on his increasing involvement with traditional art and said: *the work I'm doing right now is traditional Native art and being immersed in that aspect of the culture has been really awesome. I guess that's really just one of the big draws for me is the cultural aspect.* Another participant said:

> *When I was living back home, I did do a lot of cultural stuff. Like I was part of Big House, like anytime they needed help or someone in the back, I was always in the back helping. I was good friends with most of the carvers, I'd help them rough out masks, I'd sand for them, paint for them. I'd even do some carving. I'd wing out a piece and then go sell it. Got into that for a few years… for most of my life I wasn't living that close to my culture as it is. I liked it a lot.*

These participants were thankful for their opportunities to learn more and practice culture through their work. Kirmayer et al. (2003) stated that in contrast to young Aboriginal women who have experienced more continuity in social roles and are more often involved in child rearing, young Aboriginal men have often experienced a separation between traditional roles and opportunities in their home communities. These authors call for culturally constructive and meaningful opportunities for young people, so that

they can develop their potential. In this vein, the young men that I interviewed highlighted the positive impact that culturally-related work has had for them.

Motivation for future direction. Culturally-related work also served as a motivating factor for future employment; Juntunen (2001) et al. stated that career is viewed as an opportunity to engage in culture. Half of the present young men said that the thought of working in a field that was related to their culture was highly appealing, and that past and present culturally-related jobs helped solidify future plans for related work. One participant was involved with an art piece for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which has a mandate of learning about what happened in Canadian residential schools and sharing the findings with Canadians (TRC, 2013). He said:

> *It's slow and I'm getting more and more immersed as I go. I don't know where I will be a year from now but hopefully more involved, which is what I want to do, which I am striving to do*.

Another participant was considering educational paths that would lead him towards employment options:

> *Because of the urban population, Indigenous people don't have that connection to the land that's often touted 'cause I'm in the city. So focusing on Indigenous food in the city would be one thing I'd really like to work on.*

A third participant was planning his future career in clinical social work, and said that he wanted to work with those who have been and are affected by residential schools, so that he could give back to his people and follow his preferred career path. For these men, finding culturally-related work was highly desirable and played a large part in shaping

their employment pathways. Each participant who had previous experience with a culturally-related job said that they desired a culturally-related job in the future.

Validation. Participants who had one or more culturally-related jobs spoke about the great sense of pride they had in the work they chose to do, and about the personal implications that pursing a culturally-related job had for them. Doing this type of work provided opportunities for them to learn and grow both as individuals and members of their communities, and these opportunities helped validate their own cultural experience. Quite often, participants were eager to share the personal implications that doing a culturally-related job had, and were excited to recount their journey. One participant stated: *It's great being one with the culture… it's a big honour.* Another participant was particularly affected by his summer job, where he learned about traditional ways of working with cedar bark and cedar plank removal. In addition, he remarked on how his work would impact the generations ahead of him as he kept this knowledge alive:

> *It's a lot of self-meaning. It's really cool doing CMTs* (culturally modified trees) *and GPS plotting and all that stuff, keeping it alive for the next generation. It was genius how they could take planks and build a house and still leave the tree standing and alive. It was really meaningful and a great learning experience*.

Another participant described how traditional art invigorated him and provided him with a sense of affirmation as he practiced it with his peers and mentors: *it is constantly renewing… I wouldn't change it for the world.* A fourth participant spoke about the personal and cultural validation that he felt through the traditional art that he did:

> *It's all been a part of my life and that validation has been really good and just knowing that I am good at it and it is something that I love to do is empowering in*

itself… there is also cultural validation from family because they love the work that I do and they support me in that way too.

These participants had a great sense of pride and an eagerness to share the deeply meaningful nature of these jobs. It brought them work experience that helped solidify their sense of self and their connection to their Indigenous culture.

Possible Selves

Following the narrative interview questions focused on their experiences of finding and keeping work, participants were introduced to the Possible Selves Mapping Process (PSMP) (Marshall et al., 2011). I chose to include the mapping process within my study because it was developed to help facilitate the exploration of life and career choices in a concrete and engaging format, and to allow participants to consider next steps that are available to them while solidifying future goals and aspirations. Having the participants be able to "take something away" from the interview process was an important goal for me; previous PSMP participants had commented that they found the process to be helpful in clarifying goals and possible actions (Marshall & Guenette, 2008). Ideally, this process would have been conducted during a separate interview to increase the depth of exploration, however, time limitations and availability of participants did not allow for a second interview. Thus, the PSMP findings are brief and somewhat limited. However, the findings provided confirmation of work-related aspirations and experiences that the participants had already discussed in the narrative interview portion. Due to the more person-specific nature of the PSMP data, a common "category" in the data (as distinct from narrative data themes and subthemes) was identified if discussed by at least four of the participants.

Hoped for selves. Participants were asked to describe future hoped for work-related selves, and then list them on the possible selves maps (See Appendices F & G). Following this, they were asked to rank these selves from their most hoped for self to their least hoped for self. Participants identified between 3 and 11 hoped for work-related selves. As expected with individual participants, each map was different. However, across participants, there were three categories that were addressed by at least half of the participants.

Future employment. All participants had three or more work-related hoped for selves that were employment-related, and six of the eight participants mentioned one or more specific jobs to which they aspired. Specific hoped for jobs included: *archaeology, be a prof at a university, famous carver, movie director, clinical social worker, restaurant owner* and *sessional instructor/tenured, computer software or game making, janitorial work with big buildings or grocery stores or restaurants, chef or cook, music,* and *art*. Less specific hoped for employment opportunities were also mentioned: *business*; *finding a career path that works for me*; *finding employment*; *get a part time job* and *start career*; and *be able to have a job which educating people about Indigenous people is the point, work at a university, work for the government, working in the north – Yukon maybe* and *work with a community organization*. Across these hoped for selves, it is notable that four of the participants identified hoped for jobs that were specifically Indigenous-related.

In addition to obtaining a job, participants also talked about qualities of their jobs and what working at jobs would entail. This included: *to have a job that is enjoyable and relaxing, but also being challenging, and expansive learning can happen*; *finding a job*

that suits me, and *fun*; *healthy work environment*; *passion*; and *a job with great hours that really worked with the schedule of their employees*.

Furthering education. Four of the participants had hoped for possible selves that included either finishing their current schooling, or pursing a more advanced degree than they were currently enrolled in. The hoped for selves included: *finish college, possibility of degree after Law or PhD* and *Graduate school, get my grade 12 Dogwood*, and *further education.* In addition to these directly stated possible selves, other participants acknowledged that other work-related hoped for selves would require specific schooling as a prerequisite. This was exemplified by one participant who stated that he hoped to become a computer software designer or game designer, but would first need to finish high school and pursue a post-secondary program.

Financial security and prosperity. Four of the participants mentioned hoped for selves that were financially focused. The hoped for selves included: *stable income, good pay, a higher paying job than I have previously ever had* and *successful.* Among those that did talk about income during the mapping process, they ranked this category as either their second or third most hoped for future self.

Feared selves. Participants were also asked to described their future feared work-related selves, and then list them on the possible selves map. Following this, they were asked to rank their most feared self to their least feared work-related self. Participants identified between one and nine feared work-related selves. Across these participants, there were three categories that were addressed.

Undesirable work. Seven participants described their fears about undesirable employment options, however, the meaning of undesirable employment options varied

among participants. Individuals listed specific jobs and general qualities of jobs that they did not wish to have, including: *working in a place which is not involved with Indigenous people, working in a hostile environment, being stuck in a cubicle, tethered to a computer or piece of technology, feeling of being in an assembly line, just producing a product, working at a coffee shop, to be doing a job I don't enjoy with moderate pay, fry cook, shitty job, sewer cleaning, farm work, retail, dead end job, dictated hours,* and *not finding a job I can be happy doing*.

Unemployed. Four of the participants talked about their fears about not having work in the future: *no job, not having a job, no employment,* and *never finding a job*. For three of the participants, this was either their most or second most feared future self.

Financial hardship. Four participants also spoke about the fears that they had regarding future financial hardship. This included: *not have much money to support my family, welfare, broke,* and *never earning as much as needed to support myself in my future life*. For two of the participants, these were the first and second most feared future selves.

Personal issues. Four participants also spoke about their fears of future life turmoil negatively impacting future employment. This included: *addiction* and *bad habits, homeless* and *angry, lawyers and court stuff* and *jail*. These options were at the top of these participants' most feared future selves and reflected either personal experiences, or experiences of seeing close family members struggle. Each participant said that they were actively working against these negative circumstances as they saw them as realistic major barriers to future employment, and said that their current pursuits in life were in part an effort to move away from these possible outcomes.

Although there was not enough time to explore these work-related possible selves with the participants, the hoped for and feared work-related selves identified were similar to selves identified by young people in other PSMP studies (Marshall, 2002; Marshall et al. 2011). The participants in these previous studies also identified possible selves related to family, community, work, education, wellbeing, and future plans. Further research with possible selves concepts and methods would increase understanding of the work life related hoped for and feared selves of young Indigenous people.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings from the across-participant thematic interview data analysis. Four meta-themes were identified: Relational Supports, Work Experience, Education, and Culture and Work, along with more specific themes and subthemes. The findings were connected to previous literature. Following this thematic analysis was a discussion of the Possible Selves Mapping Process findings. Participants' possible work-related selves were described: including three categories of hoped for selves: future employment, furthering education, and financial security and prosperity; and three categories of feared selves: undesirable work, unemployment, financial hardship, and personal issues. These findings highlight the unique and interrelated experiences of searching for and maintaining employment that these young Indigenous men had.

In the sixth and final chapter, I outline the implications that the present research has for practice, policy, and future research; delineate several boundaries of interpretation; and conclude with some final reflections.

Chapter VI – Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

In this chapter, I present the summary, boundaries, and implications of the thesis. In addition, I discuss potential directions for future research, and my own final reflections.

Summary of Findings

The guiding question of this thesis was: "*What supports, challenges, and obstacles do young Indigenous men experience with regard to finding and keeping work?*". Utilizing a qualitative methodology, I explored the work life experiences of eight Indigenous men in Victoria, British Columbia. Participants were asked seven interview questions, and engaged in a Possible Selves Mapping process. I utilized Rhodes' (2000) ghostwriting to create individual stories about each participant. Thematic analysis of the data across participants supported four important domains, or themes, of their experiences: relational support, work experience, education, and culture. Each of these four areas influenced how participants searched for and maintained work, and navigated their work life transitions. The young men spoke about the importance of their relational network: not only were they supported by family, friends, and community in their vocational and educational pursuits, but giving back to these connections was a motivating factor for furthering their pursuits. Educational engagement and completion was also seen as a necessary component in employment pursuits. Additionally, participants noted that culturally-related jobs were highly meaningful, and served as motivation for future direction.

It is noted that the interrelatedness found between themes is indicative of the connection that exists across multiple domains throughout the work life transitions of

these men. This multifaceted conceptualization of their journeys serves to deepen the understanding of the supports, challenges, and barriers that are experienced by young Indigenous men as they pursue work. In addition, the Possible Selves Mapping process appears to be a useful tool for exploring future vocational, educational, and life pathways, and can be used to consolidate plans to move towards or away from particular hoped for or feared future selves.

Boundaries of the study.

There are several boundaries, or limitations, to this research that merit discussion. As with all qualitative research, it was conducted within a certain context and time frame. I recognize that my results are not broadly generalizable, and that alternative interpretations of the data could be made by other researchers. Participant recruitment and confirmability have impacted the research process.

Participant recruitment proved to be a challenge in this project. I worked with several community partners and members to obtain enough volunteers for my research. It took a considerable amount of time to find interested participants to volunteer for the study, and seven of the participants were found through either the University of Victoria or a local Indigenous community agency. There are many local on and off reserve communities that I did not have access to, and as such, I was not able to bring their voices forward in my research. A larger number of participants would have represented a more diverse range of voices in my research, particularly those living on reserve.

As a credibility procedure, I conducted member checking with my participants about their ghost stories and their transcripts. Once I had completed each ghoststory, I emailed both documents back to the participant and invited them to review and comment

on them. Of the eight ghoststories and transcripts that I sent out, two participants did not respond. I recognize that hearing back from all eight participants would have been preferable; however, I was not able to achieve this. I was not able to send the final across-participant analysis and PSMP analysis due to time constraints, and admit that it would be preferable to do so. However, I recognize that member checking the ghost stories and transcriptions to confirm that I had accurately captured and reflected participants' individual experiences, was a useful process.

This study focused on young Indigenous males. Although there will be similarities with regard to themes of supports and challenges, there will also be differences to young Indigenous women's experiences. Other researchers on the WIMW team have explored young women's work narratives, in individual and group settings (Coverdale, 2012; Marshall et al., 2012; Overmars, 2011;). One area, for example, that is often addressed by young Indigenous women is parenting and its impact on educational and work development. Among the present participants, however, this topic was barely mentioned.

Despite these boundaries, the findings of this research do have relevance for this population, and many of the themes were consistent with those identified in the literature.

Implications

There are several implications for theory, research, and practice as a result of this study, including: contributions to knowledge and theory; methodological relevance; working with Indigenous communities; the importance of community focus, employment support and educational support; and conducting the PSMP.

Knowledge and theory. There has been little in-depth research about the work experiences and processes for young Indigenous men, and the current findings add to knowledge on this topic. The importance of relational supports regarding work was expected, however, these young men also spoke about family and community support that was not directly related to the work process. These findings underscore the importance of social context in the work development process, as well as the inter-relatedness of experiences, and require further research.

Through the *Walking in Multiple Worlds* project, it has become clear to the research team that western theory would be used to complement Indigenous ontology and epistemology (Coverdale, 2012). Relational theory and Social Constructionist theory were appropriate lenses for this study, as Indigenous scholars have advocated use of theories that reflect Indigenous worldviews (Stewart, 2008). These frameworks allowed for respectful exploration of narratives while paying attention to relational and subjective realities. The critical importance of relational connections and social contexts was clearly evident in the young men's narratives, which underscores the importance of social contexts and connection in the work development process.

Research. Conducting research with Indigenous communities requires an increased level of awareness and a commitment to ethical practice. Cochran et al. (2008) stated: "an extensive body of health-related research has been conducted on Indigenous populations around the world, but it appears to have had little impact on their overall well-being" and argued that the *how* of doing research with Indigenous communities is equally as important as the outcomes. Rather than conducting research *on* this population, Cochran and colleagues (2008) urges researchers to conduct research *with*

these groups. Being an outsider to Indigenous culture had both challenges and benefits for me in this study. We are all part of several cultures, and we all share in and do not share in several pieces of each culture. Being an outsider offers an opportunity to have a fresh look into new phenomena and limits certain assumptions that others may take in based on previous shared experiences. While this naïveté allows for a certain openness that can be taken into new research, it can also leave the researcher vulnerable to faulty assumptions and breaches of protocol.

Despite being a young male who is in the middle of my own academic and employment pursuits, I recognize that many of my experiences have been different to those of my participants. Having an opportunity to work with this population, both as a researcher and a practitioner, has led to many opportunities to increase my understanding of and ability to work *with* rather than on this group. For other researchers working with Indigenous communities, it is absolutely imperative to spend time familiarizing themselves with protocol, local agencies, on and off reserve communities, and key contact people. Depending on the setting, there may or may not be ongoing relationships between academic settings and local Indigenous groups. Connecting with local agencies, "community champions", band members, and other researchers is not only necessary at the beginning of new research, but throughout and after the process. These recommendations echo those of Marshall and Guenette (2011) who advocate for the importance of collaboration between researchers and community partners.

In addition, there is a certain level of formal disclosure that is appropriate when working with Indigenous communities. To keep consistent with Indigenous practices of introductions, for example, it was important that I began every relationship with an

introduction of not only what I was doing, but also who I was. Traditionally, introducing where your parents and grandparents are from is culturally appropriate. It was also important to pay respects to the local land that we were using. I spent time at the beginning of each interview acknowledging the traditional territories that we were on, that I was of European decent, why I was interested in conducting the research, my hopes for the impact on the communities, and my appreciation for the participants' willingness to share their stories. This direct introduction served to build trust between each participant and myself, and hopefully helped to reduce some of the potentially sensitive areas of difference in the relationship. I recommend that other researchers working with this population choose to follow this practice; engaging with a member from the specific communities of interest to obtain guidance and ensure that protocol is followed.

Practice. From the outset of the WIMW project, working with community agencies to improve service delivery was an important goal. Being a practitioner myself, I also shared in this desire. There are several implications for practice that have stemmed from this research.

Community focus. Throughout this research, it has become clear that relational supports are of the upmost importance throughout employment and educational pursuits. As many young Indigenous people are already turning to their communities to access support, it would be reasonable to assume that spending time helping communities build capacity to better support their members would be a worthwhile endeavour and a valuable investment of resources. For those helpers in the communities that are already providing support, such as Elders, family members, and band office employees, having their contributions honoured and "supporting the supporters" will help maintain existing

resources. For those that are not doing so already, encouraging individuals to seek support from their relational network would be beneficial.

For individuals who feel disconnected or are living away from their home communities, providing additional and accessible relational supports would be helpful. Participants who attended the University of Victoria mentioned the First Peoples House as a central hub of support. Likewise, Indigenous agencies were often cited as centres to access multiple forms of support. Expanding the awareness of and advocating for increased funding for these key resources will allow for more individuals to connect with and be supported.

Employment support. Many of the participants noted that culturally-related work experiences were highly valued, as they provided meaningful experiences. Often, these experiences were shaping moments in the participants' lives that deepened their connection with their culture, all the while allowing the participants to earn money and increase their work experience. Participants also noted that their initial exposure to a culturally-related job helped open the doors to other culturally-related jobs and enabled participants to entertain work possibilities not otherwise considered. It would seem that increasing awareness of and access to these types of job opportunities would be useful. It is important that those supporting Indigenous peoples are aware of opportunities and maintain relationships with communities so they can help facilitate these opportunities. It was also made clear that lack of resume building and specific employment search skills created challenges to gaining employment. Increasing awareness of and access to community employment support programs and structured work search resources could help those struggling with the initial needed elements in getting started looking for work.

Intervention through community programming, both on and off reserve, and in high school curricula would also be fundamental components of supporting youth in their job search development.

Educational completion. Educational completion was consistently cited as a major support, if not a prerequisite, and challenge for gaining employment. Completion of both high school and post-secondary degrees is significantly lower in the Indigenous population when compared to the national average. Building on and building in additional resources for Indigenous youth needs to be a priority to help with educational attainment. In my personal experience of working with Indigenous youth, many have cited the importance of at school supports, including "First Nations Rooms" and "First Nations Educational Assistants", and have often said that without those supports, they would find it harder to maintain school enrolment. As found by Juntunen and colleagues (2001), participants from communities that place high value on educational goals experience relational support throughout their academic pursuits. Communities that are supportive of education will result in increased numbers of people attaining it; this has positive impacts for both current and future generations through a cascading effect. Encouraging schools and districts to partner with communities in curriculum development could, in turn, increase community support of education.

At the post-secondary level, increasing the ease of access to funding and increasing funding dollars would allow more students to consider and pursue post-secondary education. Having Indigenous-specific services and specific contact people at educational centres could prove useful. As well, participants in this study said that the resources and supports of the First Peoples House were invaluable for navigating the

intricate process of applying for funding. Again, it is encouraging to see centres like this on university and college campuses as they can be relied on heavily by students. Further, participants also mentioned that they appreciated having Indigenous-specific curriculum, and noted that it was an important part of their academic and vocational development and aspirations. Increasing availability of programs and course offerings could be a potential support for those pursuing post-secondary education.

Possible selves mapping process. The Possible Selves Mapping Process (Marshall & Guenette, 2011) supported specific exploration of hoped for and feared work related selves. This process has been utilized for work, life, and academic planning, and I have used it professionally for treatment planning when working with youth; it is a flexible tool that allows for both imaginative and realistic planning. At the outset of my thesis, the decision was made to incorporate the PSMP as a way to further supplement my data and expand the research team's working knowledge of the tool. As a result of using the tool, I share three recommendations.

First, one of my participants noted that he had engaged in a somewhat similar task in the past. He made the request that we completed the feared selves first, so that we could end on the hoped for selves. He said that it was just a good way to leave the interview, as he finished with a positive sense of consolidation about his future plans, and some steps that he could take to move towards those plans. As a result, each subsequent PSMP was completed first for feared selves then for hoped for selves, rather than following the original hoped for selves then feared selves order. I encourage others to consider the implications of completing the process in this order as well, or at least providing an option to the participants.

Second, the PSMP offers a chance for deep exploration of future selves, as well as an opportunity to create concrete plans so individuals have a list of steps of how they can move towards or away from future selves. This process can take between one and two hours to fully flesh out a map that focuses on several life domains including: academics, employment, and lifestyle. Unfortunately, I did not have enough time to fully explore the maps and follow up steps due to interviewing time constraints. In addition, participants were often feeling fatigued by the time we started the mapping process. In future, for those wishing to incorporate the PSMP, I would recommend setting up a second interview to complete the process. This would help ensure fuller exploration of the maps, and allow for more time to be spent on concretizing the steps.

Third, results from the present study would indicate that some focus on community aspects of selves or future hopes and fears would be appropriate for Indigenous participants. When administering the PSMP, providing prompts to encourage an individual to consider relational or community aspects would help achieve this.

Future Research

There are several areas of future research that could further the understanding of work and career development in Indigenous populations. I chose to have a male only participant group as there is limited research on Indigenous men's work life transitions. As my research was a part of a larger project, there were pre-established research questions and boundaries of the project. While working for a larger project has its benefits, I found that at the end of the process, I was left wanting to know more about the uniqueness of the male experience. As such, I believe that future research could have a

more direct focus on individual gender differences, including specific questions related to how gender roles within the community influence work life transitions.

This thesis has highlighted the importance of the relational impacts on vocational development for Indigenous males. As such, further research exploring relational supports seems appropriate. Better understanding the process of these supports and highlighting the importance of them would serve to benefit communities at large.

Participant recruitment proved to be quite challenging. I believe that further effort is needed to include the voices of those living in rural and more isolated areas. Southern Vancouver Island is home to nine different nations, each with unique political climates, levels of community health, access to on and off reserve resources, strengths, and difficulties. It has been noted that on reserve populations endure further marginalization and challenges when compared to urban counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2006 & Statistics Canada, 2011). Despite these challenges, there are also countless stories of perseverance and success. I believe that further ongoing efforts need to focus on working alongside these communities. Marshall and Guenette (2011) proposed that building and maintaining long term relationships, based on bi-directional communication and reciprocity, are key components in cross-cultural knowledge transfer and exchange. In my own experience of speaking with Chief and council on several of the local reservations, it was impressed on me that the formation and maintenance of long term relationships were not only valued, but required. Continuing to work with Indigenous agencies and bands requires ongoing commitment, and every effort should be made to keep connected with the communities that the researchers have been welcomed into. Part of this will come naturally through the dissemination phase of WIMW.

The participants clearly voiced that discrimination negatively impacted their experiences in a significant way. It would be important for future researchers to explore more deeply how Indigenous individuals and communities address this within work and educational fields and how non-Indigenous counterparts can best align with and support communities to address this problem.

In addition, deeper exploration and utilization of the Possible Selves Mapping Process would seem useful, specifically, over time. The PSMP allowed participants to consider realistic possibilities in their futures. At this point, I am unaware of any research that explores the longitudinal applications of possible selves with the Indigenous population. Factors that change and maintain possible selves could be explored, with specific emphasis on educational and career pathways.

Final reflections

Throughout this process, I have had the opportunity to reflect on my research and myself as a researcher. My most surprising realization was how much my counselling training influenced the way that I responded to and worked with the research participants. Often, I conducted my interviews after I finished my work day. I kept a research journal and made entries about my experience after each participant I interviewed and after each transcript I listened to. I noticed after my first interview, which I conducted thirty minutes after I finished a counselling session at my work, that some of my responses seem influenced by attempts to be empathic. While this can be facilitative, a researcher's role is different to a counsellor's. My reflections led me to more actively and intentionally step out of my counsellor role and into my researcher role by mentally preparing in subsequent interviews. There is considerable skill transfer between the two,

and actively choosing the lenses that I am looking through and working from has been an important learning experience.

In addition, this research has continued to affirm the work that I am doing with the local communities. I see both the struggles and successes that many young Indigenous people face, and I am honoured to be a part of their journeys. I appreciated having the opportunity to work closely with eight young men, who shared their journeys with me, and I look forward to bringing some of my learning with, through, and from them, to both my colleagues and the youth and families with whom I work.

I would like to close with an inspiring and hopeful quote from one of the young men:

> *The barriers and obstacles are now easier to remove, because I have options, I have a stronger identity, I have resources, I have people behind me. It's just a matter of me making that move and just finding that direction.*

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Appendix A
Recruitment Poster

Appendix B
Recruitment Letter

University of Victoria | British Columbia Canada

Department of Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies
PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria, B.C.V8W 3N4 Canada

Walking in Multiple Worlds. Aboriginal Young Adult's Work Life Narratives.
Invitation to Participate

Dear Possible Participant:

My name is [redacted] and I am a faculty member in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria. Along with my research team and Community partners, I am conducting research about the work experience of urban Aboriginal young people in Victoria, BC and Toronto, ON. This study builds on and extends findings from previous projects investigating career development for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal secondary students and young adults in rural and small coastal communities. The purpose of the present research project is to explore Aboriginal young people's experiences of the supports, challenges and barriers in the quest to find sustainable work. The research question is: "*What supports, challenges, and barriers do Aboriginal young adults experience with regard to finding and keeping work?"* Research of this type is important because the results will help improve career education and counselling support for youth. The project is supported, in part, by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

In Victoria, this research is being conducted in partnership with local Aboriginal service agencies and we consult with a Steering Committee made up of Elders, Community representatives, and youth. You are being contacted because you have volunteered to participate or have been identified by our community partners or research team as someone who might be interested in participating. Your individual interview will take about one hour, at a convenient location.

If you have any questions, please contact Research [redacted] In addition to being able to contact the researcher and/or research assistant as above, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the bottom portion of this sheet and return it to [redacted]. You may also fax [redacted], subject line Worklife Interview. You will be contacted by [redacted], graduate student Research Assistants, to schedule an interview.

Thank you.

[redacted]

Yes, I am interested in participating in the study entitled “Walking in multiple worlds. Aboriginal young adults’ worklife narratives”.

To set up an interview time please contact me via:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Name (print): _____

Signature: _____

Appendix C
Individual Interview Questions

Walking in Multiple Worlds. Aboriginal Young Adult's Work Life Narratives.
Individual Interview Questions

Part I: Individual interview participants and Focus Group interview participants

1. Tell me about your story or stories of finding and keeping work.

2. What are the supports, challenges, and obstacles you have experienced or are experiencing now?

3. Have any of your work experiences included Aboriginal or First Nations culture? If so, please explain and give examples.

4. Has any of your work been with Aboriginal service agencies or Band offices? If so, please describe that work.

5. How have parents/guardians, Elders, and other community members helped you with your schooling and/or with finding work?

6. What is the most important thing you have learned about finding and keeping work? What would you change if you could?

7. What are your next steps? How do you see your future now?

* Prompts and open questions will be used to facilitate the interview process where needed

Appendix D
Possible Selves Outline

Now I am going to ask you to think about your future and how you'd like that to be. We're going to do this using an exercise called "possible selves". One kind of possible self is positive -- selves we hope to become in the future. Some of these would be quite likely to happen; for example, being a worker at a particular job, or being a car owner. Others may seem quite unlikely, but still possible; for instance, being a world famous athlete or a lottery winner. We call these "hoped-for selves".

Besides having dreams that we hope for, we also have selves that we fear or don't want to have happen, or re afraid of happening, like being unemployed for a long time or becoming very sick. We call these "feared selves". (Pause for questions)

I'd like you to take some time and think about your dreams or hoped-for selves for the future regarding work – this could be jobs you would really like to have, training courses or degrees you'd like to take, places you'd like to work, and so on. Write your hoped-for work selves in the green boxes on this map (or the boxes on the green map), one hoped-for self per box. (give time for this). …Don't worry if they might not happen, just brainstorm all the things you'd like to see yourself doing now and in the future, as many as you can think of…. (more time for writing) … …Anything else you'd like to add?
Can you rank order these hoped-for selves now, with #1 being the one you want most, #2 being the next, and so on. Just put the number in the box. Number them all. (give time for this).
Can you tell me a bit about these hoped-for selves and what they mean to you?

Now I'd like you to take some time and think about what you **don't** want for yourself – your feared work selves. This could be a job you really don't want, or a workplace you don't want to be in, or not having a job, or anything else related to work that you don't want to have happen. Write these in the yellow boxes on this other map (or the boxes on this yellow map), one feared self per box. Write as many as you can think of. (Give time for this) Anything else?
Can you rank order these feared work selves now, with #1 being the one you fear most – the one you really don't want to have happen, #2 being the next feared one, and so on. Just put the number in the box. Number them all. (give time for this).
Can you tell me a bit about these feared selves and why you don't want these to happen?

<u>Questions for more exploration</u>:
How capable do you feel of accomplishing (preventing) this possible self?
How likely do you think this possible self is to come true?
Can you tell me some of the things you have done in the past year to bring about this hoped-for self (or to prevent this feared self from occurring)?
Which selves would your community judge to be successful (unsuccessful)?
Which selves do you feel you can achieve (or prevent) in this community?
Which selves have you been unable to develop in this community?

Appendix E
Participant Consent Form

Education Psychology & Leadership Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Victoria

Participant Consent Form

Walking in Multiple Worlds. Aboriginal Young Adult's Work Life Narratives. Individual Interview

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled "Walking in Multiple Worlds. Aboriginal Young Adults' Work Life Narratives". The research team for this project is led by Dr. Anne Marshall, a faculty member in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria and Dr. Suzanne Stewart, a faculty member at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Other team members include: Jennifer Coverdale, Payden Spowart, and Jackie LeBlanc, research assistants for this project, and _____ (other RAs, community based research assistants, and Community Partners). If you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact [redacted]

This research is being funded in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the young Aboriginal people's experiences of the supports, challenges and barriers they have faced and are facing in their quest to find sustainable work. The research question is: "*What supports, challenges, and barriers do Aboriginal young adults experience with regard to finding and keeping work*?" Research of this type is important because the results will help improve career education and counselling support for Aboriginal people. The research is being conducted in two sites: Victoria, British Columbia; and Toronto, Ontario.

You are being invited to participate because you are between the ages of 18 and 26, you self identify as a person of Aboriginal ancestry, and have indicated interest in sharing your experiences related to work.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will consist of one audio-taped interview with one of the above researchers (about 60 minutes). The focus of the interview will be on your experiences in searching for employment and maintaining employment both in the past and at present.

We do not anticipate that involvement in this research would involve any substantial inconvenience for you other than the time to travel to and participate in the interview.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you through participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research include contributing to the knowledge

about attaining and sustaining work. Your participation will provide new information on the work development process of Aboriginal young people.

As a way to compensate you for your participation, you will be given a $20.00 gift certificate at the time of the interview. It is important for you to know that it is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants and, if you agree to be a participant in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. If you would not otherwise choose to participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline. Should you withdraw from the study at any time the honorarium is yours to keep.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, or refuse to answer certain questions without any consequences or any explanation. In the event that you withdraw from this study, your taped interview will be erased and the transcript and all field notes or data associated with you will be destroyed. In the event that you withdraw from the study part way through you will be asked if you want the data you have contributed to be part of analysis. If you agree your data will remain in the study, if not your taped interview will be erased and the transcript and all field notes or data associated with you will be destroyed.

Your confidentiality will be protected by storing interview audiotapes and the transcribed data in a locked filing cabinet. Only the researchers will have access to the data. The audio-tapes from your interview, the transcribed data, and any notes taken during the interview will be destroyed after five years.

To preserve your anonymity, your name will not be recorded on the transcribed data, a code or pseudonym of your choice will be assigned and used in place of your name. The key to the coded names will be kept separately from the interview data. Signed consent letters will also be stored separately from any data.

Research findings will be communicated to participants, community members and interested professionals through interactive workshops. The results of the study will be published in peer-reviewed journals, in various scholarly publications, and will be presented at professional and/or scholarly conferences, as well as community/school meetings in your town. Summary results will be posted on an internet website.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and/or research assistant as above, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca.

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

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

_____

Participant Name (please print)

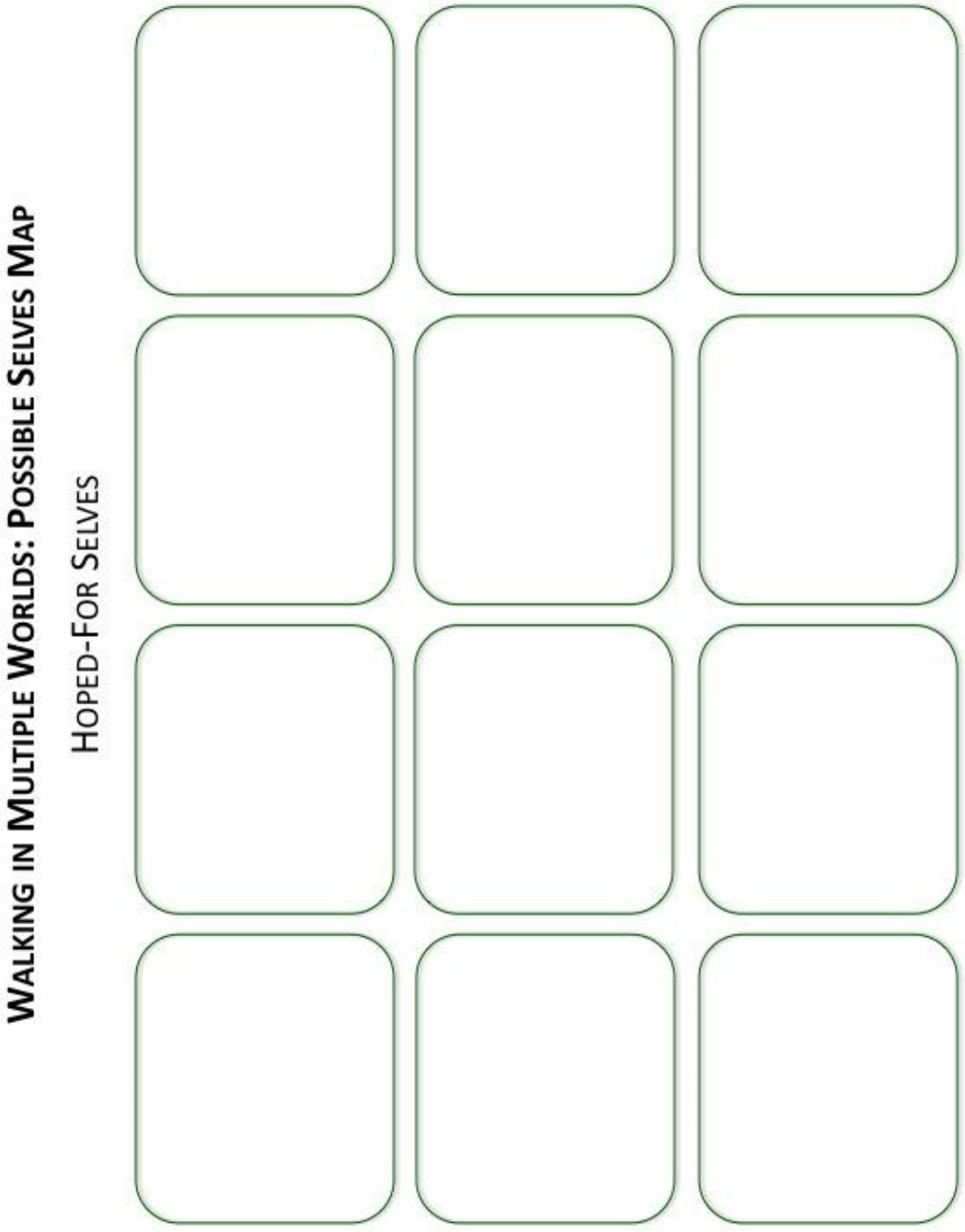
My signature below indicates I received $20.00 gift certificate from **for participating in this interview.**

_____ _____

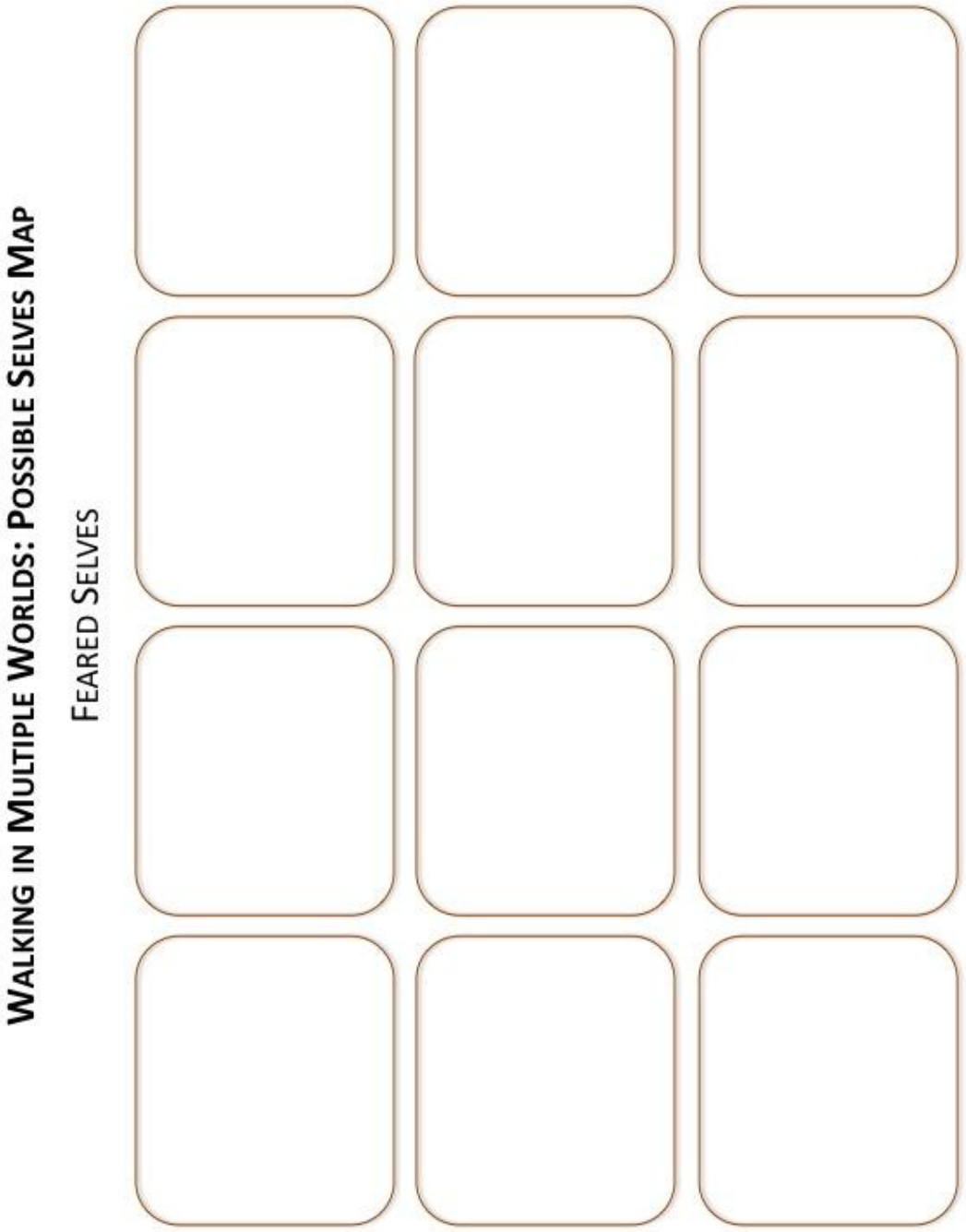
Participant Signature Date

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

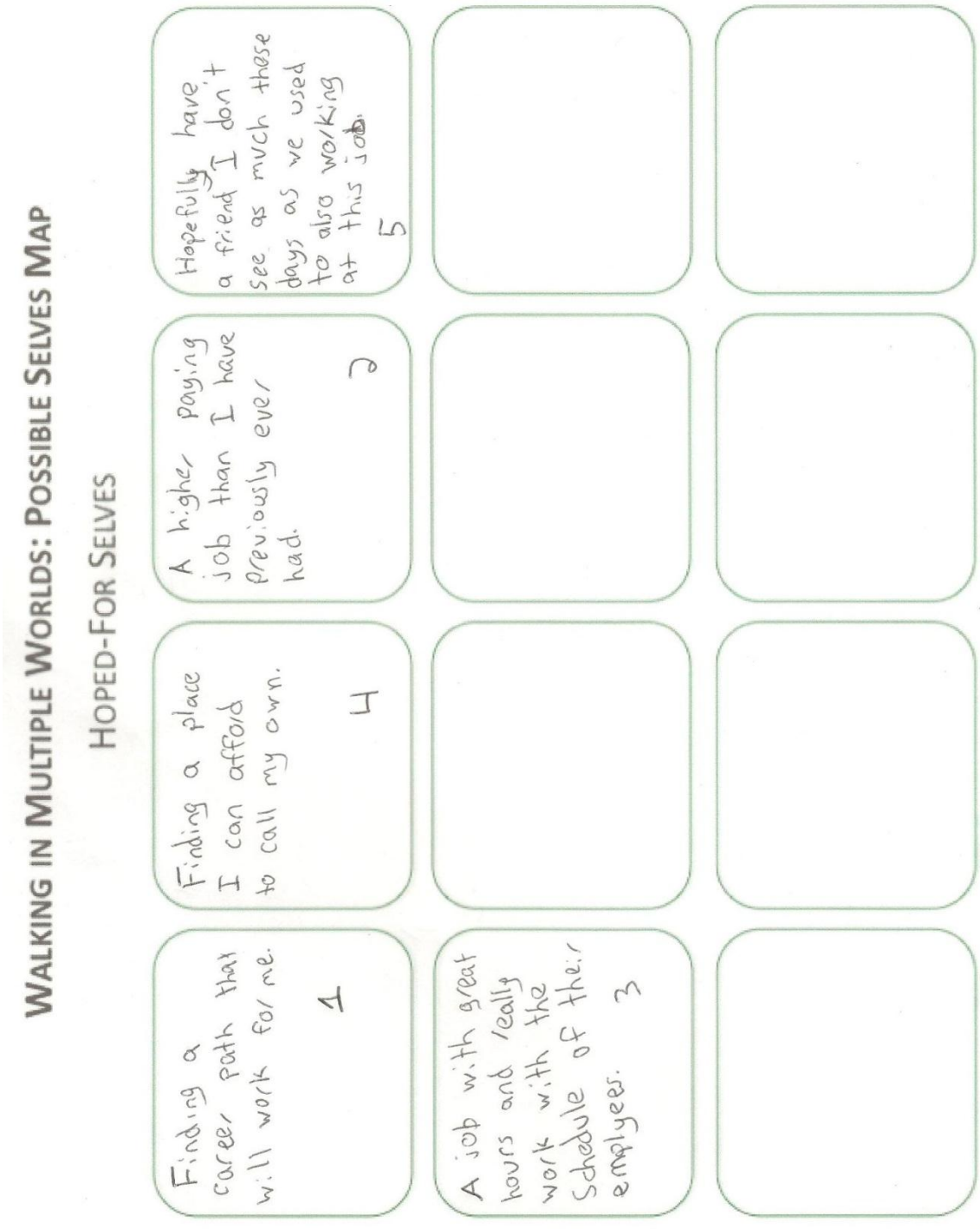
Appendix F
Hoped For Selves Blank Map



Appendix G
Feared Selves Blank Map



Appendix H
Hoped For Selves Completed Map



Appendix I
Example of Coding

good pay, good work, and good work ethic. He taught me a lot of things like when I buy a house I don't need to hire someone to fix the plumbing or fix the dry wall I know how to do it. He is a jack of all trades so we did everything in the house. We gutted it and built it back up again. It was good experience.

$, work & work ethic

Work xp - skills

skills.

PS: And when did you stop doing that?

TC: When I went to go to school that was a year last year. The start of last year, near the beginning.

back to school

Education

PS: Gotcha. And in term of right now, like this year how does that look for you?

TC: Well recently I have been employed with [NAME] so I have been doing carving with him. He is the guy who does the poles. I am currently in the process of getting grant money and starting my own business so I can be my own self employed artist and make my own stuff.

Carving for work

Work xp -

grant $ for self employment

Work xp - business

PS: When did you start carving?

TC: I have been carving my entire life. My dad and my uncles are really into it. It's just been like always there. So I guess yeah, our therapists, its everywhere.

carving all life & family

Culture Carving

Support team

PS: So it's been there from the get go.