GENDER, RACE, AND CUSTODIAL SPACE

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Abstract

Indigenous[1] people have higher levels of representation in correctional facilities compared to their representation in the Canadian adult population. This trend is consistent within the female inmate population. In 2008/2009 the highest proportion of female admissions in Canada was found in Saskatchewan where Indigenous women comprised more than 85% of admissions (Calverley, 2010) despite comprising just 14.9% of Saskatchewan's total population (Indigenous Population Profile, 2006). This over-representation presents a challenging dilemma. The racial identity assigned to Saskatchewan custodial facilities is Indigenous, which reinforces the long-standing societal belief Indigenous people are characterized by degeneracy and supports the continued exclusion of Indigenous women from dominant society. Simply put; Canada's racial pecking order continues through the over-incarceration of its Indigenous women. Firstly, to deconstruct the racial stigmatization assigned to Saskatchewan custodial settings, one must add context. A way to achieve this is through sharing individual narratives. Luana Ross (Salish) (1994) wrote, "One way in which imprisoned women can resist oppression and facilitate social change is by telling their own stories" (p. 17). Secondly, one must pay recognition to the entangled relationship between space and race. This research shares the individual stories of those with lived experience, and provokes important conversations surrounding the complex relationship between gender, race, and societal space. The theoretical framework that shaped this project stems from an Indigenous paradigm and the strategy of inquiry utilized is narrative methodology. Findings from this research includes an exploration of the complex nature of space, an

[1] For the purpose of this research, the term Indigenous refers to persons who identify as being of First Nations (North American Indian; Status or non-Status), Metis or Inuit descent

examination of family as space, the importance of culture and spirituality, a review of verbatim participant responses, and a discussion of violence, trauma, and colonialism. This research concludes with a number of recommendations, based on the research findings, and offers suggestions on moving forward.

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Statement of the Problem

Indigenous[2] people have higher levels of representation in correctional custodial facilities in Canada compared to their representation in the Canadian adult population. According to the National Household Survey, in 2011 the total population of Canada was 33, 476 688 (National Household Survey, 2011). The representation of Indigenous people was 1,400 685 people or 4.3% of the general adult population (National Household Survey, 2011). On any given day in 2010-2011, there were approximately 38, 000 people in custody in Canada (Dauvergne, 2012). Within this population, Indigenous representation skyrocketed: Indigenous people comprised 27% of adults in provincial or territorial custody and 20% of adults in federal custody, roughly seven to eight times the Indigenous representation in the general population (Dauvergne). As of April 15, 2012, the proportion of offenders incarcerated was about 10.8% greater for Indigenous offenders (71%) than for non-Indigenous offenders (60.2%) (2012 Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2014).

The disproportionate number of incarcerated Indigenous people is consistent across Canada and within the female inmate population (Dauvergne, 2012). In 2010/2011, 41% of females in provincial and federal sentenced custody were identified as being of Indigenous descent (Dauvergne) in contrast with an approximate 4% representation in the general Canadian female population. In 2008/2009 the highest proportion of female admissions in Canada was found in the province of Saskatchewan where 15% of all Canadian female admissions to custody occurred (Calverley, 2010). Within this population, Indigenous women comprised more than 85% of admissions

[2] For the purpose of this research, the term Indigenous refers to persons who identify as being of First Nations (North American Indian; Status or non-Status), Metis or Inuit descent

(Calverley) despite comprising just 14.9% of Saskatchewan's total population (Indigenous Population Profile, 2006). Indigenous females are one of the fastest growing populations within Canada's federal prison system, with incarceration rates having increased 84% within the last 10 years (Aboriginal Women One-Third of All Female Prisoners: Report, 2013).

Data collected by Correction Services Canada in 2008/2009 suggests incarcerated women are on average younger, more likely to be single, less likely to have a high school diploma, and more likely to be unemployed than women in the Canadian general population (Calverley, 2010). A higher proportion of Indigenous women than non-Indigenous women entering federal custody were assessed as having rehabilitative needs in a number of areas, including substance use, marital and family relationships, employment, and social interaction (Mahoney, 2011). Indigenous women in federal custody were also more likely than non-Indigenous women to be assessed as having multiple areas of need. Approximately 66% of Indigenous women in federal custody were assessed as having five or more rehabilitative needs in contrast with 38% of non-Indigenous women (Mahoney). Women prisoners in Saskatchewan in particular are identified as having complex needs. In 2008/2009 the majority of women inmates in Saskatchewan custodial services were identified as having a medium or high level of need for all domains, ranging from 55% identified as having treatment needs in the family/marital domain to 92% needing substance abuse treatment (Calverley, 2010).

Quite simply, Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan are coming into conflict with the law at much higher rates than non-Indigenous peoples and Indigenous women in particular seem to be experiencing ongoing and increasing contact with the justice

system. The over-incarceration rate of Indigenous women warrants closer attention. A number of social and historical occurrences contribute to this over-representation within the justice system. Colonization, systematic racism, socioeconomic disparity, and loss of traditional roles within the Indigenous family have led to personal circumstances such as abject poverty, low levels of education, substance abuse, and violence within Indigenous communities (Mosher & Mahon-Haft, 2010). An exploration of these factors provides context to the criminalization of so many Indigenous women. However, context is the very thing so often lacking when considering the plight of those Indigenous females who are incarcerated. In order to make sense of this issue, one must understand the context. A way one might make sense of such context is by recognizing the entangled relationship between space and race.

There are explicit social connections between spatial and racial processes (Neely & Samura, 2011). Racial inequality has traditionally been, and continues to be, organized spatially, particularly in colonial societies (Neely & Samura). With respect to Canada's own colonialist history, there is a long history of spatial organization and racial practices towards its Indigenous peoples. In Canada, "we walk on land that has been stolen, colonized and settled by White Europeans and whether in urban or rural spaces, histories of Indigenous dispossession dominate the landscape" (Bhandar, Fumia, and Newman, 2008, p. 13). The dynamics surrounding domination and oppression between dominant Canadian society and Indigenous peoples continues to exist. The current social landscape in Canada remains as testament to the history of colonization and subsequently became a site through which processes of colonization and forms of oppression are maintained (Bhandar et al.). However, in a time when there is a supposed decline in the significance

of race (Neely & Samura, 2011) a spatial perspective offers valuable insight in understanding persistent racial processes. One might argue the current high incarceration rate of Indigenous women in Canada is one such persistent racial process.

The over-representation of Indigenous women in custody presents a challenging dilemma. Custody represents a clearly defined, physical space where people convicted of degenerate behaviour are confined in order to protect the dominant, "non-degenerate" society (Razack, 2000). Identity is projected on to specific spaces and, ultimately, on to the bodies within (Razack). The residents within these walls are perceived as deserving of their confinement and their social exclusion. Stigmatization is based on their convicted criminal behaviour. In Saskatchewan, the women sentenced to custody are overwhelmingly of Indigenous descent. As such, the racial identity assigned by society to Saskatchewan custodial facilities is Indigenous. This reinforces the long-standing societal belief that Indigenous people are characterized by degeneracy (Razack) and supports the continued exclusion of Indigenous women from dominant or "white" society. Canada's racial pecking order, intentional or not, continues through the over-incarceration of its Indigenous women. Jail is a rationalization of a racialized space (Razack) and is couched in society's construction of what is just. Ultimately it is oppression, rather than equality, that prevails and this injustice represents an issue Canada must first acknowledge, and then address.

In order to deconstruct the racial stigmatization assigned to Saskatchewan custodial settings, one needs to add context. The over-incarceration of Indigenous women needs to be placed within the broader context of Canada's colonial project with its intrinsic racializations and racialized hierarchies (Razack, 2000). A way to add

context might be through the telling of individual narratives. Luana Ross (Salish) (1994) wrote, "One way in which imprisoned women can resist oppression and facilitate social change is by telling their own stories" (p. 17). The over-incarceration rate of Indigenous women in Saskatchewan and all of its complexities cannot be properly addressed without the inclusion of the individuals who are directly impacted. Individual voices will give voice to the issue, a face to the name, and can be a powerful force in reclaiming societal space. It is time to explore the experiences of Indigenous women in Saskatchewan who have been sentenced to custody and examine the complex relationship between gender, race, and space.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative study was twofold; firstly, to explore the experiences of Indigenous women in Saskatchewan who have been sentenced to custody. This was achieved through four personal narrative accounts of women who experienced this phenomenon first hand. Ochs and Capps (as cited in Vlasic, 2006) indicated that personal narrative is simultaneously born out of experience and gives shape to experience and it is seen as a resource in the struggle to bring experience to conscious awareness. This research explores the over-representation of Indigenous women in the Canadian custodial system, particularly those in Saskatchewan, at an individual level in order to gain a greater understanding of this disparity.

Secondly, the purpose of this study was to provoke thought surrounding how social constructions of space illuminate social constructions of race (Neely & Samura, 2011). Thinking about race, "through the lens of space not only helps us locate and understand racial processes, it also allows us to recognize possibilities for changing existing power structures" (Neely & Samura, p. 1946). This research is intended to challenge the colonialist thoughts/practices, both concrete and symbolic, that shape the treatment of incarcerated Indigenous women as it exists in Canada today through a closer examination of the relationship between gender, race, and custodial space.

In sum, the research question that guided this research is: what are the experiences of Indigenous women from Saskatchewan sentenced to custody and what does this tell us about the relationship between gender, race and space?

Literature Review

Race-space theory (Neely & Samura, 2011) is the theoretical perspective motivating this research question and literature related to this framework marks the starting point of this review. The second portion pertains to information surrounding the many complex social issues that continue to create barriers in the lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Symptoms of colonialist practices such as histories of victimization, traditional role loss, and poverty are just some examples of the challenging social problems imprisoned Indigenous women face and are the issues one needs to be aware of before even attempting to make sense of the research topic. A noticeable gap identified in the literature was the lack of personal narratives from Indigenous women, particularly those who have been incarcerated (Monture, 2006). The literature review ends with a discussion of strength, protective factors, and resilience related to Indigenous peoples and communities.

Spatial Theory, Racial Theory; Connecting Race and Space

What is the relationship between race and space? How is racial inequity arranged spatially? More frequently, theorists have begun to examine how spatial analysis of racial processes "teaches us things about race we cannot know by any other means" (Knowles, 2003 as cited in Neely & Samura, 2011, p. 1933). What has emerged from this train of thought is that the way people think about space mirrors the way people think about race (Neely & Samura, 2011). Space and race appear to have a dialectical relationship; "Racial interactions and processes (e.g. identities, inequalities, and so on) are also about how we collectively make and remake, over time and through ongoing contestation, the spaces we inhibit "(Neely & Samura, p.1934). As such, racial theory

provides a "unique lens for examining the complex processes by which racial difference and inequality are organized and enacted "(p. 1934). In a time when there is a supposed decline in racial significance, "a spatial perspective can provide a particularly useful lens and language for locating and understanding persistent racial processes" (p. 1934).

Spatial relations and processes are in actuality social relations taking a particular geographical form. There are underlying subtleties surrounding power relations that, "inform the meanings/attachments people ascribe to physical locations" (Neely & Samura, 2011, p. 1935). This dynamic results in domination, a binary concept "premised on absolute divisions often proclaimed as biological or cultural or both" (Bhandar et al, 2008, p. 8). Domination is described by Jennifer Nelson as revolving around how "groups marked as racially inferior have been 'defined, confined, regulated and eradicated through the control of space" (2008, p. 28). One of the consistent ways "to limit the economic and political rights of groups has been to constrain social reproduction by limiting access to space" (Lefebre, H. 1991, as cited in Neely & Samura, 2011, p. 1936). The sides must be clearly separated and clearly maintained through borders, both imaginary and real, in order to preserve the status quo. Doreen Massey, as cited in Neely & Samura, 2011, described how geographical placement is a method of maintaining inequality, particularly places that are raced and gendered, and argues social power "plays an important role in how people move in the world and how they connect to space" (p. 1937).

Spatial theory and the concept of domination also helps one understand how minority populations have been ordered and contained in colonialist societies. Colonialism has a long history of utilizing spatial organization as a method of oppression.

One only needs to look to Canada's own historical practices with its Indigenous peoples. Settlers claimed the land, "as their own through a process of violent eviction justified by notions that the land was empty or populated by peoples who had to be saved or civilized" (Razack, 2002, p. 97). Space is a tangible manifestation of racial inequalities (Neely & Samura, 2011) and again, causes one to recognize the importance of border and boundary maintenance. Within this particular discussion it is also imperative to touch upon the concept of "whiteness". Cheryl Harris theorized that whiteness "carries a privileged sense of belonging and entitlement to space and is fundamentally defined by exclusion and subjugation" (1993, as cited in Neely & Samara, 2011, p.1944). Historically, white people have controlled and displaced people of colour. Canada's reservation system is one example of this. As such, "the maintenance of white property and the sense of entitlement that accompanies white identity cannot be divorced from the historically systematic exclusion of people of colour" (p. 1944). Canada's historical spatial allocation of Indigenous people is part of a colonial culture that is still significantly embedded in the social, political, and economic structures of everyday life (Bhandar et al, 2008) and it is these dynamics of power and domination rooted in Canada's history that shape present-day interactions and perceptions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Hanson, 2012).

Neely & Samura (2011) suggested there are four common attributes shared between space and race that are interchangeable. Firstly, space and race are both contested. Contested spaces are "geographic locations where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance, engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources to access and power" (Low &

Lawrence-Zuniga, as cited in Neely & Samura, 2011, p. 1938). Contested space intersects with the concept of race in terms of access to spaces and difficulties recognizing how space should be known and used, often which play out along racial lines (Neely & Samura). A recent example in Canada is the Idle No More movement that was born in opposition to the Canadian government passing legislation which would erode Indigenous treaty rights.

Secondly race and space are both fluid and historical. The meaning associated and assigned to certain geographical places change with time. Caroline Knowles wrote:

> Space is an active archive of the social processes and social relationships composing social orders. Active because it is not just a monument, accumulated through a racial past and present – although it is also that – it is active in the sense that is interacts with people and their activities as an ongoing set of possibilities in which race is fabricated (Knowles, 2003, as cited in Neely & Samura, p. 1940).

The complexity of spaces can be significant. In Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, the Provincial Court House is built on an Indigenous burial ground. How do we make sense and understand a location that is a sacred spot for a colonized population while simultaneously an overt and palpable representation of the colonial government? In addition to the evolving meanings of race and space, one can also trace the trajectory of their relationship over time (Neely & Samura, 2011). Sherene Razack's theoretical work described "white settler societies" and argued one must consider the relationship between race and space, particularly as "legal and social practices reproduce racial hierarchies through space" (2000, p. 96).

Thirdly, space and race are both interactional and relational. Edward Said suggested understandings of space and race are "always created and recreated in relationship to an 'other'" (as cited in Neely & Samura, 2011, 1944), which essentially creates an "us" and "them" mentality. Throughout the literature, theorists refer to this as the "other'ing" process; the lines of absolute division and the dominant and subordinate identities tied collectively to the spaces, and the bodies which inhibit them. Razack expanded on this within her work which is discussed more in depth later within this literature review. Within this discussion, the concept of "whiteness" as well as white control both materially and symbolically involves the unjust displacement of people of colour (Neely & Samura, 2011). The reservation system in Canada is a prime example of white control and intentional placement of the oppressed minority. As such, "the maintenance of white property and the sense of entitlement that accompanies white identity cannot be divorced from the historically systematic exclusion of people of colour" (p. 1944).

The final shared characteristic lies within inequality and difference. Power relations "are inscribed into material spaces and played out through racial interactions" (Neely & Samura, 2011, p. 1945). Neely & Samura listed a number of examples, including environmental racism, disputes over citizenship status, neighborhood racial segregation, and new forms of colonialism that stem from outsourcing or international trade (2011). There are examples of neighbourhood segregation in all of Saskatchewan's major cities. Regina's North Central neighborhood, Saskatoon's West end, or Prince Albert's West flats are all impoverished socioeconomic areas, primarily consisting of Indigenous peoples, isolated and separate from dominant society. Space is defined and

organized based on dominant interest (Neely & Samura) and one must give thought to how racialized groups are systematically spatially organized. Within this discussion, there is confirmation of privilege of whiteness and racialization of certain spaces. The meanings assigned to spaces and the ways spaces are used have much to do who has the power to define and control it (Neely & Samura).

In conclusion, the overlap between race and space allows us to think more clearly about why space becomes racialized and race becomes spatialized. Social and spatial processes are deeply connected and continually interact with and influence one another (Neely & Samura, 2011). In order to change existing power structures, concrete or abstract, one must consider the relationship between race and space.

Structural Violence

In today's individualistic-natured world, a common social tenet is that individuals are responsible for their own personal circumstances - should those experiences be wealth and prosperity, or poverty and misery. However, structural and conflict theorists identify structural imbalances as the root cause of inequality and argue individual experiences (such as vagrancy or the effects of a poor housing market) are the causal effects (Taylor, 2013; Iadicola and Shupe, 2003). Susannah Taylor (2013) defined social structures as any arrangement, concrete or abstract, that organizes society. The link between social structures and human suffering is not a foreign concept (Taylor). Social structures can suppress, oppress, and cause outright violence. Iadicola and Shupe (2003) argued structural violence is, "violence that occurs in the context of establishing, maintaining, extending, or reducing hierarchal relations between categories of people within a society" (p. 316). Although there are some variations in the definitions of structural violence,

there are four common central themes (Taylor, 2013) which explain the related processes, including how Canada views and treats Indigenous people.

Firstly, the world is organized by hierarchies. Hierarchical structures produce unequal distributions of power, influence, and resources (Iadicola and Shupe, 2003) and these power inequalities often produce violent results. As such, hierarchal structures are inherently violent (Taylor, 2013). Hierarchies, by nature, are arranged so, "some people have less, struggle, suffer, and die, so that others can have more, prosper, flourish, and live longer lives" (Taylor, 2013, p.258). Some people benefit, but many do not. It could be argued the process of hierarchical practices is not dissimilar to the process of "other'ing" as presented by space-race theorists in that it divides people into groups, with some perceived as deserving and others as undesirable. It is also a point to consider when examining Indigenous peoples' social standing, both historical and present, in Canadian society where it has been and continues to be on a lower rung.

A second theme inherent to structural violence: it is invisible. And it is this very invisibility that allows structural inequities and subsequent violence to be maintained. If one cannot actually see the violence, then how can a person make effort to change it? Or, of even greater concern, if structural violence is invisible, does it even exist? Structural violence is described as, "invisible, static, insidious, silent, taken-for-granted, and hidden" (Taylor, 2013, p. 258) and it is these qualities that make structural violence so incredibly dangerous (Iadocola and Shupe, 2003). Invisibility allows structural violence to be both taken for granted and widely accepted. As such, "all structure-related suffering is attributed to individuals and their choices. When social problems masquerade as individual problems, their true nature is unseen" (Taylor, 2013, p. 259).

With respect to the many prevalent social issues experienced by First Nations people in Canada, such as substance abuse, poverty, and low education rates, there is no blame assigned to greater Canadian social structures and practices, rather the individuals experiencing these issues are viewed as being personally deficient and solely responsible for their circumstances.

Context is a third theme within structural violence. Without context, social problems are easily conveyed as individual ones (Farmer, 2004) and subsequently become invisible (Taylor, 2013). But "individuals are not divorced from their context" (p. 259) and their choices are strongly influenced by contextual factors (Taylor). People are part of a bigger social environment and this aspect needs to be considered. Structural violence needs to be contextualized historically, geographically, globally, and economically (Farmer 1996, Farmer 2004). Levels of context are also important to consider, both micro (individuals) and macro (large-scale social structures), and then the two levels must be bridged (Taylor). Without proper contextualization, "the suffering of a group or individual is attributed to individual failings (i.e, poor choices, laziness, deficiency, etc.)" (Taylor, p. 260).

The final common theme of structural violence is the issue of human rights. Human rights allow one to understand and fight back against oppression-based violence and the subsequent constraints (Taylor, 2013). This theme strongly suggests that social structures, like individuals, can impede upon human rights (Taylor) and there needs to be a societal shift of thinking to recognize this violation (Taylor). The poor are the primary victims of human rights violations (Ho, 2007 as cited in Taylor) and structural forces have limited the impoverished' social movement to the point where most of their social

rights and needs are not met (Taylor). It is imperative Canada begins to view its treatment of Indigenous people using a structural human rights lens and this shift in thinking must not limit itself to only concrete examples of suffering (i.e., residential schools) but also more general suffering (such as generational and systemic effects related to the residential school system).

Colonization

The over-representation of Indigenous people within the Canadian justice system exemplifies the legacy of colonization within this nation and when analyzing the over-representation of Indigenous people in the justice system one must consider this over-arching aspect, particularly when utilizing spatial theoretical frameworks.

> The expansion of capitalism through colonialism brought a different society to North America, with its own historical dimensions and specific, cultural, spiritual, social and political and economic norms which tended to contradict those of many Indigenous communities. This society was violently imposed upon Indigenous peoples …and had devastating results for those who were forced to adapt. (Sellers, 2006, p. 5)

Responsibility for past and present laws and policies directly falls in the hands of the Canadian government. Laws such as the Indian Act (enacted in 1876) placed restrictions on Canada's Indigenous peoples including limitations surrounding their ability to conduct commerce, the development of the reserve system, the dispossession of women who married non-Indigenous men, the ban of cultural ceremonies and traditional practices, and no participation in the provincial or federal electoral process (Mosher, C. & Mahon-

Haft, T. 2010). All of these factors contributed to the creation of Canada's First Nations people as an economic and social underclass;

> The original societies and cultures of the First Peoples have been diminished by more than a century of colonization and virtual dislocation of Indigenous traditions, cultures and institutions … the breakdown of Indigenous economies and institutions of self-sufficiency and self-governance (Ovide Mecredi, (2000) as cited in Mosher & Mahon-Haft, p. 246).

One cannot discuss the impacts of colonization on Canada's First Nations people without some discussions surrounding the residential school system. As made clear in the Indian Act,

> The early Canadian government's purpose was to eradicate 'Indians' by causing all First Nations to be entirely assimilated … the state contracted with primarily Catholic but also Protestant churches to run isolated, live-in, mandatory schools for Indigenous children who were literally stole from their homes …(Faith & Near, 2006, p. 281).

The residential school system was created by the Canadian government to force assimilation upon First Nations people and has been referred to as a "manifestation of cultural genocide" (Mosher & Mahon-Haft, 2010, p. 248). Children were removed from their traditional spaces and placed within European constructed and controlled space. Traditionally the education and upbringing of First Nations children took place through participation in community life and interaction with Elders. However, the residential school system eliminated this process and is cited in the literature as being,

> A vital component of the machine of cultural genocide as it worked to strip Aboriginal children of their economic, social, cultural, spiritual, and emotional lives, isolating them from their families and communities while replacing their young and vulnerable identities with confusion and abuse (Sellers, 2006, p. 7).

Although the residential school system no longer operates in Canada, its legacy and social disruption continues to have generational effects (Vlasic, 2006) including such social issues as familial violence, high levels of poverty, family breakdown, lower levels of education, high rates of substance abuse, physical and mental health issues, underemployment, and a lack of economic opportunity. Quite simply, the residential school system had a horrific impact on First Nations people (Vlasic, 2006; Sellers, 2006; Mosher & Mahon-Haft, 2010; Truth and Reconciliation, 2015).

One final point of discussion within this theme: much of the literature reviewed illustrates the present-day legal system, especially prison, as an extension of the residential school system (Faith & Near, 2006) and a space that continues to be racialized. The literature also presents this analogy in discussion of the child welfare system, which also has an over-representation of First Nations people. In the prairie provinces, over 50% of children in the child welfare system are of Indigenous ancestry (Faith & Near). Like residential schools, prison and child welfare separate individuals from traditional community space in processes of forced assimilation (Faith & Near) and ultimately cause division between the individual and their cultural identity and heritage. Sellers highlighted this connection, "It is hard not to make the analogy between residential schools and the high rates of Indigenous children … the conclusion, the

method of segregation of Indigenous people is not one of the past but is alive and well in different forms" (Faith & Near, p. 7).

Sherene Razack's Model of Spatial Theory; Pamela George Case

Sherene Razack's (2000) article, Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George, examined the circumstances surrounding the murder of an Indigenous woman from Saskatchewan particularly as it relates to race, gender and class. On April 17, 1995, in Regina, Saskatchewan, Steven Kummerfield and Alex Ternowetsky, two white, upper-class university students persuaded Pamela George, an Indigenous woman working as a prostitute, to come into their car. Once in the vehicle, they drove Ms. George outside the city, where they assaulted her both sexually and physically, then left her to die. Kummerfield and Ternowetsky were eventually arrested and charged with her murder, however, there was public outrage when they were found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to just six and a half years in jail, a punishment many felt was grossly unjust.

There are several key themes Razack highlighted and which lay the foundation to her theoretical framework surrounding race, space, and the law. Razack argued there is a naturalization of violence within the social spaces of Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous womanhood and prostitution (Razack, 2000). Indigenous women, and within this case study Pamela George specifically, are, "viewed as belonging to a space where violence routinely occurs and to have a body that is routinely violated, while her killers are presumed to be far removed from this zone, the enormity of what was done to her remained largely unacknowledged" (p. 93). Razack also drew attention to the racial element of the Pamela George case, and suggested the Court's ability to "dehumanize"

George derived from "their understanding of her as the (gendered) racial 'Other' whose degradation confirmed their own identities as white" (p. 93). Within this framework it was not simply patriarchal violence but the addition of the boundaries between dominant, "white" society and the degenerate "other" sustains "a colonial social order" (p. 94).

In order to find the point of intersection where this "naturalization" of violence against Indigenous women occurs, Razack "unmapped" the histories and geographies of Pamela George and her murderers. Ms. George stood, "abstracted from history and remained for the Court only an Indigenous woman working as a prostitute in a rough part of town" (p. 94) whereas Kummerfield and Turnowetsky were "just two university students" and were separate from their position within "white settler society" (Razack). Without the necessary historical context, neither side was viewed as being part of the greater Colonial project in with each was embedded (Razack). Razack contended it is vital that Canada's tolerant history surrounding the dispossession and mistreatment of its Indigenous peoples at the hands of white people be considered in the Pamela George case.

Razack expanded upon the physical geography: Ms. George occupied a degenerate space, physically removed from her murderer's worlds. The geographical division between George's world and the world of Kummerfield and Turnowetsky confirms their position in society as white and dominant (Razack, 2000). The physical separation also suggests colonization continues in present day as Indigenous peoples who have migrated from the reserves into urban centres are limited to impoverished, inner city neighborhoods. Dominant society continues to fail at seeing Pamela George and others like her as human beings as Indigenous peoples are, "over-policed and incarcerated at one

of the highest rates in the world, their encounters with white settlers have principally remained encounters in prostitution, policing and the criminal justice system" (p. 95).

Upon reflection, Razack's analysis of spatial justice as it pertains to Pamela George and the relationships between gender, race and space parallels the current state of Indigenous female prisoners in Canada. Firstly, females in conflict with the law are perceived by greater society as "bad"; belonging to criminal space, clearly defined by virtue of legal transgressions and separate from the greater "good" society (Razack, 2000). The structural societal issues that have contributed exponentially to the plight of Indigenous peoples remain, for the most part, unacknowledged and ignored. Indigenous female prisoners are viewed as gendered, racialized others, clearly different then society's ideal, white female. Those who are incarcerated are even further isolated and de-humanized due to their offending behaviour that locates them even further outside the realms of dominant society. Society has a very small chance of ever viewing offenders as human and so their personhood remains invisible (Razack).

The historical and geographical aspects as it relates to Indigenous female prisoners are tightly entwined. Although some (minimal) attention is paid to Canada's colonial history through the Court process (for example, the Gladue ruling) it has proven inadequate in providing context (Parkes, 2012), particularly when one considers the separation and division which still remains between Indigenous peoples and greater "settler society". Razack summarized Canada's history of dispossession of Indigenous people through colonialist practices as beginning with "the violent eviction" of Indigenous people from their lands to reserves ending with present-day racialized urban spaces, removed and viewed separate from "white" suburbia (Razack, 2000). Further to

this, colonialism has generously contributed to many of the pervasive social issues and simultaneous pathways to criminality, including abuse, poverty, and substance abuse (Monture, 2006; Pate, 2006, Faith & Near, 2006). Utilizing Razack's theoretical framework surrounding colonialist practice, one could interpret jail as an eviction of degenerate Indigenous women from urban spaces and as a "cleansing" of the innocent, law-abiding, white zone, perceived as vulnerable at the hands of the racialized "other"; the Indigenous offender (Razack, 2000).

The spatiality factor is obvious; jail is a clearly degenerate space, outside civilized society and containing the dangerous racial other. Saskatchewan prisons provide another method of cordoning off the racial poor (Razack, 2000), and this is clearly demonstrated by the statistical breakdown of Saskatchewan female inmate population that consists primarily of marginalized Indigenous women. In sharp contrast, the "whiteness" of society remains outside and separate from this marked "degenerate" space of prison and the naturalness of white innocence and of Indigenous degeneracy remains firmly in place (Razack).

Sherene Razack's Model of Spatial Theory continued: Freezing Deaths in Saskatchewan

In the article "It Happened More Than Once" Razack (2014) built upon her model of spatial theory in her examination of the inquests made into freezing deaths in Saskatchewan, Canada. Neil Stonechild was a 17-year-old Indigenous boy found frozen to death on the outskirts of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1990. His death was not seriously investigated until a decade later when two other Indigenous males, Rodney Naistus and Lawrence Wagner, were also found frozen in the isolated North-West section of the city. Although denied by police, all three men were last seen in the back of police

cruisers, never to be seen alive again. The suspicious nature of all three deaths and the information that emerged in the inquiry that followed drew attention to "Starlight tours" or the unofficial police practice of "dumping" undesirables at the edge of the city limits as punishment for misbehaviour. In the case of these three incidents, all three men were of Indigenous descent and as the inquiry went on it became obvious there was a long-standing, incredibly tense relationship between policing agencies and Indigenous people, which Razack argued is another example of structural relations within colonial settler society.

There is a historical tension between Indigenous peoples and Canadian governing agencies that first began with "fears of Aboriginal insurrection" (Razack, 2014, p. 56) upon settler arrival. These dynamics continue in present-day as there is "a solidified mistrust of the police by Aboriginal people" (p. 56) related to both over-policing (example: high arrest rates) and under-policing (failure to provide services when needed) of the Indigenous population (Razack). The dyadic relationship also contributes to the common public perception that Indigenous people are criminal, unrespectable citizens who need to be continuously monitored by policing agencies, in particular when they are dispossessed. Furthermore, it is these very pathologies that explain individual circumstances. Within this article, the individual circumstances were bodies frozen in fields but perhaps, for the purpose of this research, one might imagine the circumstance as bodies sitting in jail cells. The unfortunate circumstances are simply the outcome of the pathologies and there is little-to-no thought given to the greater social atmosphere in which they are embedded. "You lay waste to yourself, we have not laid waste to you" (p. 57).

Razack (2014) proposed that as a collective we examine freezing deaths within the racial/spatial economies of which they are a part. Within this racial/spatial economy, there is humanity that is considered "surplus" and this excess matter is "expelled or else violently absorbed through primitive accumulation when is becomes a threat to the liberal social order" (p. 59). Razack argued Indigenous people are marked as surplus humanity and are viewed as having little to no value in the contemporary colonial city (Razack). Starkly put, Razack suggested that, "freezing deaths are the outcome of what is understood as waste disposal" (pg. 59). However, there is a general reluctance to accept this argument. With respect to dumping, many tend to consider freezing deaths as "an unintentional consequence of an admittedly irregular police practice" (p. 59) rather than a direct attempt to eradicate a targeted population. But Razack challenged this thought and reminds us to place dumping within a colonial context. Dumping, "inscribes settlers' claims on the ground and upholds the racial order on which colonialism depends" (p. 60). Pushing Indigenous people to the outskirts of town is a practice born from the settlers' need to protect the colonial city (Razack). One must consider the greater social structures and atmosphere.

One might argue that "dumping" racialized individuals on the isolated outskirts of cities also parallels the over-incarceration rates of this same population. However, incarceration might be at times even more successful in terms of accomplishing "… the annihilative impulse that is the heart of the establishing society" (Razack, 2014, p. 60). Locking away people in prisons is more effective in maintaining colonial borders and upholding the racial order as there is a guarantee of no return, at least for a specified period of time. One can walk back to town; it is far more difficult to walk out of jail.

Furthermore, prison reinforces the common societal belief Indigenous people are degenerate and as such, the status quo continues to exist. Individual pathologies take blame rather than greater social systems and these pathologies are both the cause and effect of one's incarceration. Incarceration is a response necessary to maintain social order and the desired social order is one that maintains the lines of the colonial society. The racialized, surplus, unhuman "other" locked inside a cell is the unspoken ideal for social organization. Racialized individuals are dumped in jail, rather that the North-West side of Saskatoon.

The key point Razack presented within this article is there exists a persistent devaluation of Indigenous life by the greater Canadian society. As the inquests progressed it became clear there was a general indifference to Aboriginal loss of life and the belief that "the Aboriginal body is a body that cannot be murdered" (Razack, 2014, p. 54). It appeared many people did not seem to be particularly bothered by the fact several men had frozen to death or that their journeys that night began in a police vehicle (Razack, 2014). They did not appear to question the shady police practices, they did not appear to look at the bigger picture, and simply attributed, "Aboriginal death into a story of dysfunction or of a 'troublesome' population meeting a predicable end" (p. 54). Again, there is a strong parallel between the freezing deaths of Indigenous people and the over-representation of Indigenous people in custodial facilities. Indigenous men and women sentenced to custody are blamed for their incarceration, there is no thought given to the colonial backdrop in which they are embedded. Jail is simply considered to be, "the final installment in wasted lives" (p. 54).

Victimization

It certainly appears violence is a reality in the lives of many Indigenous women. The results of the 2004 General Society Study Survey indicated 24% of Indigenous women (three times the figure among their non-Indigenous counterparts) experienced spousal violence from either a current or previous marital or common-law partner in a five-year period prior to the survey (2004). Along with the higher rates of spousal violence, Indigenous women were more likely to report more severe forms of violence including being beaten or choked, having a gun or knife used against them, or being sexually assaulted (54% of Indigenous women compared to 37% of non-Indigenous women) (Elizabeth Fry Society, 2011). Violence against women is yet another factor of colonization; prior to the arrival of white settlers many Indigenous communities were matriarchal or semi-matriarchal before the methods of colonization imposed patriarchal, religious, economic, and political institutions upon them (Elizabeth Fry Society).

Traditional Role Loss

One theory explaining the disproportionate incarceration of Indigenous women in correctional institutions surrounds the effects of colonization and assimilation on traditional Indigenous lifestyles resulting in role loss for Indigenous males, social confusion, and subsequent victimization of women (LaPrairie, 1987). LaPrairie theorized that structural processes implemented through the Canadian government have threatened and continue to threaten the traditional way of life for Indigenous peoples and when these traditions have been eroded, traditional roles and statuses for males in particular are lost (LaPrairie). The erosion of traditional roles has led to social disorganization in many Indigenous communities and has generated hostility among family members (LaPrairie).

Destructive behaviours directed against oneself or others are a result of internalized aggression. To work within this framework one must believe people are not violent by nature but "… violent behaviour may result in large measure from the social, political and economic environment in which they live" (p. 134).Within this framework, LaPrairie suggested victimization is a causal factor in Indigenous women's involvement with the justice system.

Poverty

Within LaPrairie's framework it is also essential to recognize the link between victimization and criminality and the deprived social and economic position of Indigenous people in Canada. LaPrairie quoted Scott Clark (1985), "Problems such as damaged resource bases, high rates of unemployment, alcohol abuse, and inadequate medical, housing, and educational facilities all have direct implications for criminal activity" (LaPrairie, 1987, p. 125). Poverty seems to be a key factor (LaPrairie, 1987; Vlasic, 2006; Sellers, 2006; Mosher & Mahon-Haft, 2010). The Elizabeth Fry Society (2011) offered a profile of an "average" Indigenous women prisoner as being "… 27 years old, with a limited education (usually grade nine), is unemployed or underemployed and the sole support mother to two to three children. She is usually unemployed at the time she is arrested" (p. 2). Kim Pate argued the feminization of poverty is a strong, contributing factor to the rising rates of criminalized Indigenous females. "In Canada, we recognize that the now globalized destruction of social safety nets – from social and health services to economic and education standards – is resulting in the increased abandonment of the most vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed" (Pate, 2006, p. 81).

Lack of Personal Narrative

One gap identified throughout the literature is a significant lack of individual stories shedding light on this issue. This is concerning, particularly when one considers the value placed within an Indigenous paradigm on lived experiences. Indigenous systems are experience-based knowledge systems that rely on self-interpretation as the core of reflection (Monture, 2006). Lived experience and knowledge is the basis of Indigenous teachings. To properly gain knowledge of Indigenous women sentenced to custody these are the very people who must share their perspectives. Dr. Sharon L. Acoose's *An Arrow in My Heart: A First Nation Woman's Account of Survival from the Streets to the Height of Academia* (2015) is one example of how sharing lived experience can be a valuable learning tool. In this autobiographical account, Dr. Acoose shares her story and healing journey, offering suggestions to those who are confronting similar challenges. Publications such as this offer tremendous value in providing an improved awareness and better understanding of the struggles faced by Indigenous women.

Strength, Protective Factors, and Resilience

Historically, the majority of research with Indigenous populations has focused on vulnerabilities, problems, and needs, rather than resilience, assets, and strengths (McMahon, Kenyon & Carter, 2012). However, recognizing community assets and the mechanisms of resilience is just as important as identifying its shortcomings and deficiencies. The factors that strengthen communities are also the factors that empower communities to mobilize themselves and create positive change (McMahon et al). Although Indigenous people face many obstacles, members of this population also possess many strengths that have helped them survive racism, forced relocation, and

genocide (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, as cited in Garrett, Parrish, Williams, Grayshield, Portman, Rivera & Maynard, 2013).

There are a number of strengths and protective factors identified within the Indigenous value system. Despite significant diversity within the Indigenous population, there are shared cultural standards and meanings based on common core values that exist across Indigenous groups and that bind Indigenous people together (Garrett et al, 2013). Some of these commonalities include the importance of community contribution, sharing, acceptance, cooperation, harmony and balance, non-interference, extended family, attention to nature, immediacy of time, spirituality, humour, the sacredness of children, and a deep respect for elders (Garrett 1996, 1999a, b; Little Soldier 1985, 1992 as cited in Garrett et al). These attributes have significant potential to foster positive development. Furthermore, these values demonstrate the importance of relationships within Indigenous culture, what Indigenous people believe to be a very sacred connection with the energy of life (Garrett et al), and provides the basis for a traditional Indigenous worldview "that has served as the foundation for strength and resilience in the face of adversity over many generations" (Garrett et al, p. 473).

Indigenous values, beliefs, and culture, have the ability to drive positive change. Despite the numerous challenges they have faced, Indigenous communities are seeking to transcend experiences of trauma and loss by "embracing cultural practices that have sustained Native peoples for centuries and to focus efforts toward renewal through cultural and community-based intervention models" (Spice et al, as cited in Garret et al, 2013, p. 471). Such efforts include wellness centres based upon Indigenous concepts of healing, teaching traditional languages in schools, and culturally-based programming that

promotes Indigenous youth development and community resilience (Garrett et al). Efforts such as these have been successful at helping reduce many of the disparities that plague Indigenous communities (Chandler 2003, as cited in Garrett et al). In Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, examples of these efforts include the ISKEW (Women Helping Women) program, a mental health program centred around Indigenous cultural beliefs that offers counseling, support, referrals, and advocacy to victims and survivors of family violence; the availability of Cree language classes in both the Prince Albert public and separate school system; and PA Outreach Inc.'s Warrior Spirit Walking Program, a gang-exit strategy based on Indigenous worldviews. These examples of culturally-based interventions have all contributed to the promotion of positive development in Indigenous people in the Prince Albert community.

There is a clear connection between a positive cultural identity in Indigenous people and resilience. Resilience is defined as the ability to do well despite adversity (Kirkmayer et al., 2011) and it is inarguable that Indigenous people have faced more than their fair share of hardship, much of which is outlined previously within this literature review. However, studies have found consistent correlations between traditional culture and Indigenous people's mental health, including feelings of self-worth, self-efficacy, connectedness, and purpose (Wexler, 2014), all necessary components of resilience. Although resilience tends to be framed as an individual characteristic, it may also have collective dimensions (Kirkmayer et al., 2011) and at the level of family and/or community, resilience, "may reside in the durability of interpersonal relationships in the extended family and wider social networks of support"(p. 85). In a culture where one`s relationship others and the world around them is vital to one's essence, existence, and

very being, this perspective has particular meaning and value. The more connected you are with your people and the world around you, the more resilient you shall be. The resilience of Indigenous people in itself is a considerable strength.

Research Paradigm and Theoretical Framework

Dominant culture refers to the European, Christian, heterosexist, patriarchal values that shape Canada as a nation (Wilson, 2008). Research paradigms that stem from this described dominant society reflect these values. A common principle among dominant research paradigms is that knowledge is something individualistic in nature; an object which can be taken and owned (Wilson). The concept that knowledge is something one can conquer and lay name to (Wilson) bears a striking and eerie similarity to the colonialist foundation upon which Canada is built. When conducting research with and for Indigenous people, it does not make sense to use a paradigm that stems from oppressive practices. Indigenous research should encompass an Indigenous worldview and be built upon Indigenous values and beliefs. Within an Indigenous paradigm, knowledge is not something one can own, but is viewed as something "belonging to the cosmos of which we are a part and where researchers are only the interpreters of this knowledge" (Wilson, p. 74). Knowledge is something to be shared, and the research path is a shared, collaborative learning opportunity (Wilson).

A research paradigm is made up of an ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology and within dominant research paradigms these four components are viewed separately and in a linear fashion. However, Shawn Wilson described an Indigenous paradigm as being circular, with the four entities being inseparable and blending from one to the next (2008). He related the Indigenous paradigm to the Medicine Wheel, which symbolizes the concept that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Wilson). All parts are equal and a change in one effects change in the others (Wilson). This belief

also captures the importance of relationships within Indigenous research. Wilson described this as,

> Just as the components of the paradigm are related, the components themselves all have to do with relationships. The ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships (Wilson, p. 71).

All things are related and therefore, relevant. In fact, relationality might be considered the defining feature of the Indigenous paradigm. Identity for Indigenous people is grounded in their relationships with others, their relationships with the land, and their relationships with ideas (Wilson). As such, the Indigenous paradigm stems from the fundamental belief knowledge is not something to take, but rather something one builds a relationship with.

In an Indigenous ontology, there may be multiple realities. However, rather than the truth being something "out there" and external, the reality lies within the relationship one has with the truth (Wilson, 2008). What is important is not the object itself but the relationship one has with it (Wilson). Indigenous ontology views reality as relationships or sets of relationships (Wilson). Therefore, "reality is not an object but a process of relationships and Indigenous ontology is actually the equivalent of an Indigenous epistemology" (Wilson, p. 73). *What* we know as truth depends on *how* we know truth and there is neither singular, definite reality nor a singular, defined way *of* knowing truth. As stated above, knowledge is relational. It is from this ontological and epistemological

viewpoint this research path begins, exploring and developing our relationship with the ideas of gender, race and space.

Strategy of Inquiry

According to Creswell (2007), the use of narrative methodology is best employed in research that hopes to capture the detailed story/life experience of an individual. Individual stories need to be told to gain personal experiences (Creswell). To improve understanding of the personal experiences of Saskatchewan women within the justice system, their individual stories, experiences, and perspectives must be shared. Wilson suggested as long as one begins from an Indigenous paradigm, any method can be effective. However, those familiar with Indigenous beliefs may be somewhat confused by the reasons for narrative methodology as provided by Creswell. As described above, the concept of individualism held by dominant culture is completely foreign within the Indigenous belief system. Although oral tradition and story-telling are key elements of Indigenous culture, the traditional narrative methods employed by the dominant research community are very individualistic and, as such, quite contradictory to the Indigenous paradigm. However, to understand this choice, one might revert back to the latter half of the original research question.

Indigenous research methods are based on building relationships and the interconnection between people, ideas, and environment (Wilson, 2008). This research intends to bridge the divide between dominant culture and Indigenous people by creating a different relationship, one based on understanding and respect. In order to start building more positive relationships, we must start getting to know each other as individuals, not as "others". Individual stories may bring faces to the issue and lead to a breaking down of the very walls that maintain the current separation. The research hopes to build relationships in order to lessen the current divide and, in essence, will

deconstruct subjugation through synthesis (Wilson). A narrative approach is inherently complimentary to relationship building and relational accountability, the key threads of Indigenous methods.

At this point I will introduce myself and start creating my own relationship with this research. I was born in Whitehorse, Yukon and moved to Saskatchewan as a young girl with my parents and younger brother. We settled as a family in Fort Qu'Appelle, a small town in southern Saskatchewan, and this is where I would spend my childhood and teenage years. Fort Qu'Appelle, or "the Fort" as it is fondly known, is located in the Qu'Appelle valley, nestled amidst the chain of Calling Lakes that winds through the low, rolling hills. Fort Qu'Appelle is an oasis of sorts, scenic, and a welcome reprieve from the endless flatness of the Saskatchewan prairies. Indigenous people have resided in this area for millennia; in the early days fish and game were plentiful and the coulees and trees offered protection from harsh weather and potential threats. The fur trade arrived sometime around 1850 and the Hudson Bay Company, established headquarters in Fort Qu'Appelle in 1864, causing the area to become a thriving hub of commerce. 10 years later, on September 15, 1874, Fort Qu'Appelle is where Treaty No. 4 was signed and the Cree and Salteaux people entered a permanent contract with Queen Victoria and the Canadian government. In present day, Fort Qu'Appelle and the surrounding area is an eclectic mix of Indigenous people, farmers, cottage folks, and town residents. My family no longer lives there; my parents are divorced and both left the area shortly after I finished high school with my mother moving to Regina, Saskatchewan and my father to North Bay, Ontario. My younger brother headed west to the booming economy of Alberta and I myself would bounce around the province before ending up in Prince

Albert, Saskatchewan, which is where I presently live. However, Fort Qu'Appelle is still the place I call home.

I am not an Indigenous person. I am white. Growing up in a community where there was a strong Indigenous presence, I was aware of some of the challenges and adversities Indigenous people faced. However, I was also quite ignorant to the realities of being Indigenous in Canadian society and the mistreatment that Indigenous people experienced, most often at the hands of white people. But there is one particular moment in my personal history that has stuck with me over the years. I was in grade eight or so, and my softball team had travelled to play in a nearby town that happened to be a very "white", homogenous community. As one might expect from the demographics of Fort Qu'Appelle, there were a number of Indigenous girls on my team. We started to play and, as the game progressed, our team began to pull ahead. As the gap between the two scores increased, some of the parents of the other team grew upset and, as their frustration built, they began hurling insults at our Indigenous players, shouting things like, "Go back to the reserve" and "come on, beat these Indians". As these words echoed across the field, I remember seeing "Amanda", an Indigenous teammate and one of the strongest girls I knew, crying. In that moment I had no idea what to do, I was so surprised and confused by these adults yelling such hurtful, offensive, racist comments – and at children! – I basically just stood there with my mouth hanging open. Thankfully, we had a powerful leader in our coach and she would not allow our team to be attacked. She forfeited the game, piled us in the van, and took us home for ice cream. Now in no way can I pretend that I "understand" the racism and oppression Indigenous people face after that one negative experience. However this incident, along with some other

important moments in my youth, shaped me into a person who is aware that oppression and inequality happens. And I am the type of person who wants to talk about it, *confront* it, rather than ignore it and pretend it does not exist.

I entered early adulthood wanting to find a profession I felt passionate about. I ended up in social work and, although I did not recognize it at the time, it was a perfect fit. I have always loved people and am fascinated by the way others live their lives, especially those whose lives differ from mine. Furthermore, social work was also the perfect fit in terms of my personal values surrounding human rights and equality. After completing my bachelor's degree at the University of Regina, I was uncertain what exactly I wanted to do with my newfound credentials. I ended up accepting a position as a Community Youth Worker in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, a remote town six hours north of where I was living. This is where my career as a social worker began, working for the Ministry of Corrections and Public Safety (now the Ministry of Justice). It was not a move made in error – I fell in love with my job. It is through this line of work, I was able to meet the most interesting people imaginable, people whose personal stories, experiences, and circumstances were unlike anything I had encountered. The differences in human experience touched my very core and taught me so much, both on a personal and professional level. I found myself particularly drawn to the Indigenous women I worked with, many whose lives were very different from my own female existence, and it was their stories that inspired this research. Sherene Razack`s (2000) article, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George", which I read in one of my graduate-level courses, was also very influential with respect to my research path and deserves some recognition at this time. This article caused me to think long and

hard about the continued spatial organization of Indigenous people in Canada and became an added complexity of this research project.

As a child I always loved reading and stories so to me, narrative methodology just made sense. After all, it was "stories" that led to this research. Narrative methodology was also appropriate as this research involves Indigenous people. Narrative inquiry is particularly welcome in Indigenous communities, where story-telling has played, "a central role in the transmission of culture and is widely respected as a source of knowledge, wisdom, and affirmation of identity" (Kirmayer et al, 2011, p. 86). In addition, narrative strategy is helpful when studying the identities and stories told by oppressed and excluded groups in society (Halberstam, 2005; Reissman, 2002 as cited in Larsson & Sjoblom) and narrative research creates an opportunity for creative, collaborative research (Larsson & Sjoblom). Narrative methodology also seemed compatible with social work values as well as my personal convictions surrounding social justice and human rights as it validates the knowledge of ordinary people (Fraser, 2004) and should challenge commonly accepted beliefs, assertions, and assumptions (Jackson, 1998; Worthington, 1996, as cited in Fraser, 2004)

There is a range of definitions of narrative research, often linked to discipline (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). I chose an approach that is common in psychology and sociology and lands somewhere in the middle of the narrative research continuum. Here, personal narrative encompasses long sections of talk – extended accounts of lives in context that develop over the course of an interview (Reissmann & Quinney). I completed interviews then worked from detailed transcripts (although they are not included in this paper) to create narratives with beginnings, middles, and ends. The plot

was organized in a linear fashion with the events connected in meaningful way. I highlighted turning points and epiphanies in each account. And I tried to capture the truth of experiences while paying attention to the context that shaped them. With respect to the analysis, I examined the narratives as a whole, as well as specific utterances. And in addition to the actual interviews, I utilized outside literature to analyze previously recorded data in order to provide context to the individual narrative accounts and to assist with identifying themes, restorying effectively, and enriching the data.

This research is based upon the personal narratives of four Saskatchewan Indigenous women who have been sentenced to custody in an effort to provide context and re-assign meaning to racialized space. The number four was chosen for two reasons. First, four interviews would provide a variety of experiences without losing the quality of the stories or overwhelming the reader. Second, and more importantly, four is an important number within First Nations' culture. Indigenous teachings are based on the balance, harmony, and interconnectedness of all living things anchored by the four great directions and can be visually exemplified through the Medicine Wheel - East, South, West, North (Thunderbird, 2011). Each direction also corresponds to an aspect of humanness: North with the cognitive realm, East with the spiritual, South with the emotional, and West with the physical (Calliou, 1995). The wheel connects these elements and the holistic nature, "exemplifies the Cree sense that heart, spirit, mind, and body are integrated without disconnection" (p. 53). The Medicine Wheel will also be a useful tool moving forward in the analysis.

The women with lived experience or participants I sought were women from Saskatchewan who have served custodial time but who were not incarcerated at the time

of the interview. There are two main reasons why I chose to interview this population rather than serving women prisoners. First, women prisoners are an oppressed group by virtue of their incarceration. The Indigenous paradigm views research as being an equal exchange of information (Wilson, 2008). The value of equality would be impossible to capture when one researcher (myself) had freedoms and differential treatment than the other researchers involved in this project (the women prisoners). Building further along this line of thought, Indigenous research is based upon the formulation of relationships (Wilson). I believed that building relationships with the participants would be extremely difficult when clearly I was not one of them, in terms of the individual rights and freedoms that were available to me. Furthermore I am a white woman, and there is a visible difference and a privilege associated with the colour of my skin. I did not want to perpetuate any further dynamics of power then with what I already present. Second, I believe it is difficult for a person to have clear perspective on their personal situation while entrapped in the very throes of their oppression. A serving prisoner may not have the same ability to fully reflect on this experience when still confined to a cell. Indigenous methodology embraces a holistic approach and upon release from custody a woman may have a more cyclical and complete view of that experience of incarceration. And again, I did not want to perpetuate any further dynamics of power and oppression that might already present by virtue of the situation.

In terms of securing participants; my research design utilized a key informant, then used a snowball method. The snowball strategy of inquiry is an extremely appropriate method within the Indigenous paradigm as it occurs through the naturalization of relationships. There is a pre-existing relationship that can connect us all

and hopefully establish a partnership in this quest for knowledge. The key informant identified for this research was an Elder, a highly respected person within the Indigenous community and someone recognized for being a leader and knowledge-holder. The Elder/key informant identified was familiar with the women prisoner community and was known to me through an advisor on my research committee, again utilizing an Indigenous approach by building upon pre-existing relationships. And the Elder/key informant was also a person who had experienced incarceration first-hand, bringing true understanding and lived experience to the key informant position. As the research project grew, it became very important to me the Elder's role not be limited to the key informant. As noted above, the Elder is a leader, a knowledge-holder, someone with infinite wisdom. Recognizing these attributes and the fact I am building my relationship with something far bigger than me, I asked the Elder to guide the research project and offer counsel along the way. The Elder agreed and became a strong presence within this project.

The Elder/key informant was asked to contact prospective participant initially. If the participant was interested in participating, the Elder/key informant then provided me with the necessary contact information to arrange for an interview or made arrangements with the participant to schedule an interview time. Full disclosure was given to the participants surrounding the purpose of the study, who would have access to the information, and the awareness one could withdraw their participation at any time. Ultimately the participant had the power to decide whether or not to contribute to this study.

The procedure for data collecting was in-person or telephone interviews conducted by the researcher at times convenient for the participant. It was estimated the

interview could be completed in two hours and they were recorded using audio recording methods. This was explained during the initial disclosure and was also documented within the written consent form (See Appendix A). Participants were made aware they had the right to decline having their interviews recorded if uncomfortable with this data collection method. The research participants had the option of stating the need for a break during the interview or have the interview broken into more than one session if she found this beneficial. Participant consent forms were utilized in order to document consent in writing. However, the participant also had the option to give verbal consent and I would sign on her behalf as there is often discomfort within Indigenous culture in signing documents.

In order to protect the participants' right to anonymity, the participant had the option to select her own pseudonym and either this alias or her first initial was used throughout the findings, analysis, and dissemination. In terms of confidentiality, I stored all hard data in a locked cabinet at the University of Regina. No one had access to this locked cabinet except for myself and my thesis advisor. The electronic data was stored on my personal computer, which no one has access to without a password. All data will be destroyed five years following completion of the project. This was explained verbally to the participant during the initial explanation of the project and was also captured in written documentation within the consent form.

In terms of interpreting/reviewing the data, this research further utilized an Indigenous approach. Indigenous learning is a collaborative process and recognizes researcher and participants as contributing equally to learning. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher planned a group interview with all participants and the

Elder/key informant to discuss findings, identify themes, and seek input that would provide direction for the final analysis. The participants were included throughout the project; in the data collection, in the analysis, and in the dissemination.

Ethical Considerations

Axiology refers to the ethics and morals that guide the research process. An Indigenous axiology is built upon the concept of relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). What is important is the fulfilling of roles and obligations in the research relationship – being accountable to your relations (Wilson). The researcher is a part of the research, inseparable from the subject, and the knowledge the researcher gains must be respectful of the relationships established in the process of discovery (Wilson). Respect, reciprocity, and responsibility are key features in any healthy relationship (Weber-Pillwax as cited in Wilson) and were, I believe, the cornerstone values in the foundation of this research. I held myself accountable to the research and reflected upon it constantly. I asked myself if the research was helping to build healthy relationships between myself, the participants, and the information. I asked myself if I was contributing in a meaningful way to the relationship. And I asked myself if I was being accountable by fulfilling my role and obligations to the other researchers, to the topic, and to all of my relations (Wilson).

Research has acquired a negative connotation amongst Indigenous people due to a history of misused research practices between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous researchers (Wilson, 2001). As such, careful thought and consideration was given to this area as this research project specifically addresses Indigenous people. I am aware my ethnicity as a non-Indigenous person may have created a visible barrier in terms of initially establishing trust and rapport, two crucial elements in collecting valuable qualitative data. I am hopeful this potential mistrust was avoided or at least reduced through the introduction to participants by the key informant, a trusted source. It was a

way of incorporating self-location, a fundamental aspect of Indigenous methodology, as it created a method of relation and was a way for me to place myself within a familiar context and provide an understanding of who I am. Further to this, utilizing an Indigenous framework placed me, as a researcher, alongside fellow researchers, rather than in a researcher/participant dyad. We were equal learners in this process and neither is placed higher than the other in the quest for knowledge.

There was also significant consideration given in terms of this research and Indigenous people as a collective. With respect to community engagement, the community being engaged is a community of interest as they are Indigenous women who share a common experience. These participants were not identified as belonging to a specific community, nor did their participation in this study impact the welfare of a specified community. The key informant for this project was an Elder, a recognized and trusted leader within this informal community, which is respectful of relevant customs and codes surrounding leadership and knowledge-holding within Indigenous culture. This research fully recognizes this person's leadership, wisdom, and skills, particularly as the Elder held a key role of coordinating participant involvement. In addition, the Elder offered guidance, feedback, and prayer along the research path, from the very beginnings to the completed project.

Of significant concern to this researcher, was the possibility of causing emotional harm to the participants over this process of learning. The participants were asked to share personal details of their lives, histories often mired with pain and trauma. This researcher was guided by the principles described above surrounding respect, reciprocity, and responsibility in this research relationship. To further safe-guard, participants were

offered access to support services should any sensitive data have been disrupted. Immediately following the interview, the researcher debriefed with the participant to assess mental/emotional well-being. Had the participant reported any signs of personal trauma, she would have been immediately referred to an appropriate trained professional in their community. Within two weeks of the completed interview, the participant was contacted by the researcher for a follow-up discussion and review of present circumstances.

Finally, an ethical concern I had to address is who is the research for? Why am I performing this research? What is the purpose? Knowledge is viewed within Indigenous culture as a "gift"; it is special and the exchange of knowledge between two entities is very significant. Within the Indigenous paradigm system I understand research is a collaborative effort in the sense the information is meant to be *shared* in a mutual manner. The participants gave me the gift of their stories and I have an obligation to use this knowledge in a useful, meaningful way that will benefit others, particularly those experiencing the very issues this research touches upon. I believe the purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of Indigenous women sentenced to custody in order to re-assign meaning to this racialized space. I hope this research changes the way society views and engages with Indigenous women, particularly those of marginalized status. In addition, I hope this research gives back to the participants by a sense of empowerment through participation in the process of change.

When considering an appropriate method of dissemination for this research, my utmost concern was to share the findings in a manner both meaningful and beneficial for

the participants involved. The participants all noted part of the reason they shared their stories with me was in the hope it might change lives for other women and this sentiment is what drove the dissemination process. I applied to, and was accepted, to present this research at the 2015 Sallows Fry Conference, A Canadian Crisis: Criminalization & Imprisonment of Indigenous Women & Those with Disabling Mental Health Issues. Presenting at this conference allowed me the opportunity to share this research with experts and activists who are invested in improving the lives of criminalized and oppressed women. It was a way for the research to "give back" to the very community that inspired it. Furthermore this conference was held in Saskatchewan, the geographical area of this study, and this too seemed particularly appropriate. I did not present this research alone, a participant presented alongside me and this was very meaningful to me.

In the future I would like to present my research to the Ministry of Justice as it is this faction of the Saskatchewan government responsible for those Saskatchewan residents who are in conflict with the law and it is hoped the findings of this research may influence some change in their current programming practices. I would be interested in presenting this research at other forums that promote the well-being of criminalized and oppressed women, such as the conference described above. Finally, I would like publication in an academic journal of reputable standing. This knowledge was not meant to stay with me, it was meant to be shared.

Limitations

Like any project, there are some potential limitations surrounding this research. The narrative is from Indigenous women but is presented by a non-Indigenous woman. It is hoped this enriched the overall study by providing a greater understanding and "building a bridge" so to speak but there may have been some level of mistrust among the participants based on the history of research conducted by non-Indigenous researchers within Indigenous communities. There also may have been some limitations surrounding my ability to truly capture Indigenous women's perspectives without the shared common experience. I made every effort to circumvent this by being open with who I am and why I was performing this research. I was open with personal information (again reflective of the Indigenous paradigm). I did this to create a dialogue and in effort to create a reciprocal working relationship between researchers, another value espoused within Indigenous research methods. In sharing the research findings, I minimized my own interpretations of the data by maximizing the use of participants' verbatim responses. The use of numerous quotations or "thick descriptions" is also important because of its connection to validity (Larsson & Sjoblom, 2009).

There were some unanticipated limitations with respect to the original research design. Initially, I intended to use the Elder as the key informant, and then segue into the snowball method. However there were participant recruitment issues and the key informant role was shifted from the Elder to the Elizabeth Fry Society. However, this writer believes this shift remained true to the integrity of the original research design. The Elizabeth Fry Society, a long-time advocate for the rights of incarcerated women, is an organization whose programs and services are voluntary and this would suggest

women accessing the services know/trust the non-profit group. There were no unequitable power dynamics that might influence a participant's choice to be involved. The snowball technique and the idea of building upon pre-existing relationships, which is key to Indigenous research, was still being utilized and all additional steps in terms of participant recruitment held true to the original design. Further to this, the Elder was supportive of this re-allocation of duty and viewed the Elizabeth Fry Society as an appropriate resource.

Another complication arose in terms of the analysis of the data. Indigenous learning is a collaborative process and recognizes researcher and participants as contributing equally to learning. Upon completion of the interviews, I intended to have a group interview with all participants and the Elder to discuss findings, identify themes, and seek input which will provide direction for the final analysis. However, due to the key informant role shifting, the participants became too diverse geographically for this to be a reality. I made amends by sending each participant a copy of her "story" to review to ensure I captured her perspective appropriately. I also included an attached copy of the themes I had identified and encouraged the participants to respond with their input to be included in the final analysis. Three participants responded they were satisfied with the way their stories were told and with the themes that had been captured. One participant did not respond. The Elder and I were able to meet together in person to review the themes and she was able to give me her feedback and suggestions directly. As mentioned previously, one of the participants was able to assist in the dissemination of this research.

The change in research design also impacted the terminology used. Originally, I wanted to refer to the women involved in this study as co-researchers, rather than

participants. Indigenous ways of knowing are based upon relationships and Indigenous research is based upon building relationships with ideas. All involved are learning and growing as a result of exploring their relationship(s) with the topic (Wilson, 2008). I envisioned this research as being a truly collaborative effort, with participants acting as equal partners throughout, and I wanted to pay recognition to this partnership by using a word that suggested such equitable relations. However, due to the participant recruitment issues and subsequent geographical challenges highlighted above, this project did not achieve the level of collaboration I had originally hoped for, and, in turn, the term co-researcher did not accurately capture the relationship(s) we shared.

Findings

At some point in my early childhood I fell in love with reading. I have always loved books and a good story has always captured my attention. For Indigenous people, story-telling is both a gift and a very old custom, sanctioned by the people (Wilson& Fourhorns, 2011) and there is a difference between stories told for entertainment and stories told for teaching (Wilson &Fourhorns). The stories before you are for teaching. Now with that minimal preamble, let us get out of the way and allow the stories to simply speak for themselves. Let us start building our relationship with this knowledge.

R.'s Story

R. was born on a reserve in rural Saskatchewan. At the age of six years, R. and her four-year-old brother were sent to residential school where she would spend the next six years of her life. R.'s experiences in residential school were not positive. When the children spoke their traditional languages their mouths were washed with soap. If a child was perceived as being disrespectful or if they did not comply with the rules they would have their ears yanked, be struck with rulers, or be strapped. The dormitories were like army barracks, rows of steel bunk beds that were cold and inhospitable, and felt as far from home as one could get. Children were told if they did not change their Indian ways they would go to hell, a warning that brought terror to their impressionable minds. R. was separated from her brother and had virtually no contact with him or her parents for the duration of her residency, erasing any feelings of closeness the family once shared. R. and her brother stayed at the residential school year-round; family members did not visit and they were not sent home for summer holidays.

At 12 years of age, R. and her brother were finally taken home by their father. Her parents had by then separated and R. and her brother were shuttled back and forth between her parents' and other relatives' homes. The return home was a challenge. R.'s parents, both residential school survivors, lacked parenting skills and they did not know how to show their children love. There were no hugs or open demonstrations of affection and this would be a trait R. would eventually pass down to her future children. The house was void of communication and no one could even mouth the words "I love you". R.'s own time in residential school had destroyed her bond with her parents and R. did not know who to turn to for support or how to talk about the painful feelings she had inside from her traumatic residential school experiences. R. had lost her Cree language, further isolating her from her family, and she never really talked to her parents about anything important or meaningful. R.'s father was an alcoholic and would drink heavily whenever he was not working. R.'s mother also drank fairly frequently, likely to cope with her own painful past, and she had a string of young boyfriends, one who sexually abused R. when she was 14-years-old. R. knew nothing about the relations between man and woman and it was a terrifying encounter. And, true to the nature of the household, following the incident no one spoke about it, the police were not contacted, and everyone went about their day to day lives, refusing to acknowledge R.'s experience. R. was traumatized by this ordeal and lost all trust in men. And R. was a lonely girl, lost in her own life.

When R. was 15, her mother was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was sent to a sanatorium for medical treatment. Indian Affairs told R.'s mother she would need to find homes for her children as she could be away for several years. R.'s brother, now 13,

went out working and her younger half-siblings were placed with various extended family members. R.'s options were few to none; she had lost contact with her father whose alcoholism had become all-consuming and there was no other family member willing to take her in. R. mother's "gave" her 15-year-old daughter to an older man from a neighboring town, a fairly common practice at this time in R.'s community for women who ended up in the circumstances similar to hers. R. was terrified. She did not want to go and the unwanted sexual experience of her very recent past continued to haunt and torment her. However, she had no choice. R. would spend the next five years of her life with this man and he would become the father of her two sons.

R.'s feelings of abject loneliness would continue as she resigned herself to her new life. There was no love, no communication, no *nothing* between R. and her common-law partner. R. spent her days alone, watching her boys while their father went off to work during the week then off to drink on the weekends. One day as her partner prepared to leave the home, he told R. he had made an appointment for her with a doctor but he did not provide any further details other than the time and place. By this time R. knew better than to ask questions so she simply attended the appointment as directed. R. was at first surprised when the doctor administered a full physical then shocked when he told her she had contracted a venereal disease. The doctor told R. the disease was transmitted sexually and either she or her partner was being unfaithful. In that moment R., who never left the family home, learned her partner was sleeping with other women. R. did not even feel a hint of anger or jealousy she was so far detached from her emotions. R. returned home and faced her partner, neither mentioning the issue which now lay openly between them. Now R. not only felt lonely but also dirty and worthless.

After one week of silence R. could not take it any longer. She left her sons with their father and went back to her reserve, intending to sort through her confusion and hurt. R. was not there long when she met up with her sister-in-law who was visiting. R. would end up accompanying this sister-in-law back to a large urban centre in Alberta where R. quickly found out her sister-in-law was surviving by working on the streets. R. was 19 years old, innocent to the ways the streets worked, but without the skills to survive any other way. The contrast between reserve and city life was overwhelming and R. knew no one but her sister-in-law who soon left R. on the street in the downtown district. A woman walking by noticed R., crying and alone, and took her home for the night, offering R. food and shelter. The following day, R. and this woman searched the downtown streets until they found her sister-in-law. R. was scared, homesick, and broke, and the feelings of loneliness which had been a steady undercurrent her entire life continued to pervade. But R.'s sister-in-law knew a way to make R. feel better. She brought R. to a small, dark bar and R. had her first taste of alcohol. After two bottles of beer, R. started feeling a bit better and she was able to numb the feelings addling her soul. Under her sister-in-law's tutelage R. soon learned how to survive in the streets and she would stay in this city for some time.

Early on, R. occasionally returned to Saskatchewan to visit family and friends and during one of those trips R. saw her mother whom she had not seen in several years. The encounter was cold. So much time had elapsed R. had forgotten her mother's face and the feelings which rolled over R. were intense. R. felt her mother had abandoned her, first to residential schools then to the miserable common-law partnership R. was forced into. R. did not feel any connection to this person who was supposed to be her mother; there was

no bond to speak of. R. felt like she had lost her mother long ago and she was not prepared to attempt to rebuild this relationship. Following this meeting, R. would return to Alberta and the new life she had created under the bright city lights, not to return in any capacity for approximately eight years.

In Alberta, R. continued with alcohol use and soon graduated to using drugs, specifically pills. R. liked the feeling she got from substances, or rather, the lack thereof. She did not have to think about anyone, she did not have to think of home, and her heart and mind went numb. R. liked how drugs shut down her capacity to think and feel. R.'s alcohol use became more frequent and the drugs became heavier. Eventually she began traveling, from coast to coast, from province to province, from community to community, becoming further lost in her addiction, her pain, and who she was as a person.

In 1969, R. ended up in jail for the first time and her incarceration was the result of R. not having a single dollar in her pocket. At this time, if a person was found to be in a commercial area with no money on their person they could be arrested, charged with vagrancy, and subsequently jailed. R., her pockets empty, was arrested downtown and went to jail for seven days. This incident would mark the beginning of R.'s criminal record and was the first taste R. had of incarceration. R. began not only drifting about the country but also drifting in and out of custody, gradually building a record comprised of more serious offences. R. found she did not mind jail. Like drugs, jail was an escape from reality, a way for her to forget the outside world and the pain of her past. R. lost contact with her family, her community, and her culture. R. did not care about life; she was simply surviving, either in the streets or in jail.

In order to survive, particularly in the streets, one must learn to stand up for oneself and R. learned very early on how to defend herself. R. knew, if threatened, one could never back down because, once this happened, you would be deemed an easy target and would become vulnerable to various abuses of others living the same desperate lifestyle. Despite her petite stature, R. would never refuse a fight and became known for being fast and extremely tough. She "did not give a fuck"; if you were trying to mess with her, she would take you down and use any means she had. R.'s criminal record reflected the increasingly violent space she occupied and it became peppered with convictions of assaults in varying degrees. R. started spending longer periods incarcerated and it was not long before she had graduated to the federal system. Life passed by in this manner for R. literally for decades, spending her 20s, 30s, 40s and part of her 50s in and out of jail.

In 1998, R. received what would be her final charge. She was charged with attempted murder for stabbing a woman during a rare trip home to Saskatchewan to visit family. R. sat in police cells shaking with the realization she had nearly killed someone, something she had never imagined she would do, and this knowledge "scared the hell" out of her. She knew she was going away and this time for a very long time. And R. knew her life had spiraled far beyond her control. As she sat in cells R. began praying, asking whatever God was up there to help. She did not want to drink anymore, she did not want to use drugs anymore and she did not want to return to the streets. R. wanted out of the only life she had ever known.

R. knew there was a lot of incriminating evidence gathered against her and so she decided to enter a guilty plea. Her lawyer was able to have the original charge pled down

from attempted murder to aggravated assault and he negotiated for a sentence of four years. Once again R. would return to the federal system. However, this period of incarceration was a significant departure from times past. Until midway through the 1990's, the Kingston Penitentiary for Women in Ontario was the lone federal prison in Canada for women and R's previous federal sentences had all been served at this institution. In 1995 other federal institutes for women prisoners began opening and the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan opened its doors for the first time. This was Correctional Services Canada's first healing lodge and R. would serve 18 months of her federal sentence within the walls of this facility. R. arrived at the Healing Lodge determined that this was it; she was leaving behind the life she had been living. She sincerely wanted to change, from the bottom of her heart. And she was willing to do whatever it took.

In residential school R. had been told, that as a First Nations person, she was a pagan, the devil, a sinful being…and all these negative beliefs had become ingrained in her mind as truth. She had spent her life hating herself. She had spent her life hating being an Indian. And she had spent her life trying to walk the white road because she was ashamed of whom she was ... and she had become lost. But this all changed for R. at the Healing Lodge. It was here R. finally began learning about her culture; the practices, the beliefs, the ceremonies. The Elders taught R. not to fear the traditional teachings, not to be mistrustful of the medicines, and, most importantly, that being a First Nations person does not make you inherently *bad*. R. learned about the Creator, how to smudge, how to sweat, and how to pray. She opened her heart to the Elders and she absorbed their teachings. She began to embrace her culture and she learned to love the

person she was. At the Healing Lodge R. finally found peace in her heart. An Elder teacher told her to get back on her own road, a red road, a First Nations road. And she knew as long as she stayed on this road, she would never get lost.

It has been 15 years since R. left the Healing Lodge and she has been sober and crime-free since this time. She is now an Elder in a community in central Saskatchewan and she continues to practice her traditional teachings. R. truly believes the key to her success was finding her own road and she uses this analogy frequently when sharing her knowledge. R. is not a white person, she is an Indigenous woman, and it is the red, Indigenous road she is meant to walk.

C.'s Story

C. does not know her biological family, nor the community from which she hails. She was adopted at birth into an upper middle-class family in urban South central Saskatchewan. C. had, what appeared to be by all accounts, a typical childhood. She achieved good grades at what would be considered a "good" school, she was enrolled in dance classes, and she played a variety of sports. However, there were some secrets lurking beneath the surface. Although they were caring, C.'s adoptive parents were not demonstrative in their love for C. They never told her they loved her, never gave her hugs or kisses. No one talked about how they felt and it was a cold, austere home. At the age of four years, C. had her first sexual experience, one which clearly was not by her choice. And, true to form, the incident was not discussed. This would have a significant impact on C.'s childhood. C. became an angry, volatile child, prone to eruptions of rage, and she began stealing anything she could get her hands on. Always aware she had been adopted, at age 11, C. learned the specific circumstances of her birth; C. was a product of

rape. C. did not know where she belonged, she did not know where she fit in, and she felt dirty.

As she grew older, C.'s behaviour became even more out of control. She began smoking marijuana and her outbursts became increasingly violent. At age 13, during one such outburst, she pulled out a knife and held it to her mother's throat. Following this episode, C. was placed at a government-run group home. This was C.'s first encounter with "the system" and it was a grating, eye-opening experience. C. quickly vowed she would change her ways and she was returned to her family. However, within days C. had returned to stealing, using marijuana, and acting out at home. C. continued to be angry. She did not know how to cope with the trauma of her sexual assault or the confusing, conflictual feelings associated with her birth and subsequent adoption.

Around the age of 13 years, C. met who would be the father of her future children and, as things continued to break down with her adoptive family, she came to view her boyfriend's family as her own. C. finally had a sense of belonging and felt as if she fit in. Unfortunately, this young man and his relatives were heavily entrenched in gang activity, drugs, and crime. And as C.'s involvement with this man became more serious, so did her involvement with this sort of lifestyle. C. began actively participating in various gang activities, mainly running drugs, and she was pulling further and further away from her adoptive family. She wanted nothing to do with them and any attempts her parents made to reach out to her, C. would quickly and angrily rebuff their efforts. C. felt her parents did not know her, did not understand her, and she was unwilling to listen to their pleas for her to return.

At age 15, C. became pregnant with her first child and it was a traumatic pregnancy. During C.'s pregnancy the father of her baby stabbed her. C. and the baby would both survive and shortly after her daughter's birth, C.'s boyfriend fired a gun at her, the bullet just narrowly missing her head. Despite the extreme violence, C. stayed. Her newfound kin gave C. a sense of belonging she had been searching for her whole life and, despite the dysfunction, C. felt love, understanding, and support. C. would have a second child with this man and would remain living in this household until the age of 19 years when the relationship finally ended. After leaving this family, C. became involved with the man she would end up marrying and who would father her third child. However this new relationship did not bring love and compassion to C.'s life. C.'s husband was an alcoholic, an addict, and he inflicted horrific abuse upon C. He told C. she was nothing, he beat her senseless, raped her repeatedly, and told her she should kill herself.

Throughout this period in her life, C. attended school regularly and she did well in her classes. C. enjoyed school and found it to be somewhat of an escape from the harsh realities of her life. C. finished grade 12, then achieved several post-secondary diplomas, including certificates in Child and Youth Care, Education Assistance, and Office Education. C. also maintained steady employment at a variety of agencies, which included a juvenile detention facility and several emergency shelters for women and children escaping abusive relationships. To the outside world, C. appeared to have her life in order but after her shifts at work she would return home where she was beaten and raped. And C. continued to sell drugs - often to the very sort of people she was attempting to help through her daily work.

C. never fully cut ties with her ex-boyfriend's family whom she had turned to in her teenage years. As her marriage fell apart, she felt she had only two choices; stay with the man who would surely kill her one day or return to her chosen family and commit fully to gang life. C. was worried for her young children who were witnessing terrible violence in their home and she felt she had nowhere else to turn, having lost contact with her adoptive family. Seeking outside help was not an option; the belief one must always remain silent was a mentality engrained in C. since her childhood, following the sexual assault committed against her 4-year-old self. And so, C. took one final beating at the hands of her husband then threw herself whole-heartedly back into thug life. C. began selling drugs for the gang and in return the gang offered her support and security. Until this point, C.'s drug use had been limited to marijuana and some minor dabbling, but, at age 29, a doctor provided her with a prescription for OxyContin. After swallowing her first pill, numbness washed over C., dulling all of the inner turmoil she had been trying to suppress for so many years. C. was relieved; she finally had a way to push away her thoughts and feelings and pain. She had discovered a true escape. At the time C. was employed by a public school system and she began selling drugs out the back door of the school where she worked, getting high on Oxy in the school bathrooms, and then returning to the gang at night.

C. finally felt good at something; she was good at selling dope, doing crime, and being a gangster. And as both her addiction and her street credibility rose, so did the potential for harm to herself. C. was living a dangerous lifestyle, and one which for many would be unfathomable. Her addiction would soon overtake her and she escalated from taking pills to using needles. Her weight dwindled to 96 pounds. She began

prostituting to support her habit. There were a number of times where C. would get clean, including a 23-month period in 2010 where she left the gang life altogether and moved several thousand kilometers away to a coastal province. However, things eventually broke down and C. eventually returned to Saskatchewan, returned to gang life, and returned to heavy drug use. Horrible happenings became fact of life. Memories from C.'s thirties include being drugged to unconsciousness, being beaten, being robbed, being raped, and being strangled to her last breath. C. watched as her daughter followed in her footsteps and also became an active gang member, occasionally prostituting alongside her mother. Contact with her adoptive family was sporadic and her adoptive parents were in denial at how far gone their daughter was. And in addition to the chronic drug use, C.'s lifestyle was also becoming increasingly criminal. There soon was no criminal act in which C. had not committed, played a part in, or personally witnessed, including bank robbery, murder, and selling drugs to a friend who later killed her young child in a drug-induced psychosis.

C. somehow managed to avoid incurring any criminal charges until she was arrested at the age 37 years for having possession of a 22 caliber revolver and 1000 rounds of ammunition. C. was so high on Oxy at the time she does not remember why she had the shotgun or ammo, or how she had come to have these items in her possession. The arrest resulted in nine charges, including gun trafficking, but due to her lack of criminal history C. was released on bail until her next Court hearing. However, C.'s addiction continued to consume her and further to this she believed she could continue with her ways and get away with crime. It was not long before C. was arrested again on new charges. This time while remanded in custody, C. was surrounded by familiar faces,

as her ex-boyfriend's mother was on one range and C.'s daughter was on another. C. realized the life she was living was a far cry from the life she had once envisioned and she told herself something would have to change.

While awaiting her Court appearance, C. began praying. She did not want to live this life anymore and she reached out to a higher power for guidance. C. felt the urge to get honest with herself and, in order to truly do that, something told her she needed to enter guilty pleas. And so she did. At the time of her sentencing, C. had incurred a total of 33 charges and she pled guilty to every single one. Her lawyer was dismayed by her decision to do so, however, C. was firm. This was something she needed to do. In the fall of 2013, at age 37, C. received her first sentence, a 30-month federal prison term to be run concurrently with a 23-month sentence. The Edmonton Institute for Women was at capacity so C. was sent to the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan to begin serving her custodial time.

C. struggled to fit upon her arrival. She felt discriminated against by other Indigenous women who taunted her for having fair skin. She reached out to her adoptive family, calling them for the first time in years, and the first words she heard were "what the fuck do you want" with the conversation ending "well you are going to have to prove yourself". Once again, C. felt there was nowhere she belonged. C. fell into the repetitive routine of custody, wondering when she would ever feel right in her own skin, and wondering when she would ever find the space in life where she was meant to be.

Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge is unlike other women's custodial centres. There are few televisions and the ones available to the women prisoners only have two channels. The gym is the size of a small room. There are no beauty products available in

the canteen. The guards wear hoodies and jeans, there are no jangling keys, and everyone within the walls refers to one another on a first name basis. The warden brings her young granddaughter to work and there is somewhat of a family-feel to the centre, a completely foreign feeling in most prisons. And the focus of Okimiaw Ochi Healing Lodge, as the name might suggest, is on healing and is based on primarily on Indigenous beliefs. All programming is Elder-assisted and there are more Elders available than at other facilities. Ceremonies, such as sweats, happen frequently. There is a therapeutic horse program, which has many benefits. Women are encouraged to open up and talk to confront the unresolved pain of their past, many doing so for the first time.

In custody there are two distinct groups; prisoners who want to simply do their time and prisoners who want to work on bettering themselves. Initially, C. found herself in the first group. However, as time went on, her perspective began to shift. She did not like being in jail, she did not ever want to return, and, further to this, she truly wanted to change. The words "prove yourself" echoed in her mind, from that first telephone conversation with her mother and in the letters that followed, which expressed the same sentiment. C. began engaging in the programming, participating in the cultural activities, and she found herself talking about some of the incredibly painful and bewildering things she had experienced throughout her lifetime. C. disclosed everything; every secret she kept, everything she had suppressed, and the more she talked, the lighter she felt. She found herself spending every free minute with the Elders and she started to heal.

In the summer of 2014, C. received parole. Rather than returning to the city where she grew up, C. moved to a halfway house in another urban location, several hours away. C. knew if she went back to where she had grown up it would be harder to avoid

her past and C. was determined her life was going to very different from how it looked before. C. was going to be sober. She was not going to spend time with former gang associates. She was going to abide by the rules of the halfway house. She was going to reach out for supports. And she was going to continue talking. She talked to her parole officer, she talked to counselors, she talked to other women going through the same thing, and she talked to the Elders and staff at Okimaw whom she called on a regular basis.

This brings us to present day. C. continues to live in at the halfway house, away from her home city. She has successfully avoided the gang life thus far and she is maintaining her sobriety. She has found employment that she enjoys and she has begun doing some public speaking engagements about the risks of living the thug life. However, there are days where life feels like a struggle. C. is not used to feeling good about herself and this in itself is challenging. And there are times where C. wants to give up. In September 2014, C. found herself on the steps of a drug house where some of her former associates were, asking for drugs. For whatever reason, on that particular day, C. felt like succumbing to her daily challenges and throwing away her sobriety and her months of hard work. However C.'s former associates finally did something good for C.; they refused her drugs and told her to leave, telling her she had come too far to fall back now. C. returned to the halfway house, realizing how close she had come to throwing it all away and with a renewed determination to continue on the positive path she had found.

C. is currently rebuilding the damaged relationships she shares with her family. In September 2014 she saw her children for the first time in two years. Growing up, the

familial roles were often reversed, with C.'s children acting more like a parent than their gangster mother who later became lost in the throes of her addiction. Her children have long felt abandoned by their mother, first to the gang life, then addictions, then jail. At present time, C.'s daughter is continues to be actively involved in gangs. C.'s youngest son, hurt time and again by his mother's actions, is distrustful and C. still stings from the time he called her "a fucking Indian hooker" after he witnessed C. leaving a house to do a deal. C. also has three grandchildren whom she is getting to know and with whom she wants to build a healthy relationship.

C. is repairing the relationship with her adoptive family as well. C. is finally talking with her parents and is finally opening up to them after years of keeping silent. C. is also coming to terms with understanding her adoptive mother has her own demons that prevented her from being the kind of mother C. needed as a child. C.'s mother suffered through an abusive childhood and as a mother, she did not know how to give C. the hugs and kisses she craved. In September 2014, while visiting C. heard the words "I love you" from her mother for the very first time. After she was dropped off, C. felt like she was floating as she walked up the steps to the halfway house. C.is finally feeling the acceptance from her adoptive family she has been looking for her whole life.

C. is eligible for full parole in January 2015 but she has chosen to remain at the halfway house until June 2015, the end of her sentence. C. has learned to say things like "I love you", "I thank you", "I'm sorry", "I forgive you", "I'm hurt" and "I need help". And she has learned it is ok to seek out help when she needs. Overall, life these days feels pretty good. C. is coming to terms with who she is as a person and she is starting to find self-acceptance.

K's Story

K. is a 22-year-old woman originally from a reserve in western Saskatchewan, not far from the Alberta border. She was born to a mother addicted to drugs and alcohol and who was deemed unfit to care for K., her older sister, or a third daughter who followed. K. was apprehended by the Ministry of Social Services at two months of age and spent the remainder of her childhood in foster placements, never to return to her mother's care.

K.'s experiences in the foster care system were not positive. K. changed foster placements frequently, upwards of 30 times, by the age of 12 years. In one placement K. would spend her nights tied to her bed, unable to rise even to use the bathroom and if she was unable to hold her bladder until morning she would be physically beaten by the foster parents. In another placement, K. suffered sexual abuse and even after repeatedly running away, Social Services would continue to return K. to the home of her abusers. K. had limited contact with her family except for the occasional visit supervised by the Ministry and grew up away from her home community. At the age of 12 years, the Ministry of Social Services were successful in obtaining a Permanent Guardianship Order (PGO) for K., which placed her legally in the Ministry's care until she reached adulthood.

K., was angry; she had spent her existence thus far being shuffled from home to miserable home, and the thought that her teenage years would follow this same path was something her young mind would not accept. Adding to her anger, the foster home where the Ministry of Social Services continued to place K. was the home where she was sexually victimized over and over again by her caregiver. Shortly after K. was deemed a PGO, she ran away to a remote town in northern Alberta and it was here she used drugs for the first time, smoking crack at the age of 12 years. K. did not like the taste, it

reminded her of diesel, and she felt disgusted by the way she felt afterward. It was not long before K. was picked up by authorities and placed back in foster care, again to the same home where she was a victim of sexual assault. K. ran again and this began a period of frequent running that would last for the next two years.

After the first run from foster care, K. shifted directions and began running to a larger, urban centre in Alberta. K., who had felt displaced most of her young existence thus far, was drawn to the streets of this city where she finally felt a sense of belonging and acceptance. Shortly after arriving for the first time, K. used crack for the second time in her life. However this time the man who provided the drug expected payment. He told K. "You smoked it. You have to pay for it. What are you going to do now?" K. was at a loss. She had no money in her possession and she did not know how she would pay back this unexpected debt. The man, demanding his payment, instructed K. to go out on the city streets and find a man on whom she could perform sexual acts in exchange for money. With no other options, K. followed the man's instruction.

K. now knew a way to make money that was useful to her, particularly as her drug habit was beginning to grow. K.'s life took on a cyclical form; she would run from her foster home to the streets where she would abuse drugs and engage in prostitution until Social Services located her and returned her to her designated placement, which continued to be the residence where she was sexually assaulted by her caregivers. Then K. would run again. She was adapting to street life and had familiarized herself with whom and what she needed to survive. The Ministry of Social Services was at a loss as to what to do with the streetwise 14-year-old. One day, after being picked up from yet another run, K.'s social worker sat across from her and advised K. Social Services could

not continue chasing after her and they could not keep bringing K. back to foster placements where she would only run away from a short time later. K.'s social worker ended the discussion by telling K. "if you want to go, go. Be on your own out there. We aren't doing this anymore". Rather than relief, K. felt scared. What had she gotten herself into? What would she do now? K. returned to the city streets and with no other method of survival became heavily entrenched in the world of prostitution. Her life would continue this way for two years.

At age 16, things changed for K.; she met the father of her future child and she decided to leave the space she had occupied the last several years of her life. K. returned to her home community to live near her biological mother and quickly became pregnant. K.'s boyfriend found a job, K. sought assistance from Social Services and they were able to move into their own apartment, purchase furniture, and begin their family life together. This was the happiest time of K.'s life. She finally had her own home, she was ecstatic with her son and his father, she felt strong and independent … she felt complete. However, things change.

K. was 19 years old when her cousin was released from jail. K. shared a particularly close relationship with this cousin. He was the person who took her under his wing when she first began running. He looked out for her. He taught her who could be trusted and who should be avoided when navigating the perilous inner city streets. K. credited her survival in part to this cousin's guidance. Upon his release from custody, K.'s cousin came to their shared home community to visit family and friends. He came to K.'s apartment and the two ended up getting high together. K. did not like the feeling of being high after having been sober for some time and quickly decided she did not want

to use any more drugs with her cousin, no matter the occasion. In the wake of her drug use and the negative feelings attached, K. felt the need to be with her son who she had sent to her mother's for the weekend in advance of her cousin's arrival. Both K. and her cousin left the apartment and parted ways, K. going to her mother's home on the reserve and her cousin to his.

Late in the evening, K. received a telephone call at her mother's home. It was her cousin. He told K. he was arguing with his mother and asked if he could return to K.'s apartment as he needed to leave the situation for a while. K. did not trust her cousin in her apartment without her, particularly as she thought he would bring others with him and she did not want negative things happening in her son's home. K. told her cousin no but that she would take him there in the morning if he still wanted to go. K.'s cousin said, "That's okay. I love you guys" and hung up the phone. Although she did not know it, these would be the last words K. would hear her cousin speak. K. would later find out her cousin had borrowed money from another relative and purchased a bus ticket for his return to Alberta.

The next day, K. and her family were watching the evening news when a story rolled about a man who had been stabbed and died en route to hospital. The man had no identification on his person but police had found Court papers on him with the surname S****. K. and her family instantly felt frantic' S**** was their surname and this person would surely be a relative. There would be no answers until the fingerprints came back but K. knew in her heart this person was the same cousin she had denied her home just one day prior to his death. Sure enough, K.'s instinct was right; the man stabbed to death was later confirmed to be K.'s cousin.

K. was devastated. This cousin was like a brother and K. blamed herself for his death. K. believed had she let him go to her apartment he might still be alive. And this personal conviction destroyed her. After his funeral, K. "just let everything go". She ended her relationship with her boyfriend, gave up her apartment and all of her belongings, and asked her mother to take over her son's care. She returned to the city she had run to so frequently in her younger years and she resumed smoking crack. However, K. found crack no longer sustained her. K. needed something stronger and so she started using crystal meth. K. did not like the life she was leading. She was entrenched in drugs and the subsequent lifestyle and although she would periodically return home to see her son and family she would not last longer than a weekend before she would leave, returning to the space of drugs, which now felt like home.

K. began spending time in a larger urban centre in Saskatchewan where she began using intravenous drugs and prostituting to support this habit. During this time, a man held K. hostage in his house and she was raped by both him and his roommate. This incident caused K. to leave Saskatchewan and return to Alberta but once there she was raped yet again, this time by a group of three men. K. was feeling *bad* and she knew prostitution was only leading to further sexual violence. K. made the decision to stop prostituting. However, she still had a drug habit to support and she began selling crack to support her crystal meth habit. K. was living a nomadic lifestyle, traveling back and forth from province to province, selling drugs and becoming increasingly paranoid and increasingly volatile due to her ongoing drug use.

Throughout this time, K. continued to sporadically visit her family and it was during these visits she became increasingly aggressive, mostly toward her own family

members. K. felt angry and resentful, and she could not forget the feelings of abandonment that came from her childhood spent in foster care. K. was tormented by questions; why didn't you keep me as a child? Why are you suddenly a part of my life now? K.'s behaviour continued to escalate and she lashed out at her family, expressing her pain through physical outbursts.

K. had a stormy relationship with her step-father in particular, one that often resulted in violence, and it was this continuous conflict that would lead to K.'s imprisonment. One day K. and her step-father began arguing, then fist-fighting, and on this particular occasion it reached a whole new level of intensity; K. stabbed her step-father. Realizing at this point there was no turning back, K. decided to take all of her step-father's money as well as his bank card. She took away the telephone so no one in the house could call for help and she held her entire family hostage in the home. K. was scared and she was angry. She wanted to hurt all those she cared about because these were the same people who had hurt her. And K. knew she had fucked up – bad.

K. was arrested and was charged with assault with a weapon, assault, robbery with violence, and driving while disqualified along with a number of other more minor offences. K. waited on remand while lawyers haggled over her charges and K. would end up being sentenced to three years custody after entering guilty pleas to robbery, assault, and driving while disqualified. K. would spend the next two and a half years of her life in custody at the Okimaw Healing Lodge in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan.

In the early stages of her imprisonment, K. felt extremely depressed. Her young son refused to speak to her because K. had hurt his daddy and he was mad. K. was crushed. The other women on remand viewed K.'s despondence as snobbiness and they

avoided K. except when trying to provoke her or fight. The depression continued after K. was sentenced and would last for the first five months of her time at the Healing Lodge. As time passed, K. began to feel a bit better. However, she figured she would simply do her time and she did not bother to apply for parole or visits as she believed her family was still angry with her for her actions. K. wanted to get through her sentence then fully intended to return to the lifestyle of drugs she was leading before her incarceration.

As the name suggests, a central focus of the Okimaw Healing Lodge is healing. K. viewed the healing component of the Healing Lodge as bullshit. She thought the programming offered was a joke and openly laughed at the facilitators. K. was adamant the programming would not work; do they know what she had been through? Did they have any idea where she had come from? However, this programming was not voluntary and K. was forced to attend. Initially she made up excuses in attempts to avoid it but the staff continued to push her into the sessions. Even in custody, K. was still pissed off as she was forced to sit through sessions she viewed as being utterly useless.

As K. sat in the sessions, she started to listen to what was being shared. She started to pay attention. One day, K. felt like a light bulb went off and she broke down. K. felt bad, so unbelievably bad. She felt guilty for leaving her son behind for a life of drugs and she felt terrible for the pain she had caused her family. K. began to not just attend the sessions but actually participate. She talked about all the things she was carrying inside her, tearing her apart and she cried, acknowledging all the hurt she felt. For so long K. had tried to hide these emotions and she began to let it out. She began speaking to the facilitator after the session on her own and she began accessing the Elders available to the women inmates, sharing some of the hardest moments of her difficult

personal history. K.'s attitude changed and she applied for parole and escorted temporary absences (ETAs) to go home and see her family. She started to feel good about herself and how far she had come and she thought to herself she could handle whatever the future might hold. For the first time in her life, K. thought "I am not that bad of a person if I try".

In the fall of 2014, at 22 years of age, K. reached the end of her sentence and was released from custody. She moved to a new city for a fresh start. Every day is hard, but K. continues to look ahead with hopes for her future.

M.'s Story

M. was born 37 years ago in a small, northern community just east of the Saskatchewan/Manitoba border. The location is so remote the only way to travel there is by boat or plane. M. is of Dene ancestry and was raised by her biological parents in her familial home. Her parents were devout Roman Catholics who raised their children under this set of religious beliefs.

At six years of age, M. and her family relocated to another northern community in order to be closer to M.'s paternal grandmother, the lone surviving grandparent on either side. The move was difficult for M. as it removed her from all things familiar. The children in the new town were unfriendly and bullied M., which hurt her deeply. Around the time of her upheaval, M. began experiencing what she refers to as "mishaps". She describes these occurrences as "things that happened behind closed doors" and these encounters contributed significantly to the unhappy memories surrounding her childhood. M. recalls feelings of fear, shame, and an acute lack of awareness around what she now understands as sexual molestation. However, her conservative Roman Catholic home

was not a place where sex was discussed and M. kept silent about the years of sexual abuse she sustained as she simply "could not speak". These "mishaps" continued until she was a teenager and M. endured them silently, keeping her pain and confusion to herself.

Her parents quickly recognized the difficulties M. was experiencing settling into the community and after some time the family reached a decision to send M. to residential school with the hopes M. would be able to escape the cruel treatment from her peers. M. was 10 years old when she re-located for school, to a city approximately 10 hours south of her family's community. Due to geographical distance, M. would spend long stretches of time away from her family. The only times she was able to return home were over Christmas, Easter, and summer holidays. This fragmentation from her community and family added to M.'s feelings of loneliness and of not belonging. Several years went by where M. was shuttled back and forth between the two communities and although M. was able to escape the bullying she was unable to escape the sexual abuse that continued throughout her childhood and into her teenage years. M. describes herself as feeling angry, guilty, resentful, and ashamed and she had no way to release these emotions. Then, at age 14, while in her home community for Christmas break, M. was raped, which resulted in her first pregnancy.

M. did not learn she was with child until shortly after she returned to school for the winter semester. M. did not tell anyone but as her pregnancy advanced her condition became visible and she could hide it no longer. Her peers tormented her with name-calling and after the semester ended she returned to her community where the ridiculing continued. Although it was painfully obvious, her parents did not discuss her pregnancy

with her as it was not in the nature of their household and M. felt frightened, overwhelmed, and alone. At age 15, M. became a mother for the first time.

Despite the manner in which M.'s baby was conceived, M. describes her infant as being special, perfect, and something that was all her own. She felt hope throughout her pregnancy and had many dreams for her unborn daughter's future. M. chose to remain in her northern community rather than return for more schooling as she did not want to give her baby up for adoption and this was the stipulation should she continue with her education. Although she was young, M. was determined to create a happy life for herself and her daughter.

However, M.'s past continued to haunt her. The unresolved issues from her childhood continued to plague her and she sunk into a depression shortly after the birth of her daughter. M. turned to drugs and alcohol as a method for coping with her pain as she knew no other avenue and began using regularly as a method of self-medication. M. became pregnant again at age 17. Despite her reliance on alcohol and drugs, M. notes she was successful in maintaining sobriety throughout her pregnancy as she was aware substance use could damage her unborn child. M.'s children's health and well-being were always of utmost importance and she treasured her relationship with them, however, she felt the strain of being a single parent. She had no education and no steady job. She relied on odd jobs around the community such as house-cleaning as a way to provide for her young family. And further to this she still was experiencing a tremendous amount of pain from the sexual abuse she had experienced in her younger years.

Around this time M. met a young man who impacted her significantly. M. describes this person as showing her "love" for the first time. M. began a relationship

with this person that lasted several years. In the beginning, the relationship represented something positive for M. as she was able to connect with another person on an intimate level and she felt happy and valued. However, the relationship began to deteriorate shortly after the birth of their twins. The relationship became abusive, controlling, and mistrustful and M.'s past appeared to be repeating itself. It felt as if her childhood was repeating itself. M. could not escape the cycle of abuse she had been entangled in throughout her young life.

M. wanted to improve her personal circumstances in terms of financial stability and recognized education was an important element of economic security. She pursued her education through evening classes in her community but her attempts were thwarted by her partner's accusations she was being unfaithful whenever she was away from the home. It was emotionally taxing for M. as she wanted to better her family's future but also desperately wanted to preserve the first loving relationship she had ever known. Ultimately, M. decided her children deserved the chance at a better life and she ended the relationship. M. was 20 years old, a single mother of three and still had no education and no career.

Once again, M.'s unresolved issues surfaced and she used alcohol to numb her pain. M. began acting out violently while under the influence and started coming into conflict with the law, incurring a number of criminal charges including assault, aggravated assault, and being intoxicated on-reserve. Despite her legal and substance abuse issues, M. maintained her family unit and persevered at her education, earning some Adult 12 credentials. She became pregnant again at age 25 and recalls continuing with her school assignments right up until her period of convalescence where she was

sent to a southern city to await the final weeks before her due date. Like her other children, the birth of her son was a joyous occasion but as an overwhelmed, single mother, M. knew she would be unable to care for him. She made the decision to give her baby boy to her sister to raise as her own and returned to the far North and her three older children.

Following the birth of her son M. began drinking and drugging heavily and her violent behaviour continued. She was well-known to the local RCMP detachment for her alcohol use and the subsequent criminal behaviour that continued to spiral. A short time after her return, M. received a two-year conditional sentence order as a result of numerous assault charges. A conditional discharge order is viewed as a jail sentence served within the community; there are stringent conditions which must be followed and any violation surrounding the terms of release may result in the sentence being converted to custody. One condition of M.'s order was regular meetings with a probation officer who was responsible for monitoring M.'s compliance with her court-ordered conditions. This probation officer and M. built a strong rapport and as M. developed trust towards this person she began to open up about her personal struggles. M. and the probation officer shared long discussions about her alcohol consumption and her behaviour while under the influence. M. acknowledged when she was sober she would present as a friendly, easy-going person but when intoxicated the ugly experiences of her personal history would quickly emerge in the form of violence and aggression towards others.

M. decided in order to put her demons behind her and achieve sobriety once and for all she would attend in-patient treatment. In the final months of her conditional discharge order, she traveled eight hours south in order to attend a detoxification centre.

However, prior to admitting herself into the facility, M. went to a local bar and became extremely intoxicated. She was arrested by RCMP for breach of her legal conditions. Further to this, M. incurred possession of an illegal substance charges due to police finding marijuana on her person. Her community-based sentence was converted to custody and she was sent to Pine Grove Provincial Correctional Facility, the lone women's facility in Saskatchewan, to spend the remaining four months of her order.

M. had a lot of time to think while incarcerated. She considered many aspects of her life but primarily thought of her children, her family and her education. She considered how at 26 years old she was still so young but her life had gone downhill so fast. She felt lost. She was saddened by her situation and knew this was not the life she was intended to live. M. decided she would not continue walking this path and swore to herself she would make the changes necessary to turn her personal situation around.

Despite her trials and tribulations, M. never lost sight of the value of education. While in custody at Pine Grove, M. wrote a letter to the facility's educational coordinator. M. requested she be able to write the provincial exam which challenges the grade 12 equivalency diploma (GED). Should M. pass this exam, she would leave Pine Grove with her GED, a tool to take with her upon her release and use towards her future. The coordinator was impressed by the quality of writing demonstrated in M.'s letter and asked to meet with M. personally, which was highly unusual. The two women talked at great length about M.'s life and the obstacles she had encountered and the coordinator agreed to assist M. with her educational endeavor. M. wrote the exam two days before her release date and returned to her community, unaware if she had met the requirements

or not. Four weeks after her return, M. received a telephone call advising she had passed the exam.

In 1999, M. became pregnant with her fifth child. During her pregnancy she entered a relationship with her current common-law partner and after the birth of her child she moved into his home. M. was hopeful for her future; she had completed her conditional sentence order, she had earned her GED, and she had met a man who accepted her and her children. She had promised herself after the demise of her last long-term relationship she would never return to an abusive situation and she was eager to begin her new life with her new love. However, M.'s hope was short-lived; once again she found herself in a violent relationship. The domestic violence within this relationship was extreme. In 2001 M.'s common-law partner struck her over the head with a steel pipe while having a dispute in their yard. M. was knocked out cold. He ran into the house and returned with a shot gun that he held to M.'s head and pulled the trigger but the gun did not go off. RCMP were called and M.'s common-law was remanded in custody while M. was sent south to receive medical treatment.

M. recalls the shame when she returned home after her convalescence. Everyone in the small community knew what had happened and she was the "talk of the town". M. returned to the only coping mechanism she knew; alcohol. M. was able to remain crime-free during this period and she made great effort to protect her children from her alcoholism. She did not use alcohol in her home or around her children and ensured they were in the care of relatives when she was under the influence.

M.'s partner was sentenced to 18 months custody and was released after serving 13 months in jail. M. resumed her relationship with him but domestic violence continued

to permeate their relationship. M. recognized the danger she was in and sought help from agencies in the community. She approached the RCMP and requested a restraining order against her partner but the application was declined. She went to the Health Clinic and asked to take up residence in the local women's shelter but there were no beds available. M. was pleading for help but felt denied at every turn.

In 2003, the domestic violence reached its peak. M. and her partner were intoxicated when an altercation broke out. M.'s partner stabbed her 18 times with a screwdriver and beat her until she was black-and-blue. She was air-lifted to a hospital where she spent six weeks in the hospital recovering from her extensive injuries. M. had a broken arm, several broken fingers and her eyes were swollen shut. She underwent two hours of surgery before her wounds were stitched closed. She could not drink water or eat for days due to her face being so inflamed and sore. As she lay in her hospital bed, M. wished she was dead. The physical pain, the emotional anguish, and the psychological damage was indescribable and unimaginable.

M. returned home a deeply distraught woman. Members of the community wanted to hear M.'s version of the tragic events which had taken place several weeks prior but she was not in a position to share her story. She became morose and depressed and began experiencing suicidal thoughts. Her mother was very worried for her and after discussions amongst family members it was decided M. would go back to the place of her birth for a period of time in order to heal. Her mother assumed care for her children and M. went to reside with an aunt, removed from her community and the pain associated with it.

After approximately three months, M. returned in order to testify against her common-law partner. She recalls feelings of sheer terror at the thought of having to face the man who was both her abuser and lover and of speaking of her ordeal in front of others. Prior to her testimony she was shown pictures taken of her in the hospital following her attack. M. could not believe she was the woman in the pictures as the injuries sustained had distorted her features beyond recognition. While still absorbing the visual shock of her recent trauma, M. had to walk across the court room, in front of the court party, her community, and her common-law and was required to give evidence to the case. This experience was paralyzing.

M. describes herself as being mad at the world. In particular she was angry with God. She could not understand why she had experienced such pain and suffering as a child, then as a teenager, and now as an adult. She felt no one understood the level of trauma she had withstood. She was frustrated because all she wanted was to find love and happiness and acceptance and this pursuit had almost cost M. her life twice. And adding to her turmoil she was now being questioned about an extremely painful, personal situation in a public forum. M. felt like everyone and everything had failed her. M.'s partner received an 18-month custodial sentence for the assault and once again M. found herself alone and emotionally adrift.

Following her partner's sentence, M. remained in the community and resumed care of her children. She attributes the relationship she shares with her children as being the reason for her resilience. She always knew her children needed her and the most important role she had in life was that as a mother. However, M. once again began using alcohol to numb her personal demons. As always, she was careful to keep her alcohol

usage separate from her family life. She would leave her children in the care of her mother when she was using alcohol and would not resume responsibility for her brood until she was sober. During this time M. also managed to control the aggressive behaviours that so often surfaced when she was intoxicated and avoided further altercations with the law.

One morning, in 2004, M. was walking home after a night of drinking with friends. Her route home happened to pass the local addictions services centre. There were an assortment of vehicles outside and, for some inexplicable reason, M. felt the urge to stop and enter the building. This was not typical of her character but the sensation she felt was like an energy pulling her in. Inside there was a group of women from the community who were planning a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, a site in Croatia where there have been many powerful religious experiences related to Roman Catholicism.

The idea of the pilgrimage piqued M.'s interest. She could not understand why she was so interested, particularly as she had lost faith in the existence of higher powers after all the personal misfortunes she had endured. M. went home and asked her eldest daughter if she was interested in participating in the pilgrimage. After some discussion, M. and her daughter decided they would both go on this religious journey. Over the next several months M. became involved with fundraising and planning for the journey and in the summer of 2004 she and 27 others set off to Croatia to experience this religious phenomenon first-hand.

M. continued to drink alcohol regularly in the months leading up to the group's departure and once she arrived in Croatia she befriended a group of Irish travellers with whom she was able to drink in her new surroundings. After several days of sight-seeing

and alcohol consumption, the day arrived to attend Medjugorje. The purpose of this pilgrimage is to experience the apparition of Mirjana who is the saint believed within Roman Catholicism to pray for non-believers. Crowds of people were traveling to the site in the hopes of experiencing such a miracle and M. was one of many fighting for room within the tent to witness the visionary. The personal significance of attending a religious event dedicated to non-believers was not lost on M. She had lost all faith in religion, in others, and in herself. She felt resentment towards God for the personal struggles and ongoing pain she could not seem to overcome.

Upon arrival at the site, M., her daughter, and two others became separated from the rest of the group due to the high volume of people. M. was not sure where to go and no one spoke English. However, a young man appeared and began leading her through the crowd to the edge of the tent. He crawled under bleachers and wove his way through the masses of people, taking M. and her daughter along with him. Once inside, he managed to guide them to the front of the tent at which point he appeared to vanish into thin air. M. recalls the heat and intensity from so many bodies being crammed into such a small space and was unable to see anything. She decided to kneel down and was able to see through people's legs to the centre of the tent. A small, blonde woman in a cleared area began leading the people through recital of the rosary in Croatian. M. began repeating the rosary in English and fell into the rhythm of prayer. After a while M. describes a cool breeze washing over her. It felt like a veil being lifted and suddenly she reached a level of inner peace, calm, and clarity. M. visualized her inner demons taking shape and being physically carried away from her body. The experience was intense, to say the least. The hurt, the resentment, the anger, the jealousy, the hatred … all the

unwanted feelings just disappeared. The unsavory emotions M. equated with her childhood, teenage years, and adult years thus far were lifted away and replaced with what she identifies as intense feelings of love. This specific moment became the turning point in M.'s life where she realized she was meant to be on earth and she had endured all that she had endured for a purpose. At this moment, M. recognized her life had value and she vowed she would not destroy it.

M. `s pilgrimage to Medjugorje represents the true turning point in her life and although she was not actively involved in crime at this time she believes she would have continued to experience conflict with the law had she not had this experience. Medjugorje caused her to find renewed faith in her spirituality and in herself. This moment was her new beginning. Upon her return to Canada, M. focused her energy on recovering from her history of addictions and abuse. She attended in-patient treatment, which she completed successfully. M. attributes her successful completion to her own volition; she attended treatment entirely for herself, because *she* wanted to and not for any other reason. She embraced the experience of treatment whole-heartedly and utilized the coping strategies she learned once she left treatment and resumed her day-to-day life. The transition was not easy. A sacrifice M. had to make in order to maintain her sobriety and ultimately her own happiness was to end many of her former friendships as those former companions were continuing to lead the unhealthy, addictions-fueled lifestyle M. was determined to avoid. However, the love, inner peace, and happiness she had discovered on her pilgrimage stayed with her and she was unflappable in her resolve to stay committed to her new lifestyle.

After several months of sobriety, M. learned of an employment opportunity with a northern health region as an addictions worker at the very agency that had connected her with her religious pilgrimage and the catalyst for change in her life. M. was doubtful she would be considered as she had only been sober for a few months. However, she applied and was offered an interview. There were others interviewing for the position and the day the interviews took place M. waited patiently for her turn in the waiting room, praying as she waited, in order to calm her nerves. She recalls her interview as being very brief and believes it may have lasted 10 minutes at the most. She was asked, "What does health authority mean to you?" M. responded, "Health is life itself; authority is to govern. That is what health authority means to me". The interview ended quickly after that. M. left, thinking she had no chance in securing the position. However, the interview panel saw something in M. and in her response. She was given the opportunity to travel with a group of health region workers to a professional conference where there were many discussions held surrounding sobriety. For once M. could not keep quiet and she vocalized her opinions throughout the meetings. M. had direct personal experience and she deeply understood what people needed when they were experiencing addictions. As they were leaving, M. was handed a sheaf of papers to fill out; she had gotten the job. This was 11 years ago.

M. continues to reside in this northern community with her husband and children, living a sober and crime-free lifestyle. She is now an elected band counselor and is a leader in the community.

Analysis

As we move into the analysis, I would like to remind readers of the Medicine Wheel and the underlying concepts. Medicine Wheels are, "pedagogical tools for teaching, learning, contemplating, and understanding our journeys at individual, band/community, nation, global, and even cosmic levels" (Calliou, 1995, p. 51). It has an ability to explain relationships and the interconnectedness between domains of life; the cognitive, the emotional, the spiritual, and the physical. The Medicine Wheel recognizes it is impossible to isolate one area from another and if there is discord in one quadrant the other quadrants will be duly influenced. This concept is helpful when considering the four stories before us.

In addition, the Medicine Wheel is a useful tool in assisting with our understanding of the themes and the relationality between them. The themes that emerged in this data are intertwined and it is impossible to critically think about one theme as separate from the others. There is overlap. Again, the Medicine Wheel offers explanation; a common principle of the Medicine Wheel is "everything is related to everything else and things cannot be understood out of their context and interactions" (Sevenson & Lafontaine, 2003, p. 190). It would be impossible to analyze the data without accepting the relationality and the interplay between the themes.

Layers of Space

When considering space as it relates to this research, one quickly realizes space is not necessarily a clear or easily defined concept. It takes on various forms, has various definitions, and can mean different things at different times (Bhandar, Fumia & Newman, 2008). Space is not limited to physical space such as one's surrounding environment

(Bhandar et al). It can be a broad, vague, invisible space. It can be the various social systems that surround an individual. It can also be emotional space, meaning one's frame of mind. The component of space that remains consistent is that it is something that is created in relationship to another and therefore requires the maintenance of borders, both real and imaginary (Bhandar et al). Space would not exist without other bodies of space to relate to. Negative space, whether it is an impoverished and crime-riddled urban area, the invisible broken child welfare system, or the shattered self-esteem of a person beat down from a lifetime of abuses, all exist in relationship to the positive … the "good" side of town, the "functional" families who remain outside the child welfare system, the confidence of a person who has only known love and acceptance.

Space, as defined by this research, is not limited to physical space. However it is necessary we first give some consideration to the physical spaces the participants occupied and, as Razack would suggest, "map" their physical journeys. Throughout their lives the participants would occupy physical spaces that located them outside the realms of dominant society. R. was born on the reserve, spent her childhood in residential school, then much of her adult life drifting between urban spaces where drug use was common-place. C. spent her life caught between two spaces – the middle class existence of her adoptive family and the hood where she felt acceptance and which would eventually become her chosen space. K. grew up in foster care, isolated from her family and home community, before running away to the streets and the subsequent street life. M. grew up in a remote northern community, deep in the wilderness and 10 hours away from the nearest Saskatchewan city. All four participants eventually would spend time in jail.

The participants all report experiencing various forms of negative space, physical or otherwise, very early on in life. This negative space would manifest throughout the woman's life in physical, social, and emotional constructs and was a very real barrier in terms of experiencing any form of success. R., at age six years, was sent to residential school, which stripped away her identity as an Indigenous person. C. was a child conceived from rape and at four years of age was sexually assaulted. K., at two months old, became a ward of the Ministry of Social Services and spent her childhood in upwards of 30 foster homes, many where she suffered horrific abuse. M., at age six, was also made victim of sexual assault. In each case, the negative spaces they entered created feelings of worthlessness and unimportance and these feelings seemed to become the shared undercurrent of each woman's life from that point forward. Emotions identified in the interviews included feeling depressed, sad, hopeless, lost, unwanted, unloved, and "never good enough". This negative space became ingrained, became a part of the participants very being, and seemed inescapable. Their bodies absorbed the characteristics of these spaces. C. sums this up, "I was nothing and I believed it.'"

These early experiences of the participants created a feeling of "no place". Although the terms space and place are often used interchangeably, they are not the same (Crisps, 2008).

> Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened and are now remembered and which provides continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and

> demands have been issued. It is a declaration our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment, and undefined freedom. (Brueggemann, 1977 as cited in Crisps, 2008).

Place refers to the relationship one has with space; it creates "roots" and a sense of connection (Crisps). "No place" refers to the opposite; a lack of connection, feeling no belonging to anywhere or anything. People find their place within space. Place, for many people, "is the land in which they dwell, and/or where their ancestors dwelt, which is pivotal in shaping their identity and from which meaning emanates" (Crisps). As one can imagine this becomes a particular issue for Indigenous people who have been displaced within colonized countries (Crisps) as well as other groups/individuals forced into transience. For example, children like K. who spent years in the foster care system. C. spent much of her life searching for a place where she fit, "You want to belong because you never belonged in your whole life. It's like where the hell do I belong? Where do I fit in? I want to fit in …but I don't."

Belonging is a basic human need, a crucial component of human existence. Donna Greschner wrote, "Human survival and identity requires individuals to live in communities. The old African aphorism 'a person only becomes a person through other people' aptly encapsulates one's need of other people…" (2001, p. 297). The desire to belong is one of the most critical human needs (Greschner). As such, no place is actually worse than finding room in negative space and, subsequently, people stuck in this no place existence often move to negative space in desperation to escape it. People *need* place and sometimes place is only attainable in dark spaces, such as the streets, unhealthy relationships, or the world of drugs and alcohol. All four participants would eventually

find belonging and acceptance within dark spaces. K., after a childhood of miserable foster care homes, explains "… the only place I could think of where I would be accepted was the streets of *******. So, I went to the streets." R. spent her youth through early adulthood feeling lost and alone, and eventually she too turned to the streets. She explains the relationships she formed there:

> Those were the ones I confided in with, those were the ones I met with when I'd get out of jail, those were the ones that stood by me, because I had no family.. When you talk to people that have done time, a lot of them will say that, that was my family, people that were in jail, street people were my family. That is how it was with me too. Those are the ones that your trust is in them and you're able to talk to them and they know how you're feeling, they know where you're coming from. Even these young people on the streets, they don't have families, you know these little gang members, they don't have family and when they get accepted into the gang, that's their family.

Before moving further into the analysis, we must step back and remind ourselves to consider the greater colonial project in which we are all embedded. Within this context, Indigenous women are viewed as the (gendered) racialized "other", deserving of their social exclusion (Razack, 2000). From an early age the participants were relegated to the outskirts of society and the causal effect of this forced eviction was finding place in negative space. The participants would drift from space to similarly negative space, pathologized figures on the outskirts of society, before eventually being removed from it altogether through their incarceration. And jail, the least desirable location of all, offers both explanation and justification of the participants lifetimes of rejection and alienation.

Indigenous women are not meant to find place in this society because it has been specifically designed for their exclusion.

Canadian prison space and the over-representation of Indigenous people within clearly exemplifies Canada's modern-day colonization project. One might interpret jail as an eviction of degenerate Indigenous women from urban spaces and as a "cleansing" of the innocent, law-abiding, white zone, perceived as vulnerable at the hands of the racialized "other"; the Indigenous offender (Razack, 2000). Jail is also a prime example of how space becomes racialized. As the women sentenced to custody in Canada are overwhelmingly of Indigenous descent, jail becomes a racialized space, *Indigenous* space. This reinforces the long-standing societal belief that Indigenous people are characterized by degeneracy (Razack) and supports this continued exclusion of Indigenous women from dominant or "white" space. As we have discussed, identity is projected on to specific spaces and, ultimately, on to the bodies within (Razack). Occupants of negative spaces assume the space's characteristics. Jail space is the worst space, those who inhabit it are the worst people, those who inhabit Canadian prisons, particularly in the western provinces are Indigenous peoples … and the link is made. Jail is bad. Jail is Indigenous. Indigenous is bad.

A key aspect of space/place appears to be acknowledgement. It seems from very early on, the participants experienced no acknowledgement from anyone – society, their family, even themselves. In Greschner's (2002) article, she cited Isaiah Berlin to explain this concept, "An individual's sense of identity and self-worth is inextricably determined by the recognition and status accorded the groups to which she or he belongs" (p. 299). A lack of acknowledgement correlates with feelings of "no place". Again, from their

very early years, the participants experiences went without validation. M. endured sexual abuse and was bullied relentlessly by her childhood peers. She comments on her experience,

> Life was hard … when you learn to keep taking it and taking it and taking it, there's a time in your life that you quit feeling, you know? It's like it doesn't really matter, nobody is gonna notice, like who cares?

No acknowledgment hurts. The emotions listed throughout the interviews include depressed, sad, hopeless, lost, unwanted, unloved, never good enough. In order to numb these painful feelings, the participants often turned to substances. That was M.'s coping mechanism as she struggled to process the sexual molestation and relentless bullying, "I was about 15 or 16, that's when I picked up the bottle, to try and numb 'cause I didn't know how to handle it. It was so hard." C. speaks of her experience:

> I would escape in my addictions … I got hooked on Oxycontin at 29. I picked up and it took one pill and that pill numbed every single thing that I ever didn't want to deal with, so I didn't feel anymore.

R shares her perspective on this disparity,

> A lot of them have been sexually abused and they're ashamed to talk about it, a lot of things that they're ashamed to talk about, and when they don't talk about it, they push it down in their body and they become unhealthy and they turn to drugs or alcohol and that leads to incarceration because they numb their minds so badly that they don't care what happens.

Based on the participants stories, acknowledgement of one's experiences, one's pain, and one's truth appears to be a way to create some positive space. There is a need

for people to talk, a need to validate their experiences, for people to have someone else listen to their stories and hear their pain. Everyone needs to feel like they belong, somewhere. And the way to truly acknowledge these things is through honest reflection and open conversation. C. comments, "…and then I let go. I disclosed every secret I kept, I disclosed everything that ever happened and the more I let go and talked about it, the lighter I felt". K first experienced acknowledgement while in custody and shares her experience,

> The more I sat there and listened, the more I started to pay attention, I just kind of like, it was almost like a light bulb went off in my head and I was just kind of like, I just had a breakdown and I just felt so bad, I was just, I just, I don't know, I just felt really bad for what I had done, for the fact I had left my son for drugs, for the fact that I was being so stupid and that's when I started paying attention and that is when I started actually talking and I started talking about these things that were bothering me inside that I didn't – I didn't want to cry. But I eventually started crying and I would talk to the facilitator … like I had been raped three times.

As we continue our exploration of the various domains of space, it becomes clear negative emotional space is greater for the participants and more powerful than positive physical space. It does not matter if one's body somehow ends up in positive space, if the mind and emotional state is not also present, one will not be successful. K. experienced a period of success after the birth of her son, a time she describes as "probably the best time of her life" where she had her own apartment, a caring partner,

and a sense of independence. However, after her cousin passed away, K. felt responsible for his death and was wracked with guilt.

> I was really hurt because he was like my brother and I was really sad because I blamed myself, I should have just let him go back to my apartment and he would have still been alive. So after we had the funeral I just kind of let everything go. I broke up with my son's dad, I asked my mom and my step-dad to keep my son and I said I can't do this right now. I took everything of son's out of my apartment and left everything of ours in there and just told the landlord to keep it all, to do whatever. I went back to the streets and that's when I started smoking crack.

The Medicine Wheel is helpful when trying to make sense of this particular point. A change in physical environment cannot independently remedy or resolve complex issues, particularly ones that have existed over the course of one's lifetime and are ingrained in one's sense of self. The emotional, intellectual, and spiritual sides must also be addressed as all quadrants are equal and interconnected (Verniest, 2006). Although she had left the streets for a new life, K. never addressed the trauma of her childhood and teenage years, and her cousin's death brought these painful memories and experiences back to the surface. This emotional and intellectual disharmony caused significant imbalance (Verniest), which subsequently caused K. to leave behind the positive space she had found and return to the negative space she had tried so hard to escape.

Negative space, like other spaces, is organized by hierarchies. Hierarchical structures produce unequal distributions of power, influence, and resources (Iadicola and Shupe, 2003) and these power inequalities often produce violent results. As such,

hierarchal structures are inherently violent (Taylor, 2013). Gender inequity and violence against women is not neutralized within negative space and, based on the information provided by the participants, it in fact appears to run rampant. Within the negative space of the streets women have less power and value than males and are frequently victimized. The violence against women is atrocious. C. shares her experience in the streets,

> It is not good stuff that is happening to you there. I've been beaten to my last breath, I've been strangled to my last breath, I've been raped repeatedly was drugged, robbed and raped.

At age 13, K. was coerced into prostitution and by the time she was 20 she had experienced a number of acts of significant violence,

> I got into intravenous drugs and I was still prostituting … Then some things happened that I didn't like. I was held hostage in this house by this guy and I ended up getting raped by him and his roommate. So after I got out of that, I went back to ****** and then there I ended up getting raped by three black guys.

Hierarchies, by nature, are arranged so, "some people have less, struggle, suffer, and die so that others can have more, prosper, flourish, and live longer lives" (Taylor, 2013, p.258). Within the gender-neutral space of custodial facilities, a racial hierarchy exists with Indigenous women relegated to the bottom. M. shares her experience,

> Not to sound racist or anything, but when I got there a riot had broken out at the women's correctional where there was this one Caucasian woman that was only in there for a week or two weeks and she asked to go to a halfway house and they approved it. So after that happened, of course the native girls, they got mad because some of them were there for a while and then they request to go to

> whatever they call this halfway house and they deny their request and her, a girl that has only been there for two weeks, they granted her that request because she was Caucasian. So it was unfair.

Even within this gender-neutral space, Indigenous female prisoners are viewed as being gendered, racialized others who are clearly different then society's ideal, white female (Razack, 2000). And furthermore, M.'s particular experience suggests white women are viewed as not belonging to the racialized space of jail and subsequently are treated differently within the institutionalized environment.

Family as Space

Family truly appears to be intertwined with everything. It is the core of people's being, our first and most influential relationships and the most important space to cultivate. A person's place is traced to their roots. However, some of the most negative space of all appears to exist in family space. Family is supposed to be safe, it is supposed to be loving, it is supposed to be nurturing. Negativity is not supposed to exist here. When family space is or becomes negative space, the pain and subsequent effects of this contradiction are long-lasting and appear to be extremely significant in terms of shaping one`s life.

Family as a contradiction between positive and negative space existed in all four participants' lives. The effects of residential school rippled through generations of R.'s family and R.'s own experiences at residential school would also impact her significantly. She describes this as,

> My dad, he didn't know how to raise kids because he was in residential school … so was my mom and my grandparents … there was no love there and because they

> didn't know how to give us love you know, you know, they didn't have no parenting skills and there was no bond between us … I grew up a lonely, lonely girl because I didn't know who to turn to or talk to or show my feelings to because being there, all my feelings were shut down, my emotions, everything so I never really spoke to my parents much about anything.

At the age of 14, R. was sexually assaulted by a male friend of the family. R. indicates her family was aware the assault occurred but no one spoke to her about it, nor was there any effort made to file charges with the local police agency. Shortly thereafter, R. would be given away to an older male, a relationship born from the necessity for survival, and the feelings of isolation continued. R. shares,

> I had no choice but to be with that guy – my sons' dad and I didn't know anything about love or anything like that, so I couldn't offer that to him, you know, and we never spoke. We had no communication, no love, no nothing between us.

When she became a mother, R. struggled with how to raise and emotionally connect with her sons, "I didn't know how to hug them. I didn't know how to say I love you to them, and they grew up like that … my sons grew up having issues like I had".

Loneliness, pain, and silence, the words R. uses to describe her experiences within family space, are contradictory to the adjectives most associate with explanations of family. The other participants also echo similar adjectives as R. upon their descriptions of family, particularly through childhood. C. states, "I never had love, I never had hugs, I never had kisses". K., raised in foster homes, articulates, "I didn't grow up with my family, I grew up in foster homes … and most of them weren't good" and M. recalls of her childhood, "I remember always being sad but I couldn't tell nobody, you know?"

All four participants report being sexually assaulted by the age of 14 years; R., at age 14, K., at age 12, M., at age six. C. in particular talked about the impact of this on her childhood. C was assaulted at the age of four years, an event which would relentlessly torment her, and at age 12 she learned she was born a product of rape. C. recalls being an extremely angry, volatile youth who was unable to control her turbulent emotions. These emotions continued to escalate and, at age 13 years, C. had an outburst which ended with her pressing a knife to her mother's throat. Shortly thereafter C. would leave her adoptive home altogether to live with her boyfriend and his family. The violence would turn from C. being the instigator to the victim. C. remembers,

> I got pregnant at 15 … he stabbed me when I was pregnant. I lived, my baby lived. He shot me and I don't know, by the grace of God it went by my head and through the roof.

At 19, C. would leave this relationship and begin another and that is when the abuse really started.

> I would go home and I would get beaten or I'd get raped and you just try to stuff it under the carpet … he beat me and raped me repeatedly, all the time, emotionally physically, mentally, sexually. I was nothing and he told me and I believed it. He told me to kill myself.

Again, the words C. uses to describe her family and the picture she paints is a stark contradiction with the warm, protective, caring space one typically associates with family. Her early sexual assault would impact familial relationships throughout C.'s life and the anger and pain associated with this transgression was a defining feature of her childhood. This discord would carry on in her adult relationships.

K.'s sense of family space is of yet another perspective. K. entered the foster care system as an infant due to her parents' addictions and would remain in care of Social Services until her teenage years when she discharged herself from the Ministry's care. Foster care is intended to be a safe place for those children who are in need of protection from their own families. However, the foster care system was a horrific experience for K. She speaks of this experience,

> My home community is in O*****and I was in foster care anywhere from S**** to E***** [a distance of 542 km]. I was in well over 30 foster homes in my life … most of them weren't good, either they ended up being racists or some of them would tie me and my sister down to the bed and then we wouldn't be able to get up during the night and go to the bathroom, so we ended up peeing the bed and then we'd end up getting hit for that. Or sometimes they would just hit us. There was one foster home that I was in that I ended up getting sexually abused.

How does one make sense of a systematic space intended to protect children but rather places them in repugnant, abominable conditions? How does a child process the horrific experiences laid upon them from essentially birth and which lies outside of their control? How does one attach the word "family" to this foster care experience? Not all foster care placements can be grouped within this category and K. herself acknowledges she had some positive placements. However, even these homes would leave a negative impact,

> There were times when I was in good foster homes and then they would have to leave me … I would have to leave to a different foster home after I basically fell in love with these good people that I finally met … I eventually started not trusting people like that.

The pain associated with the early childhood trauma and various levels of rejection caused the participants to eventually strike back at their families, almost as if they wanted to hurt the very people who had hurt them. K. talks of her experience,

> So when I was going home, that's when I would start doing the violent stuff back at O***** and it was mainly towards my family. I think it had something to do with maybe the anger, the resentment, towards the fact that they didn't keep me and my sisters.

In hindsight R. muses over this point, drawing upon her own experience,

> There's no connection with family. Their families either don't want them because they're either on drugs or drinking a lot you know. I drank a lot when I was in E***** and my mom was living there, she didn't want me around the house you know, because I was mean and she always put the knives away because she knew I always carried stuff you know?

Negativity experienced in early familial relationships seems to bleed into romantic adult relationships. The level of domestic violence in M.'s life was astounding. The relationship would nearly cost M. her life on two occasions. She describes these events,

> He hit me over the head and split my head … he knocked me out and after beating me he held a gun to my head and then he pulled the trigger. I remember because I heard it ring, that click, and then somebody saw him, this person went and grabbed the gun from him. When they checked the barrel, there were two bullets in there. For some reason when he pulled the trigger it didn't go off. He went to jail for that but when he got out we got back together and then a year later it

> happened again. He stabbed me 18 times and he beat me black and blue beyond recognition. I ended up in the hospital for six weeks. It took them two hours just to stitch my head up.

The violence M. experienced at the hands of her partner is incomprehensible. She was nearly killed on two occasions by the very man who is supposed to be her partner and within her own home, a space intended for sanctuary and safety. M. is not alone in her experience. Violence against family members is epidemic in Indigenous families (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014). Indigenous women are almost twice as likely as non-Indigenous women to be a victim of physical or sexual violence and are also more likely to report multiple victimizations (Dickson-Gilmore). Indigenous survivors appear to experience much greater extremes of violence: they are nearly twice as likely to have been hit with an object, or to have been beaten, strangled, threatened, or assaulted with a firearm or knife (Dickson-Gilmore).

Domestic abuse in Indigenous partnerships warrants some further conversation and is a point that again reminds us of the over-arching colonial project. Colonialism in Canada meant that the government came to "legally control and socially modify all aspects of Indigenous life and that law was both racialized and gendered and heterosexual" (Million, 2013, p. 41). Through the Indian Act, the Canadian government altered gender relations in Indigenous communities and constructed a hierarchal patriarchy in Indian Country (Million). The Canadian government took control of the Indigenous domestic sphere and Indigenous relationships were reorganized to match "normative" Canadian society. Within this new arrangement, Indigenous women were positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy. Gendered violence is the heart of colonialism

and is perpetuated by individuals whenever heteronormative order is threatened, an order that is still invested in a racialized, white, male subject (Million).

The impacts of living within such dysfunction is, "inter-generational and presents significant obstacles to the health, well-being and self-determination of Aboriginal families and communities" (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014, p. 422). In particular, children experience serious and long-lasting harm through the secondary victimization implicit in living in violence (Dickson-Gilmore). The children of the participants have been impacted by their parents' behaviour and lifestyles. C.'s 21-year-old daughter followed in her mother's footsteps and is an active gang member and she describes her youngest son as being unsure of her current status as a sober, law-abiding citizen, "he's really leery about if I'm honest about this or not … all he has ever known me to be is a drug addict and a gangster". K. remembers how she felt at her son's refusal to speak to her by telephone when she was first incarcerated due to her violent assault on her step-father who was also her son's primary caregiver. M.'s children all bore witness to the indescribable domestic violence which occurred within their family home.

To summarize what is highlighted above: family as a contradiction between positive and negative space exist in all four participants' lives. Violence within family space seems to be the root of this contradiction. All four participants experienced extreme violence within their families (sexual, physical, emotional) and this violence began very early in life with sexual violence in particular appearing to be a common thread. Loneliness, pain, a sense of not belonging, and separation from families (such as residential school, foster care et cetera) are also prevalent sub-themes in terms of the emotional experiences.

Culture and Spirituality

Connecting with culture, discovering spirituality, and finding faith in something bigger was the clearest theme in this research project. This was the space where the women found solace, support, and strength. This was also the "turning point" in their lives, the epiphany in their stories. Culture and spirituality appears to be what both spurred and sustained positive change and success. Traditional Indigenous teachings and practices were embraced by three of the four participants and the fourth had a powerful religious experience which resulted in reconvictions in her Roman Catholic beliefs.

Before beginning this discussion it is important to quickly define the above terms. The term culture refers to, "an organization of informational messages that members (of a group) learn and consequently pass on, both within and across generations" (Green, 2010, p 28). Culture is learned (Green) and language, customs, and rituals serve as integral aspects (Green). Through culture,

> Individuals and groups acquire characteristics such as the capacity to represent the external world, think and communicate, and explain their place in the world, and they maintain group identity through myths and rituals. (Green, 2010, p. 28)

Spirituality is something that is understood differently by different people. Some make no differentiation between spirituality and religious practice that automatically assumes one's spirituality involves a relationship with a (typically) Christian God (Crisps, 2008). Others move to the opposite end of the spectrum and view spirituality as simply having meaning or purpose in life (Crisps). Notwithstanding debates, spirituality for the purpose of this paper is defined as "*how* we construct a sense of meaning in our lives" (Crisps, p.

365), it should nourish some human connections, and it has the potential to make significant contributions to an individual's overall well-being (Crisps).

Based on the above definitions, I would argue that culture and spirituality cannot exist independent of each other. One constructs a sense of meaning in their life (spirituality) based on the way they interpret the world (through culture). As such, the two are implicitly tied. Within Indigenous culture in particular, spirituality is viewed as being a crucial component to achieving harmony and balance in one's life (Verniest, 2013). The Medicine Wheel visually explains this significance as an entire quadrant is devoted to the spiritual side of one's being. If spirituality is absent, the circle stands incomplete.

Although spirituality is assumed to be (in general) positive in nature, because of the ties it shares with culture, spiritual beliefs, and experiences, one's sense of spirituality can turn adverse. Discriminatory practices surrounding particular cultural groups can lead to spiritual convictions subsequently becoming negative space. This is exemplified by the residential school system that was created by the Canadian government to force assimilation upon First Nations people and has been referred to as a "manifestation of cultural genocide" (Mosher & Mahon-Haft, 2010, p. 248). The legacy and social disruption stemming from the residential school system continues to have generational effects within the Indigenous community (Vlasic, 2006) including such social issues as familial violence, high levels of poverty, family breakdown, lower levels of education, high rates of substance abuse, physical and mental health issues, underemployment, and a lack of economic opportunity (Vlasic). R. spent six years of her childhood in residential school and she tells of her time there,

> I didn't even like to be an Indian because in residential school, they used to call us names, you know, they labeled us that we were pagan, we were the devil, we were evil, you know, all these negative things they told us and I believed them because it was instilled in my mind and so I didn't want to be an Indian. I was scared of ceremonies, I was scared of smudging, I was scared of all of that because I was told it was evil and I came out of residential school believing that. So I walked the white road, you know, because I didn't want to be an Indian, I was ashamed.

Disconnect from culture is problematic because culture correlates with one's sense of place. Culture involves a constellation of individuals who share common religious beliefs, language, sex, culture, ethnicity, or history (Greschner, 2002) and offer individuals a sense of belonging to a group or community. Conversely, disconnect from one's culture and/or cultural group contributes to one's loss of place. Disconnect and "no place", as discussed throughout this paper, is significant and damaging. Three of the four participants explicitly identified feelings of disconnect with Indigenous culture as having negative impact on their lives. R., as described above, spent six years in residential school which left her both fearful and ashamed of her culture. C. was an Indigenous person raised in a non-Indigenous home, which challenged her sense of identity. K. spent a prolonged existence in the foster care system, which allowed her limited access to her home community and Indigenous traditions.

There is a clear relationship between culture and healing, particularly within Indigenous culture. Healing is improved when consideration is given to, "cultural messaging, knowledge, and learning that is related to the complex historical legacy of Aboriginal societies, which can provide important diverse contributions to current

treatment and wellness problems" (Green, 2010, p. 33). All four co-researches identified healing as a necessary component in their turning points from negative to positive space and three participants paid recognition to culturally driven programs. C., who participated in both culturally-based programming and western-based programming comments on her experience,

> In E***** [a federal institution] their programming is separate. You can take Aboriginal Women's engagement program or you can just take women's engagement program. One is geared for Native and one is geared for non-Native. I think you learn more of the teachings, you learn the more spiritual aspect of stuff in the Aboriginal part of it. I finished my programming in the community two weeks ago. It's facilitated by a white man and parole. It's kind of weird … it's different because there's no cultural aspect to it. There's no teachings behind it, you're taking it from parole whereas when you take the other program there's the culture, there's the traditions, spiritual, all those aspects to it.

R. spoke about her belief in the importance of utilizing an Indigenous paradigm,

> A lot of people are still asleep. I say asleep, they're still doing that, whatever it is, drinking, whatever eh, they're slowly waking up now because we're doing our teachings and we're doing our ceremonies and slowly a lot of these women are coming to ceremonies and they are slowly waking up and learning. They're lost right now and what I mean by lost is they don't know where to go, they don't have the teachings of our culture, they don't know who they are or where they come from. So once they start learning about their culture, they'll slowly wake up.

Three of the four participants were incarcerated at Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, a federal facility focused on healing and is based upon Indigenous teachings and beliefs. These participants all attribute Okimaw with re-connecting them with their culture and credit their incarceration at this facility for being the starting point for their individual change. It was not always easy. In the beginning, K. was an unwilling participant, remembering thinking, "this programming, this healing is basically bullshit. I just did it because I had to do it". However, the more programming she received, the more she paid attention, until the day "a light bulb went off". C. had a similar experience at Okimaw. She shares,

> Just put it this way, it's like you learn to appreciate the simplest things like walking out and smelling the air … You have to follow their ways of First Nations or you can just do your time, right? There's a horse program, which is amazing. We get a sweat once a week. We get more ceremonies than any other jail. Everything there for programming is Elder assisted. There's an Elder there, it's like living with family. Well, it is a family! They become your family. There's no uniforms, there's no keys, they have radios but they wear jeans and hoodies. First name basis, not like out there right? The Deputy Warden, when it was a safe place, would bring her kids in and the PO would bring her granddaughter in and we got to experience that stuff we needed right, like that bond and connection.

R. credits her time in Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge as to what re-connected her with her culture.

> The last time I went to jail, that's when I learnt about my culture. My Elders told me there's nothing bad about the medicines, they're to help you. This is what the Creator has given us native people and so I started learning to smudge, how to pray, how to do these things and I came out of there I brought those tools out with me, whatever I learned from those Elders in Maple Creek, I brought those out with me. So I came out of there with all those teachings I was taught – ceremonies, I became a sun dancer. Every year I go and do my ceremony sun dancing … And that's what I do every year and I'm still walking my path today and that's from 1998 when I got out of Maple Creek.

Culturally driven programming is both meaningful and effective. A study completed by Nechi Institute and KAS Corporation (1995) on Indigenous ex-prisoners who had "gone straight" concluded with this same information and reported in their findings, "the impact of spiritual and cultural identity in the process of becoming law-abiding was extremely powerful. It would appear to be the single most important and influential factor "(p. 58).

An authentic spirituality, "…must necessarily accommodate the hurts and struggles which people have endured. It also has the potential to help people explore new sources of hope" (Crisps, 2008, p. 368). Spirituality is something attainable in negative space and, in fact, at times it is the only thing. Based on the participants' perspective, spirituality appears to be what allowed each participant to overcome this existence. Belief in a higher power, in particular, appears significant. Looking back on her experiences, C. shares her perspective, "there's *a reason* I'm not dead. Like I said I've been shot, I've been stabbed, I've been beaten, I've been strangled, and I've overdosed four times." R. recalls her experience, "…I really, really wanted – in my heart I wanted

to change and I did everything I could to change. I really believed someone was up there that was looking after me, 'cause I should have been dead a long time ago".

Although the focus of this discussion has surrounded the value of traditional Indigenous beliefs, finding spiritual space in non-Indigenous belief systems can be positive well. M. talks about her powerful religious experience at Medjedori, which she credits as being the true turning point in her life,

> …I felt love for the very first time and that feeling that I had was so powerful it stayed with me. I had no need to drink no more after that. I had no need to feel like I had to be a certain way to be liked, you know what I mean? And I didn't care what others thought of me, I didn't seek nobody's approval, I knew I was loved by God and that's all that mattered, nothing else mattered after that.

Following her experience at Medjedori, M. began what she calls her "healing journey", which she attributes primarily to her faith. M. shares her current relationship with God,

> The way I perceive God is He's the power or Creator who created all things. So I talk to him like a person. I talk to him like the way I am talking to you now, that's how I talk to God when I feel the need to. I thank Him for the life that He has given me, I think Him for times that He has given me every day. I wake up, no matter what kind of day I have, I'm always thankful because I'm always given another day … He has taken me this far. He has the power. I leave it up to Him.

Spirituality, for these participants, has the power to persevere in dark spaces and allows one to overcome significant obstacles.

Indigenous Women and Custodial Space

Why are so many Indigenous women from Saskatchewan incarcerated? What might change this disparity? Within these two questions lies the crux of this research. The analysis should end with these points being addressed and the answers of the participants, the knowledge-holders of this project, are the voices that should be honoured. The reader should be left hearing the participants' thoughts, unmuddied from outside interpretation. The participants' voices should ring clearly in our ears. As such, this section is presented slightly differently than the sections that came before it. It is arranged very simply, with the participants' verbatim answers to these two specific questions being the lone data presented. After the participants offer their response, I offer my perspective, based on what I have learned along this journey. I included myself in this conversation as I am also a part of this research. I am not separate. I have created a relationship with this knowledge, with these women. And I too have a voice. This final section represents a dialogue, amongst us women, as we consider the learning journey we have taken.

With respect to why so many Indigenous women occupy custodial space, R. indicates,

> They have nowhere to go. They are disconnected from their families so they turn to either drugs or alcohol. They have a lot of issues, they don't trust anybody they can talk to … they're lost right now and what I mean by lost is they don't have the teachings of our culture. With myself I was on the wrong path, I was walking the white road instead of my own road and I was lost.

C. states,

> Everything goes back to where you came from. Indigenous women come from genocide, they come from residential schools, they come from alcoholism, they come from drug addiction, they come from abuse, they come from violence.

K. suggests,

> Most of us are from the same background, we basically went through the same shit. You know it's all the same story and it's really sad … I think a big part of it is probably growing up in foster homes and parents being affected by the residential school system so much they can't parent their own kids.

M. advises,

> I think the reason there are so many Aboriginal women in there is because of their addictions. And I think it stems from their childhoods. No one chooses to be an alcoholic or drug addict but then when you are Aboriginal woman trying to live life and sometimes things happen to you that are not under your control like a lot of things happen behind closed doors when you're a child, helpless, and then you try to find ways to cope with whatever happened and that's where the addictions comes in.

Me,

> All four participants identify painful personal histories and a clear disconnect – from the space of family, the space of culture – as factors that lead to over-incarceration rates of Indigenous women. And many of the things that lead to criminal involvement seem to be outside of the individuals' control. The terrible experiences in childhood, the sexual assaults, the effects of intergenerational trauma … these are not things the participants had power over. Society tends to

> blame criminalized women for their circumstances – but when you think critically about their histories and experiences, this is wrong, it is one-sided, and it is so unfair.

The participants further elaborate on what they think might change this over-representation

R. shares,

> Once they start learning about their culture, they'll slowly wake up. … If Aboriginal men and women would go back to their culture you wouldn't see an Indian in jail.

C. states,

> There is so much work to be done …It's getting awareness out there right? At the end of the day, everything is about a choice …For me, I left there [jail] and I go to a sweat lodge every week, I go to every ceremony I can, I follow those ways and I never stopped and I never stopped talking to my Elders and all of that, whereas so many women know nothing about those traditional ways … I find it, I search for it.

K.'s perspective,

> I think that people could be educated more, then there could be more success stories then there is not success. And people need to start talking about these things bothering them inside, these things that are making them feel bad. It is so tough to hide that stuff.

M's offers her advice,

> There is a reason as to why things happen in life, whether it's good or bad, and it's those things that make people who you are and people can change regardless where you've been or what you have done. Be the change you want to see happen.

Me,

> A return to culture, education and awareness, and personal faith are things that have the power to change the over-incarceration rates of Indigenous women in Saskatchewan. I found this interesting. The participants` responses to the first questions identified oppression and social issues as factors that contribute to over-incarceration rates of Indigenous women. Yet when asked to consider what might change this disparity, they all identified positive change as something that exists at a personal level. The participants all see positive change as being something within their control, something they have power over, something within their reach.

Violence, Trauma, and Colonialism

Before we continue, I must pause and explain how this section came to be. Originally, this section did not exist. As I mentioned above, I thought leaving the reader with the participants' words would be a simple and respectful way to end the learning journey we had embarked upon …. But, as some of you may already know, the learning journey never truly ends. While presenting the findings of this research at a conference alongside one of the participants, it was suggested to me that I read the book Therapeutic Nations by Dian Million (2013) and it is from here I began thinking more deeply about this research. Schaffer and Smith (2004) wrote "All stories emerge in complex and

uneven relationships of power" (as cited in Million, 2013, p. 76). The stories before us are no exception and it would be irresponsible to ignore the greater framework in which they are positioned. Let us now "produce silence into meaning" (Million, p. 64) and look at what was *not* said. Let us take a step back, consider the big picture, and place the participants' stories and the earlier sub-themes of the analysis within this context. Let us remind ourselves that colonialism still remains the heavily weighted backdrop to present-day dynamics between Canada and its Indigenous people.

Throughout this research, there has been much discussion about space. In the very first paragraphs of the analysis, space is explained as a binary relationship; it is something that is created in relationship to another. However, we now know space is far more complex. Space is racialized, space is gendered, space is contested … and in Canada, space is *always* a site of colonization, a site where white, heteronormative society takes on the racialized other in a clash for land and resources (Million, 2013). Moving forward, we must remind ourselves that the element of colonization, the history between Canada and its Indigenous people, and all of the accompanying dynamics must always remain a forefront during *any* discussions about space. In Canada, space is never innocent from the colonialist beliefs and practices which shape it. As such, it is imperative we view the stories before us as stories of *colonialism*, not just stories of "space". Like space, colonialism also involves a relationship with an "other" and that "other", within the Canadian framework, is Indigenous people.

One of the first points within the analysis was identifying *negative* space as opposed to *positive* space. However, now that we have reminded ourselves that Canadian space and colonialism are implicitly tied, the word *negative*, should, in fact, be reframed

as *violence.* The participants were not entangled in "negative" space; they were entangled in violent space, a space that marks ongoing colonial violence committed against Indigenous women. The various abuses, the marginalization, the displacement, the lack of "place", the disconnect from culture and family, all of which began early and carried on throughout their lives, are the violent outcomes of a still ongoing Canadian colonial assault against Indigenous peoples, with women bearing the brunt of this purposeful dismemberment. These stories, and the many horrible experiences within, highlight a history of colonial-settler relations, a normative devaluation of Indigenous women, a deep-rooted disrespect for Indigenous life, and a systematic, gendered, racialized attack upon anyone and/or anything that deviates from white, heteronormative order. It is not just "negative" space; it is a site of ongoing Canadian colonial violence. It is critical, as learners, that we understand this concept.

At some point in recent years, this ongoing cultural violence became rearticulated as "trauma". Cultural trauma, "occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks on their group consciousness" (Million, p. 7). Indigenous people have embraced trauma theory and for a myriad of reasons. For one, it provides a powerful explanation for present pain as it locates blame for historical acts of colonization to present conditions in Indigenous lives (Million). It is also attached to practices of self-disclosure, allowing individuals to articulate key issues in their lives (Million). Within this new ideology and subsequent language, also came the term "healing". "Healing" is viewed as the solution to Indigenous' people's contemporary poor health, substance abuse issues, violence in communities, and it allowed individuals and their families not only a language but an actual set of practices

that could affect positive change at a local level (Million). "Healing", in Indian country, is often associated with re-connection with culture and the discovery of spirituality and, for the participants, it was no exception. This was the space where the women found solace, support, and strength. This was the turning point in their lives, the epiphany in their stories. This is how they "healed" from a lifetime of atrocities. This is what they viewed as a necessary component in eliciting positive change. This was their survival tool in a complex, complicated, and often-cruel world.

There is some risk associated with adopting a trauma theory perspective. When positioning these stories in a greater framework, we must think critically about what the causal effects of adopting a trauma standpoint. "Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the Stories of First Nations Individuals" (1994) is a detailed report published by the Assembly of First Nations, intended to heal fragmentation in a spectrum from individuals to communities in the familiar sequence of trauma, repression, and resolution. The report recommends that "healing" be the careful rebuilding of Indigenous psyches, families, and communities, with responsibility, cooperation, and respect as key tenets. However, in order for healing to be successful, there is another key component.

> (Healing) cannot omit the larger community of Canada – which is called on to take responsibility in its actions. Part of assuring safety, a first criterion of healing, is out of the hands of Aboriginals themselves since Aboriginal peoples may never be assured safety from Canada's economic and social interventions. (Million, 2013, p. 99)

Quite simply, given the history between Indigenous people and settler states, given the ongoing colonial violence, there *is no safe space* for Indigenous people in Canada. In the same moment Indigenous people look to reconcile their pain, in the same moment they look to "heal", there continues to be an assailment of racism, gender violence, political powerlessness, and the continuous breakdown of networks such as communities and families (Million, 2013). Until Canada transforms the very order our nation is built upon, the colonial relationship and subsequent violence will continue and, as such, healing becomes a moot point. Personal healing is meaningless without a healing of larger relations (Million, 2013). "Healing", as experienced by the participants, may be a meaningful therapeutic exercise or, as suggested above, a survival tool in a world fraught with colonial violence, but change is meaningless when it occurs on only one side of the spatial relationship. There is risk in adopting this standpoint as it places responsibility for change on the oppressed, rather than the oppressor.

This brings us to the second component of the risk associated with adopting a trauma theoretical perspective and it is here which lays the heart of the matter. By adopting a trauma theory perspective, the focus shifts to health rather than autonomy. Million writes,

> Healing from trauma begins to be narrated as a prerequisite to self-determination. If the Indigenous don't heal, they may not be able to self-govern; in any case, they would need to heal to be self-sufficient (p. 105).

The link between individual dissolution and an inability to maintain stable community and governance is profound (Million). Trauma is not a site wherein self-determination is practiced. Indigenous people who experience unresolved trauma are viewed as lacking

the capacity to be subjects of their own polities, as incapable of governing their people and lands, and unable to achieve full autonomy. By permitting a focus on healing, Indigenous people are having to "fully assume victimhood at the same time they seek political power and autonomy, spheres that speak very different languages" (Million, p. 81). Healing becomes a primary focus, trauma becomes a policing rationale for further colonization (Million), Indigenous claims for political autonomy are deferred, and Canada maintains its paternalistic hold on Indigenous people and its authority over the nation's lands and resources.

In the end, the bottom-line between Canada and Canadian Indigenous people is and shall always be … a control of our nation's "space". Culture, spirituality, trauma, healing … although helpful tools in coping with the symptoms of a colonialist relationship, they are not the solution. There must be a complete transformation with respect to the relationship Canada shares with its Indigenous people (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015). Reflecting on what we have learned thus far and as we move into the recommendations stemming from this research, it is important to keep all of this in mind.

Recommendations for Social Work

Research surrounding the experiences of Indigenous women in Saskatchewan who have been sentenced to custody has significant implications for social work practice. As noted within the introductory paragraphs, Indigenous people have higher levels of representation in correctional custodial facilities compared to their representation in the Canadian general adult population. Within the custodial setting, Indigenous people comprised 27% of adults in provincial or territorial custody and 20% of adults in federal custody, roughly seven to eight times the Indigenous representation in the general population (Dauvergne, 2012). In 2008/2009 the highest proportion of female admissions in Canada was found in the province of Saskatchewan where 15% of all Canadian female admissions to custody occurred (Calverley, 2010). Within this population, Indigenous women comprised more than 85% of admissions (Calverley) despite comprising just 14.9% of Saskatchewan's total population (Indigenous Population Profile, 2006). The over-incarceration of Canada's Indigenous peoples is a significant social issue, one that does not appear to be going away

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), in their report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future, the Truth and Reconciliation Final Report* (2015), calls upon federal, provincial and territorial governments to take action so as to fulfill the promise of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The TRC outlined ninety four 'Calls to Action', in the hope that these recommendations will redress the harmful legacy of residential schools . . . ." (TRC, 2015, p.181). One of the 'Calls to Action', called "upon federal, provincial, and territorial governments to commit

to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody over the next decade" (TRC, 2015, Calls to Action 30, p. 324).

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this research, many of which are supported by the TRC Report, and they are arranged in a similar manner as to the research journey we just traveled – first, are the recommendations created in response to what was said and, second, are the recommendations created in response to what was left unsaid.

Based on what the participants shared, it is clear there is significant value in culturally-relevant programming. Culturally-relevant programming should be made available to incarcerated Indigenous people, particularly as a method of coping and survival. However, it should be Indigenous-developed and delivered, free from state intervention. The state, "cannot be a safe agent in reconciliation because it is still constituted through the same nexus of racialization, heteronormativity, and gender violence that it was formed in" (Million, 2013, p. 162). One way to do this in Saskatchewan might involve the province contracting with Indigenous nations to independently create and deliver treatment programs within the provincial jail system, without government interference. The TRC Report (2015), calls upon all levels of government, "to work with Indigenous communities to provide culturally relevant services to inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence, and overcoming the experiences of having been sexually abused" (TRC, 2015, Call to Action 36, p. 324).

Although there have been some previous discussion surrounding the risks associated with adopting a trauma theory standpoint, it must be recognized that people

need a way to make sense of their world. The participants experienced significant challenges throughout their lives, many of which were outside their control, and they all spoke about needing to "heal" in order to overcome these obstacles. There is a significant body of literature that stresses the importance of Indigenous communities having access to culturally relevant customs and ritual in order to reconcile their pain (Waldram, Herring & Young, 2006 as cited in Green, 2010). However, the vast majority of current health services in North America are based upon a western paradigm, which differs from an Indigenous worldview (Gone, 2004, as cited in Green). This is problematic. Providing healing services to Indigenous populations from a non-Indigenous perspective is, "a form of continued oppression and colonization as it does not legitimize the Indigenous cultural view of health" (Green, p. 29). Treatment models delivered to Indigenous populations need to be inclusive of Indigenous viewpoints and beliefs and in a way that is not judged or discredited by non-Indigenous perspective (Green) and may include cultural practices such as smudging, talking circles, and sweat lodges. This recommendation is supported by the Truth and Reconciliation Final Report (2015); when they call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system "to recognize the value of Indigenous healing practices and use them in the treatment of Indigenous patients in collaboration with Indigenous healers" (TRC, 2015, Call to Action 22, p. 322).

As demonstrated by the stories before us, the lives of Indigenous women are fraught with violence and chaos. Indigenous women who experience this violent space are not the sole victims. In May 2014, there were 619 women incarcerated at the Canadian federal level, two thirds of whom were mothers (Shingle, 2014). Violence is

truly a family experience and the impacts of living amidst such discord presents significant obstacles to the health and well-being of Indigenous families and communities (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014). Early exposure to violence in particular has been revealed to be an influential factor in limiting opportunities for Indigenous children (Dickson-Gilmore).

> It is a leading cause of the dissolution of the families and the removal of children from their homes and into foster care and is implicated as a central factor in poor school performance and school leaving. Taken together, these factors merge into behavioural patterns conducive to early contact with the criminal justice system, which is, in turn, directly tied to the over-representation of Aboriginal people, both as victims of crime, and as offenders, at every level of the justice system (Dickson-Gilmore and LaPrairie, 2005; Weatherburn, Fitzgerald, and Hua, 2003; Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997, as cited in Dickson-Gilmore, 2014).

To combat the effects of exposure to violence, there should be programming made available to the children of incarcerated Indigenous women that addresses trauma, is culturally-driven, and instills a sense of pride, identity and belonging in participant – it should create positive space and allow for a sense of place. However, by nature of the colonial project in which we are all embedded, it is safe to assume most Indigenous children, not just the children of Indigenous women prisoners, will encounter violent spaces (Million, 2013). As such, this programming should be made available to all Indigenous youth and, in addition to the aspects described above, should provide Indigenous youth with the skills necessary for living in world where racist discourse exists. Indigenous youth represent Indigenous future and it is imperative they have space

to flourish. The TRC Report (2015), highlights the need for specific youth programs and calls upon the federal government to "establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliations, and establish and a national network to share information and best practices" (TRC, 2015, Call for Action 66, p. 332).

In recent history, the social work profession has not recognized the importance of spirituality in the lives of either service user or the professional workforce (Crisps, 2008). Few social workers consider it their role to be concerned with clients' spirituality (Crisps) and it is viewed as a private matter and a personal choice. However, as visually exemplified by the Medicine Wheel, an individual's spiritual needs are equal to and inextricably connected with their physical, mental, and emotional requisites. Spirituality is important. There is considerable value in incorporating spirituality into social work practice, particularly when working with Indigenous people for whom spirituality and culture are implicitly connected. Furthermore, this research demonstrates that spirituality and faith is significant for individuals overcoming personal obstacles, seeking comfort, and searching for positive space and individual place. Although spirituality is not a solution for ending colonialist or other oppressive practices, there may be value in incorporating spirituality into social work practice.

Moving into what was left unspoken; marginalization stemming from colonialism is what causes Indigenous women's increased contact with the justice system and is the starting point for this population's pathway to prison (Nielson, 2003). Colonialism creates a unique set of circumstances. Indigenous women prisoners experience similar disadvantages as other women prisoners, however, Indigenous women also suffer from

"… the loss of cultural identity, spirituality, language, and the loss of self-esteem that is based in not having a respected place in the history of the colonized country" (Nielson, p. 69). The impact of colonization is crippling, far-reaching, and has inter-generational effects. As such, it is imperative programming that addresses the effects of colonialism is made available to incarcerated Indigenous women. However, it is far more important we, as a nation, confront the fact that the effects of colonialism are ongoing, there continues to be an intense pathologizing of Indigenous people in general, and there must be a sincere commitment from Canada with respect to making significant changes in the relationship it shares with its Indigenous people (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015).

It must be understood that jail does not solve colonization. In fact, the over-representation of Indigenous people within the Canadian justice system exemplifies current practices of colonization within this nation. But how does one go about decolonizing current legal practices? There is no doubt this is, and will continue to be, a significant undertaking as it will involve a complete transformation of not only Canada's legal system but also of the way we, as a nation, view Indigenous people. However, a first step might begin with addressing current judicial practices. With respect to Indigenous people in conflict with the law, Indigenous nations should be involved as an equal partner throughout the judicial process, including the actual sentencing. This is a way for Indigenous nations to achieve some autonomy and self-governance over its people. In addition, Indigenous knowledge systems must inform fundamental judicial processes with Indigenous people and not simply be an afterthought. Options such as sentencing circles, other forms of restorative justice, and Gladue reports should be automatic check points throughout the legal process when it involves Indigenous people,

rather than forgotten-about or rarely-used options. Indigenous epistemologies can, and should, inform legal practices (Million, 2013). There are a number of recommendations with the TRC Report related to justice, including Call to Action 28 which calls upon law schools in Canada to require all law students to take courses on Indigenous people and the law, and Call to Action 31, which calls upon federal, provincial, and territorial governments to provide funding to "evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders" (TRC, 2015, p. 324)

As the gap in the literature suggests, Indigenous women from Saskatchewan have had very little opportunity to personally express their stories, wants, and needs. Colonialism's strongest defense is silence (Million, 2013) and, as such, this side of the colonial relationship must be heard. No two histories are alike and it is imperative to gather multiple perspectives to enrich one's understanding. These stories are just the tip of the iceberg. There are many other women who have knowledge and wisdom to share and these personal accounts will lead to an enriched understanding. Incorporating the views of those directly impacted will be the starting point in what is needed to address the complex social issues that exist within this province. Indigenous women have the power and wisdom to lead their nation. Honorary Witness Patsy George sums this up succinctly, "Women have always been a beacon of hope" (TRC, 2015, p. 11).

Changing the relationship between Canada and Canadian Indigenous peoples is no easy task and it takes far more than just a collective acknowledgement of past and current wrongdoings; it will require a complete transformation of our nation and the systems within. Ultimately, Indigenous people need the ability to govern their own people, they need to regain control over their lands, and they need to find some form of

autonomy, free from the Canadian government. Indigenous knowledge must inform this new Indigenous governance. Furthermore, Canada and its Indigenous people will need to find an entirely new way to relate to each other. Kiera Ladner (2009), as cited in Dian Million's text, suggests that people live best together "as part of a circle of life, not as superior beings who claim dominion over other species and other humans" (p. 179). The TRC Report (2015)calls for, "a renewal of treaty relationships based on principles of mutual recognition, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for maintaining those relationships in the future" (TRC, 2015, Call to Action 45 (iii), p. 326). This would mean a complete overhaul of our nation's ideological framework, where white heteronormative male order is no longer our core, and where Indigenous peoples, other minorities, and anyone who is oppressed can find inclusion. Social work practitioners can actively participate in this social transformation. For social workers, "there is meaning in working towards social transformation, simply because humanity is more important than the inhuman systems that try to control and shape it" (Morley & Ife, 2008).

Conclusion

This research and the relationships we built with it were formed with the intention of challenging thought and provoking conversation around the complex relationship between gender, race and space, specifically as it pertains to Indigenous women from Saskatchewan and the custodial system. As we participated in this learning opportunity, a number of points were made clear including the complexity of space, the challenges surrounding family space, and the important role culture and spirituality can play in one's survival. And throughout this journey, we tried to make sense of the greater colonial project in which we are all embedded. This was not an easy task.

Something unknown to me as I began this research journey was that the first of Canada's antidiscrimination laws began with the Saskatchewan Bill of Rights, 1947 (Greschner, 2002). The bill had two components. First, it affirmed the fundamental freedoms such as freedoms of speech, association and religion, participation in elections and so forth. Second, it, forbade discrimination of race, creed, religion, colour, and ethnic or national origin. The purpose of the bill was to ensure every resident of Saskatchewan could participate fully in the life of the province without regards to race, nationality, or religion (Greschner). A number of speeches made by public figures spoke to this goal, including the Attorney General J.W. Corman, who in March 1947 condemned prejudice and asked the Legislative Assembly whether other provinces, "had such a wonderful opportunity of showing the rest of the world how people of diverse nationalities can live together in peace, in harmony, and in good will" (as cited in Greschner, p. 308). Years later, Tommy Douglas described his Saskatchewan, "an island of tolerance and good will … a haven of neighbourliness" (as cited in Greschner, p. 308).

In 2015, in the very province where the first anti-discriminatory legislation was implemented, equality for Indigenous people has yet to be achieved. Indigenous people are still not afforded the right of true membership to dominant society and persistent racial practices go unacknowledged. The dynamics surrounding domination and oppression between dominant Canadian society and Indigenous peoples continues to exist and the over-incarceration rate of Saskatchewan's Indigenous people is a clear example of present-day colonialist practice. This over-representation reinforces the long-standing societal belief that Indigenous people are characterized by degeneracy and supports the continued exclusion of Indigenous people from dominant or "white" society. Canada's racial pecking order continues through the over-incarceration of its Indigenous people. This must change.

The final words of this literary work should reflect the powerful journey the researcher, participants, and readers traveled. In closing the words of two women shall be shared. First, Patricia Monture, a Mohawk Canadian lawyer, activist, educator and author wrote,

> Prison cannot remedy the problem of the poverty on reserves. It cannot deal with immediate or historical memories of the genocide that Europeans worked upon our people. It cannot remedy violence, alcohol abuse, sexual assault during childhood, rape and other violence Aboriginal women experience at the hands of men. It cannot heal the past abuse of foster homes, or the indifference and racism of Canada's justice system in its dealings with Aboriginal people. However, the treatment of Aboriginal women can begin to recognize that these things are the realities of the lives many Aboriginal women offenders have led. By

> understanding this point, we can begin to make changes that will promote healing instead of rage (2006, p. 27).

Out of respect, the last word is given to R., fellow participant and the Elder who guided this project,

> They tried to assimilate the Indian into the white world, that's what they did. It didn't work because we're not white, we're red, red people, we're native people. The Creator made us the keepers of Mother Earth, and the medicines, ceremonies, that's what was given to us. We are red people and we are meant to walk the red road. If we walk the red road we will never be lost.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

[Your department/institutional letterhead] ***Participant Consent Form***

Project Title: Women, Race and Custodial Space; Exploring the Experiences of Aboriginal Women in Saskatchewan Sentenced to Custody

Researcher(s):
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Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

The purpose of my research is to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of Aboriginal females in Saskatchewan who have been sentenced to custody through personal, narrative accounts. The objective is to achieve awareness surrounding the historical and social factors which have contributed to this disparity and to share this information with others in a meaningful manner. It is hoped the research would give back to the participants by giving a group of individuals who have experienced oppression a voice, as well as an opportunity to participate in the process of change. And it is hoped the research will provoke thought and challenge the ways society views space and race in Canada present-day.

Procedures:

The procedure for data collection would entail in person or telephone interviews conducted by this researcher at a time convenient for the research participant. It is estimated this interview could be completed in two hours. The interviews will be recorded on audio tapes. The research participant has the option of stating the need for a break during the interview or could have the interview broken into more than one interview if she would find this beneficial. The research participant will give verbal consent to have interview recorded before interview questions commence. There will be four participants involved in this research project.

Funded by:

N/A

Potential Risks:

- There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research
- **Should there be any psychological trauma which emerges due to disruption of past feelings/experiences, you will be referred to a trained professional within your community for follow-up**
- Immediately following the interview, the researcher will debrief with participant to ensure mental/emotional well-being is intact. Researcher will offer referral to support/services should further debriefing be required at this time.
- Within two weeks of the completed interview you will be contacted by the researcher for a follow-up discussion and review of present circumstances
- You have the right to only answer questions you feel comfortable answering
- You have the right to terminate the interview at any point

Potential Benefits:

- It is hoped the benefits will include greater awareness and understanding of the issues related to Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan women serving custodial sentences. **There is no guarantee the findings will lead to any change in current programming practices.**

Compensation:

- There is no compensation.

Confidentiality:

- For the purpose of safeguarding confidentiality and anonymity of your response, you will be given the option of choosing a pseudonym. If you decline to choose a pseudonym, you will referred to throughout the research by your first initial. Under no circumstances will further information be provided within the data or subsequent publication of research findings
- Upon completion of the data collection, there will be a group interview, consisting of the key informant, the participants and this researcher to discuss findings. You have the right not to participate in the group interview should you wish to maintain your anonymity. Your response will not be shared at the group interview should you choose not to participate

- The data you provide will be shared in a published thesis

- **Storage of Data:**
  - The hard data will be stored with the researcher in a locked cabinet in the office of my Academic Supervisor at the University of Regina. No one will have access to this locked cabinet except for the researcher and Academic Supervisor.
  - The electronic data will be stored on the researcher's personal computer which no one has access to without a password
  - When the data is no longer required it will be destroyed; it is anticipated at this time the raw data will be stored for five years following completion of project.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:"

- I grant permission to be audio taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

- I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: ___ No: ___

- I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___

- You may quote me and use my name: Yes: ___ No: ___

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the interview at any point
- You have the right to withdraw from the study for four months after completion of the interview. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow up:

- If you are interested in obtaining results from the study, please advise the researcher. Once the information has been returned from professor review, the written transcript can be made available upon your request.
- Upon completion of the interview, the researcher will debrief with you to ensure mental/emotional well-being is intact. A referral to appropriate support services will be offered at this time, upon your request.
- The researcher will be having a follow-up discussion with you as a participant two weeks following the interview. The date and time will be scheduled upon completion of the telephone interview and will be at your convenience.

Questions or Concerns: (see section 12)

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;

- This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the U of R Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at [585-4775 or research.ethics@uregina.ca]. Out of town participants may call collect.

Consent

SIGNED CONSENT

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

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

Due to geographical constraints, the consent may be obtained orally. In this scenario:

I read and explained this Consent Form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it. In addition, consent may be audio or videotaped.

Name of Participant	*Researcher's Signature*	*Date*

Appendix B

Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your family, growing up, and your community.
2. Tell me about the circumstances that led you to "this" place?
    a) At what point did you become involved in criminal activity? What kinds of things were happening?
3. What were your experiences within the system and in what ways did your time in facility impact you?
4. Why do you think so many women who are incarcerated are Indigenous? What do you think might change this?
5. How do you think your experiences as an Indigenous woman might be different than those experiences of a non-Indigenous woman?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share