ONISITOOTUMOWIN KEHTE-AYAK (THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE OLD ONES) OF HEALING FROM ADDICTION

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

University of Regina

by

Carrie Leanne LaVallie

Regina, Saskatchewan

July 2019

Copyright © 2019: Carrie LaVallie
Carrie Leanne LaVallie, candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, has presented a thesis titled, *ONISITOOTUMOWIN KEHTE-AYAK (The Understanding of the Old Ones) of Healing From Addiction*, in an oral examination held on July 2, 2019. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: *Dr. Lethv Rain Prud'homme-Cranford, University of Calgary*

Supervisor: Dr. JoLee Sasakamoose, Educational Psychology

Committee Member: Dr. Angela McGinnis, Educational Psychology

Committee Member: **Dr. Linda Goulet, Indigenous Education**

Committee Member: *Dr. Sharon Acoose, Faculty of Social Work*

Chair of Defense: Dr. Fanhua Zeng, Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research

*Via Zoom Conferencing
**Not present at defense
ABSTRACT

Colonization and assimilation processes deteriorated access to *maskihkiy* (medicine) that act as protective factors to help work toward *pimatisiwin* (in a good way/good life). Exposure to generational trauma and layers of racism may be considered disruptive factors metaphorically depicted as *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine). These disruptive factors create *achak* (spirit) distress that is expressed through addiction.

Using Indigenous methodologies to decolonize addiction research, knowledge about healing was constructed with five Indigenous *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones, knowledge keepers) who answered the question, What do *Kehte-ayak* have to say about the relevance of harmonizing Indigenous ceremonial practices and western-based treatment approaches to meet inherent spiritual needs in healing from addictions. Four Cree *Kehte-ayak* were chosen who utilize Indigenous and western ways to support *n’duwihitowin* (healing together) and one *Kehtehi* (Old One) was chosen to translate concepts into Cree.

Through a process of relationship building, I spent time identifying intention, attending ceremony, having conversations, and reflecting on the data to create ethical space to privilege the voices of the *Kehte-ayak*. Data was Reflexively Reflected upon by uniting current neuroscientific theories with respected Indigenous practices offered by the *Kehte-ayak*. Through metaphors from the teachings, the *Kehte-ayak* identified that the disruptive factor of *maci-maskihkiy* produces *waneneetumowin* (distressed) *achak* and then fosters closing off the *achak* connection. Effective addiction work should focus on *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction by ‘calling the *achak* back’ and strengthening neurological regulation through Indigenous cultural methods.

Harmonizing effective Indigenous and western approaches creates opportunities for
n’duwihitowin (healing together), which is used to build spiritual grounded maskihkiy to nugaska addiction and to call the achak back, key in pimatisiwin for all.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Universe, spirit, and ancestors. A special thanks to my daughter Chelsea and son Matthew. Your support and encouragement kept me going. In addition, I thank my larger family, all my friends, and colleagues who carried me in my writing and incented me to strive towards my goal. Words cannot express how grateful I am to have this level of support in my life. I would like to express appreciation to my beloved husband Anton who spent much time listening to my explanation of what I was doing only to respond with ‘well keep doing it.’ I can assure you that this is the last hurdle. I express my appreciation and thanks to my advisor Professor Dr. JoLee Sasakamoose. Without your direction, support, and unwavering vision, I would not have completed this. I thank my committee members, Professor Emeritus Linda Goulet, whom without your unretired commitment to my dissertation this would not have been possible. Thank you, Professor Angela McGinnis, your influential insight deepened my project. Lastly, thank you Professor Sharon Acoose, your stories of courage are the reason I chose this topic. I would especially like to thank Kehtehi Florence Allen, Kehtehi Irene Bird, Kehtehi Rose Bird, Kehtehi Preston Gardypie, and Kehtehi Keith Goulet. Your teachings were profound and led me to discover the world of metaphors. This project received funding from the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit (SIDRU), a provincial educational research and development unit located in the Faculty of Education, University of Regina. The dollars from this fund supported me to attend ceremony and honour the teachings of the Kehte-ayak in a respectful way. Lastly, this dissertation would not be readable without the tireless effort of my two editors Bea Fisher and Tim Drake.
DEDICATION

To the Kehte-ayak who participated in this study.

Your stories reveal your wisdom

and commitment to helping people

heal from addiction/trauma and seek pimatisiwin.

In memory of those, we lost due to addiction.
## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ v

DEDICATION .......................................................................................................................... vi

Table of Contents ................................................................................................................ vii

List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... xiii

List of Illustrations ................................................................................................................. xiv

CHAPTER 1: FOCUS OF THE STUDY .................................................................................. 2

PROLOGUE .......................................................................................................................... 2

   Beginning the Journey ........................................................................................................ 2

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 6

   The Healing Journey (Research Problem) ........................................................................ 10

Healing Options (Environmental Scan) .................................................................................. 14

   Service provision................................................................................................................. 16

   Aftercare.............................................................................................................................. 19

Research Objectives ............................................................................................................. 22

Research Question ................................................................................................................. 23

Creating Ethical Space ........................................................................................................... 24

Setting Boundaries ................................................................................................................. 27
Trustworthy................................................................. 28
Credible................................................................. 29
Dependable............................................................. 31

CHAPTER 2: Rationale (Literature Review) ................................................. 33

Trauma Informed ......................................................... 33
Strengthening Resilience.................................................... 35
Ceremony ....................................................................... 37
Engaging the Voices of the Kehte-ayak ..................................... 38
Concept Analysis of Addiction ...................................................... 40
Neuroscience Perspective of Addiction ........................................ 41
Neuro-regulation and Addiction .................................................. 45
Mindfulness based practices ....................................................... 47
Attention Restoration Theory (ART). ........................................ 48
Somatic Experiencing® ....................................................... 53
Neurodecolonization approach ................................................ 54
Neuromodulation to Moderate Addiction ................................... 56
Cultural Responsiveness ..................................................... 57
Theoretical Framework ....................................................... 61
Decolonizing Research ...................................................... 61

viii
Indigenous Research Agenda .......................................................................................... 62

Sandy Grande .................................................................................................................. 65

Indigenous Onto-Epistemology ..................................................................................... 68

Situating relational onto-epistemology. ......................................................................... 69

Integration of Theoretical Perspective ............................................................................ 74

Cultural Responsiveness Theoretical Framework .......................................................... 79

CHAPTER 3: Methodological Considerations ................................................................... 82

Indigenous Methodologies .............................................................................................. 84

Beyond Narrative and Critical Inquiry ............................................................................. 87

Reflexive Reflection (Data Analysis Method) .................................................................. 90

My Journey (Fieldwork/Research Design) ...................................................................... 99

Data Collection ................................................................................................................ 99

Researcher Preparedness ................................................................................................. 102

Participants ....................................................................................................................... 104

Researcher as Tool ........................................................................................................... 107

Inquiry Strategies ............................................................................................................. 109

Data Reflection ................................................................................................................ 112

CHAPTER 4: Their Journey (Results/Findings) ................................................................. 115

Addiction as Achak (spirit) Distress in the Journey of Healing .................................... 116
Achak (spirit) Disrupted (Love and Belonging) ........................................ 118

The way it was. .................................................................................. 119

Disruption........................................................................................... 127

Multiple losses. ............................................................................... 139

Achak (spirit) Connection Closing (Forgiveness) ......................... 152

The exuberance of life................................................................. 154

Achak (spirit) waneneetumowin (distress). ..................................... 161

Achak (spirit) connection closing............................................... 167

Achak (spirit) blocking the connection. ........................................ 170

Achak (spirit) connection guardians.......................................... 171

Keeping the connection closed. .................................................. 189

Walking the White Road (Purpose and Meaning) .................... 196

Achak (spirit) calling.............................................................. 197

Smudging is slowly being accepted........................................... 203

Western way is not working......................................................... 207

Freewill. ...................................................................................... 213

Need to Harmonize Ways (Hope and Creativity) .................... 218

Ancestral calling. .............................................................................. 222

Two hands working together...................................................... 226
CHAPTER 5: Our Journey (Major Findings and Discussion).................................231

Calling the Achak (spirit) Back (Trauma Informed) ................................. 233

Meeting spiritual needs. ................................................................................. 238

Walking the Red Road (Cultural Responsiveness) ...................................... 256

Amending Moniyaw Ways (Neuromodulation) ........................................ 270

N’duwihitowin (Healing Together/Harmonizing) ....................................... 286

Healing the Achak (spirit) Through N’duwihitowin (Healing Together).... 286

Harmonizing approaches through N’duwihitowin. .................................... 292

Local.............................................................................................................. 296

Your own way. .......................................................................................... 298

CHAPTER 6: Your Journey (Implications & Dissemination).........................301

Harmonizing Culturally Safe Practice by Decolonizing Neuro-regulation ... 302

Trauma Informed Research............................................................................ 305

Policy – Cultural Responsiveness ............................................................... 307

Dissemination (Responsibility)..................................................................... 308

References.....................................................................................................313

Cree Terms.................................................................................................... 340

Glossary......................................................................................................... 343

APPENDIX A Ethics Approval....................................................................348
APPENDIX B  Consent Form ........................................................................................................350

APPENDIX C Demographics Questionnaire .............................................................................353

APPENDIX D Interview Questions.............................................................................................354

APPENDIX E Reflexive Reflection Example ...............................................................................356
List of Tables

Table 1 ART Resources and Factors .......................................................... 52
Table 2 Ontological/Epistemic Perspectives ................................................. 71
Table 3 Research Paradigms ...................................................................... 88
Table 4 Reflectivity and Reflexivity .............................................................. 92
List of Illustrations

Figure 1 Research Process of Four Journeys Depicted in this Study................................. 4

Figure 2 Illustration of Indigenous Research Agenda ....................................................... 63

Figure 3 Four Elements of a Relationship. ................................................................. 73

Figure 4 Theoretical Illustration for Indigenous Methodologies .................................. 78

Figure 5 Cultural Responsiveness Framework ............................................................. 80

Figure 6 Illustration of Indigenous Methodology Overview For This Study ............... 84

Figure 7 Illustration of Indigenous Research Process.................................................... 98

Figure 8 The Pileated Woodpecker Represents the Need to Dig Deeper .................... 108

Figure 9 Illustration of Themes.................................................................................... 116

Figure 10 Illustration of Key Findings.......................................................................... 233

Figure 11 Tree Metaphor for the Healing Journey ....................................................... 274

Figure 12 Eagle Feather Metaphor for the Healing Journey......................................... 276

Figure 13 Illustration Depicting the Elements of Your Journey................................. 302
CHAPTER 1: FOCUS OF THE STUDY

PROLOGUE

Beginning the Journey

This study portrays co-constructed journeys of an aftercare theory that influences healing from addiction by harmonizing\textsuperscript{1} Indigenous\textsuperscript{2} and western approaches, as expressed through five *Kehte-ayak*\textsuperscript{3} (Old Ones) teachings and metaphors. Some titles, concepts, terms, and metaphors alternate between Cree expressions\textsuperscript{4} and western words, with the accompanying term shown in brackets. Cree terms are presented in italics and referred to in the glossary. Using Cree terms and typical western-academic terms represents a harmonizing approach by respecting both ways of knowing. All sections have the traditional academic headers of Fieldwork (research design), Results, Discussion, and Implications in brackets beside the *journey* headers. The first three chapters in this study portray the classic Introduction, Rationale, and Methodology sections. *My Journey* replaces the typical third chapter subtitle Fieldwork (or research design). Chapter four houses the Results portion representing the *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones) journey as *Their Journey*. *Our Journey* articulates the co-constructed knowledge

---

\textsuperscript{1} Term coined by LaVallie (Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb, 2017; LaVallie & Sasakamoose 2016).

\textsuperscript{2} This study uses the term Indigenous to represent the First Peoples of Canada. It is an international term that suggests a shared experience of colonization and the struggle for self-determination among First Peoples (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Capitalization reflects a proper noun.

\textsuperscript{3} There are different dialects and spellings of Cree terms that are used in this dissertation. Different sources of Cree language come from different dialect communities, for example the Nehiyuw dialect is spoken in southern Saskatchewan (Y dialect) and the Nehinuw community of Cumberland House (N dialect) is where Kehtehi Keith Goulet is from.

\textsuperscript{4} See glossary of Cree terms.
rounding out the Discussion section (Chapter 5) and Your Journey, as the reader, will present the implications segment classically titled Chapter 6. I also supported traditional academic terminology with more inclusive language such as renaming the ‘research problem’ section The Healing Journey. The Results chapter will offer metaphors from the Kehtehi (Old One) teachings. I remind readers within the brackets of the spiritual need that has not been met, for example, ‘closing off achak (spirit) connection’ (Forgiveness). ‘Closing off achak (spirit) connection’ is the metaphor and Forgiveness is the spiritual need that has been affected; an accompanying Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) teaching is labelled ‘The Way it Was.’ This study is a snapshot in time and you are encouraged to read each section, taking a moment to reflect on what was presented. You are invited to consider what makes sense to you and what questions arise. Together we will explore harmonizing approaches to decolonizing aftercare to assist everyone in healing from addiction.

Absolon (2011), an Indigenous methodologist, suggests using imagery to help visualize Indigenous research approaches. To provide visual representations of the theories, processes, and findings, I used illustrations and tables. The first figure depicts the four journeys (My Journey, Their Journey, Our Journey, and Your Journey) of the Indigenous research process used for this study (see Figure 1).

5 Achak is a Cree term meaning the Christian perspective of spirit. Cree language has different terms for the many spirits. See glossary for further discussion.

6 See glossary for definition.
The following is a narrative overview of the progression and the completion of this study. *My Journey* is shown as the east, yellow quadrant in the Research Process figure (Figure 1). The colour yellow signifies the rising sun, metaphorically symbolizing the start of *my journey*. *My Journey* represents the preparation, and execution of the data collection portion of the study (typically titled Fieldwork or Research Design). Through conversations with the *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones), I uncovered metaphors and *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones) teachings that reflected *Their Journey*. The blue quadrant depicts the sky as the *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones) journey. Sharing their stories of disruptive residential school experiences and generational trauma developed into stories of hope and collaboration with the goal of helping everyone heal from addiction. Representing the setting sun, *Our Journey*, the red quarter signifies our journey together or our co-creation of new-
knowledge. ‘Their Journey’ is chapter four (Findings) and chapter five is *Our Journey* (Discussion) and *Your Journey* (Recommendations). My western perspective was united with the Kehte-ayak’s (Old Ones) perspective using culturally responsive, trauma informed, harmonized care approaches. The constructed knowledge from this study is shared with you, the reader, rounding out the fourth guardant. The white colour symbolizes the white moon, or winter, characterizing our ancestors and contemplation. Winter is a time for storytelling and produces *Your Journey*. ‘You’ start by reading our shared stories and are then invited to reflect on how this information may influence ‘you.’ I invite you to reflect on how this information changed you and how you will create new knowledge.
Introduction

Elevated numbers of addiction among Indigenous peoples is a problem that was initiated by disrupted life experiences from colonization and has been perpetuated through assimilation practices and policies. Colonization efforts in Canada disrupted Indigenous cultural practices and ceremonies and were replaced with the ethnocentric, Christian-based European perspective of the settlers, churches, and government as it moved in. Cultural practices and ceremonies met the spiritual needs of Indigenous people and helped to protect against addiction. Factors that influence Indigenous peoples’ health perspectives address wellness in a holistic manner unlike western biomedical approaches (Shea, Poudrier, Chad, Jeffery, Thomas, & Burnouf, 2013). Recovery approaches therefore require wholistic\(^7\), culturally responsive methods to support sustained healing. This study presents metaphors from Indigenous\(^8\) Kehte-ayak’s (Old Ones) teachings, wisdoms, and traditions. Metaphors are compatible in clarifying western non-metaphorical concepts to build new strategies for aftercare services in addiction treatment. Metaphors shape reality (individual and collective) and are a tool for understanding and changing reality. To decolonize aftercare approaches, the act of interpreting the metaphors and harmonizing\(^9\) them with western explanations of cognitive processes become the object of inquiry.

\(^7\) Wholistic is used to represent all parts or whole parts as opposed to holistic which denotes a religious sense as in holy.
\(^8\) See glossary of terms.
\(^9\) Term coined by LaVallie (Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb, 2017; LaVallie & Sasakamoose 2016).
Decolonizing addiction treatment and western-based aftercare measures are steps that bolster healing for Indigenous peoples. Front line Indigenous addiction workers and Kehte-ayak\(^{10}\) (Old Ones) are doing much work; however, very little is disseminated in academia on the need to use proven western-treatment options while honouring Indigenous-healing approaches through a decolonizing perspective. Using Indigenous methodologies framed by a relational ontology, this study presents findings to decolonize healing approaches that harmonize Indigenous and neuroscientific western approaches for people healing from addiction. Through conversations with five Kehte-ayak (Old Ones), this study answered the question ‘What do Kehte-ayak have to say about the relevance of converging Indigenous ceremonial practices and western-based treatment approaches to meet inherent spiritual needs in healing from addictions?’ Metaphors, teachings, and wisdoms harmonized with western-based neuromodulation approaches are made known.

Innovative research in neuroscience using functional magnetic resonance imagining (fMRI) has explored the potential predictive nature of addiction relapse and neural\(^{11}\) self-regulation (Choi, Soyon, Tian Wang, & Phillips, 2014; Leeman & Potenz, 2013; Luijten et al, 2014; Szabadi, 2013; and Tovino, 2006; Winger, Woods, Galuska, &

---

\(^{10}\) Under the constitution, the Indigenous populations in Canada are identified as Aboriginal peoples separated as Indian, Métis, and Inuit. The term First Nations is respectfully used to depict the Indigenous populations identified as Indian peoples by the Government of Canada when discussing statistics. The term Kehte (Old One) is used to describe a person who is acknowledged by their community as a Kehte who lives a clean life and offers guidance and wisdom based on Nationhood knowledge. A Kehte is not required to be of a certain age but many Kehte-ayak are over the age of 65.

\(^{11}\) Pertaining to nerves and the nervous system.
Two emerging neural self-regulation approaches to strengthening sustained healing, supported by neuroscience, are mindfulness (Lea, Cadman, & Philo, 2014) and attention restoration therapy (ART; Kaplan & Berman, 2010). Additionally, Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau (2015) speak to decades of work that supports regulation of the nervous system through Somatic Experiencing®, pointing to biological evidence and its comparison to eastern methods (Zen and aikido as examples).

Extraordinarily little of the previous research speaks to harmonizing North American Indigenous practices to neuro-regulation in healing from addiction. The research co-constructed within this study explores how Northern American Indigenous ceremony and ceremonial practices support neurological changes associated with healing through practices reflective of mindfulness, ART, and Somatic Experiencing®.

Indigenous ceremonies provide the cultural context needed for Indigenous peoples and all peoples to meet inherent spiritual needs to heal from addiction. Meeting spiritual needs and ritualistic practice in ceremony are century old examples of current western-based, self-regulating processes essential for healing such as mindfulness practice, ART, and Somatic Experiencing®.

Calling for decolonizing approaches to addiction recovery (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005; Yellow Bird, 2011, 2012, 2013), neurodecolonization theory is foundational in converging Indigenous-healing and western-based practices. Yellow Bird’s theory is the process of reconciling the effects of colonization through

---

12 Pertaining to the structures, functions, and disorders of the nervous system
mindfulness practice and then seeking united solutions to health issues. Many Canadian organizations centered on strengthening the health of Indigenous peoples recognize the need for education and reconciliation from the effects of colonization (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006a; Chansonneuve, 2007; Cultural Safety Working Group [CSWG], 2013; Health Canada, 2015; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012; Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2002; Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb, 2017; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). To assist people healing from addiction, applying a culturally responsive practice means that the support and supported need to understand the effects of colonization and assimilation practices to reconcile the past and forge a new future.

The theoretical framework for this study follows a relational ontology influenced by Indigenous scholars and philosophers and decolonizing researchers such as Anne Waters, Sandy Grande, Maria Battiste, LaNada Vernae Boyer, Maggie Walter, Margaret Kovach, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Kathleen Absolon, and Shawn Wilson. Reflexive Reflection was used as a method of analysis of nine conversational interviews and one focus group to co-construct knowledge of healing from addiction with five Cree Kehte-ayak (Old Ones). Reflexive Reflection helped formulate observations around four Indigenous research agendas–healing, decolonizing, transforming, and mobilizing (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). The findings from this study are influenced by a respect for all

13 Term created by LaVallie to describe an accurate and respectful consideration of the data when using Indigenous Methodologies as opposed to the process of analysis.
epistemologies (Indigenous and western metaphors and teachings) to enhance culturally responsive practices for the field of addiction and other helping professionals.

**The Healing Journey (Research Problem)**

Lawlis and Martinez (2015) explain that prolonged recovery hinges on one’s highest motivation. They suggest that one’s spirituality directs this motivation. The spirit is a multidimensional term that is difficult to define because it is connected to all aspects of life whether it is religious or non-religious. Spirit is an English word to depict the essence of life. Psyche has replaced the term spirit in most western vernacular relating to emotional and mental phenomena. This study brings back the term spirit in addiction and neuromodulation work. Spiritual concerns the spirit, psyche, or essence of life and is often culturally defined. One may experience spiritual distress when he or she goes against cultural or internal beliefs. In this study, spirituality is an umbrella term to depict the four basic spirit needs; purpose and meaning of life; forgiveness; love and belonging; and hope and creativity (adapted from Richardson, 2002). The noun spirituality concerns the spirit, psyche, or essence of life. It is not seen as a form of religion. Disruptions in meeting spiritual needs increases ones’ risk for continued addiction.

Meeting spiritual needs should become a priority in models for aftercare. The resistance one performs by not embracing spirituality creates internal conflicts (Zukav, 1989. These internal conflicts generate emotional and mental disharmony and may influence the development of addiction (Mate, 2008). Lawlis and Martinez (2015) advocate much of the work in recovery is learning to love oneself and others. Learning to find relationship with self and others strengthens our understanding of our highest
motivation. This is made known through spirituality. Exploring the role of spirituality in treating addiction is growing with much of the work remaining with a Christian based perspective. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has supported numerous people living with addiction; however, the religious basis suggested by various organizations associated with AA have turned many away from the process. In addition, the current discourse on recovery produces a shame/guilt spiral. People healing from addiction are expected to identify with the term addict or recovering addict, and the western dominant connotations associated with the discourse, such as sober, coming back, struggling, and clean. Blame for failure from treatment falls on the client as opposed to the system (Duran & Duran, 1995). People healing from addiction may struggle with forgiveness toward others and principally towards self as they face feelings of guilt and shame from behaviours associated with addiction, past trauma experiences, and nervous system deregulation.

Healing from addiction requires a wholistic approach, not merely abstinence and cognitive therapy. Richardson (2002) identified that innately, people have a moral code; living outside of the moral code reduces resiliency energy. Part of the energy is listening to intuition or loving one’s spirit (Richardson). We keep going because something inside us, a voice, a calling, a feeling that says, or suggests that we are something else or something more. We are unable to articulate it, or even consciously know it, but it is there. Richardson proposes two aspects of innate resilience—tapping into intuition and finding meaning. Intuition is aligned with the energy’s purpose and this purpose provides life direction. Disruptions occur and then we re-align our behaviours with our spiritual energy. According to Richardson, this is the process of resilience.
Meeting spiritual needs through *maskihkiy* (medicine) is a protective factor against relapse. *Maskihkiy* is a Cree term meaning medicine. Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, and McNabb’s (2017) interpretation of Snowshoe and Starblanket’s (2016) work suggests that medicines can be used as protective factors. *Maskihkiy* (medicine) does not mean the western term of herbs and drugs used to treat. *Maskihkiy* comes in many forms and is personified to guide, heal, influence, or benefit a disruption. Having its own *achak* (spirit), the *maskihkiy* is respected through relationship protocols for the work done. Ceremony, other cultural catalysts, plants, and thoughts are examples of *maskihkiy*. Cultural catalysts are actions or activities sparked from Canadian Indigenous values that may include dreams, intuition, special experiences, ceremony, inner voice, or prayer. Using *Maskihkiy* to strengthen protective factors and meet spiritual needs is a cyclical experience whereby the protective factors and met spiritual needs in turn create *maskihkiy* through the soul’s connection with the Universe. For example, loving oneself and receiving love are *maskihkiy* (medicine). One is given to self and the other is received. Both *maskihkiy* (medicine) become protective factors in assuaging future spirit interference.

Richardson (2002) suggests that we can find meaning in trauma to assist us in overcoming the past. Finding meaning in our trauma and uncovering the soul’s purpose enhance the process of resilience. Trauma-informed work is key in addressing addiction issues. The term ‘spiritual’ denotes a concept that incorporates one’s sense of purpose, hope, and commitment to life. Spirituality may include one’s religious beliefs as a means to meet spiritual needs but spirituality is not religion or even religiosity. In this study, Richardson’s work was adapted to clearly articulate four inherent spiritual needs—
love and belonging, purpose and meaning, forgiveness, and hope and creativity. The number four is used by many North American Indigenous teachings, representing the four directions. Addressing four needs is described in the 12 Step process popular within AA circles and in Health Canada’s (2015) Mental Wellness Continuum Framework. Both use slightly different interpretations, for example, Health Canada identified the needs as aspects of self but omits forgiveness. Forgiveness in this study is the process of acknowledging a wrong whether to self or others and then releasing the burden of guilt. Part of releasing the burden of guilt is acknowledging the unspoken shame or blame tied to the negativity in the experience. The four needs adapted from Richardson’s work honours spiritual need reflected through Indigenous teachings. Given the lack of research in this area, this study explored how spiritual needs may be met through traditional healing approaches to offer more culturally safe practices and greater opportunities for success.

Indigenous peoples seeking cultural and spiritual support often find that cultural practices are adapted to meet dominant western organizations and protocols. Research appraising treatment options speaks to the need for cultural sensitivity or cultural safety; however, the methods and perspectives are grounded in western values and knowledge. Professor Blair Stonechild explains that “colonialism has so severely damaged Indigenous cultures and economics that there is too often an absence of spirit, overlooking the fact that it is an integral part of a balanced society” (Stonechild, 2016, p. 5). To be efficacious, healing approaches must be culturally responsive by incorporating spirituality, identity (individual, family, community, and Nation) and traditions (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay, & Hinson, 2017).
Western-based perspectives identify addiction as the manifestation of physical and psychological reliance on repeated exposure to a stimulus as evidenced by the diagnostic criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.) (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). This study reveals that the introduction of the stimulus briefly meets inherent spiritual needs such as sense of belonging, hope, and for some, creativity. Because it is brief, the artificial effect of the met spiritual need wanes or breaks down physical function from the effort. Continued exposure to the stimulus usually produces destructive results such as addiction, medical complication, neurological changes, familial interruption, and economic interference identified as diagnostic criterion in the DSM-5. Western-based research on physical and cognitive treatments alone are seldom proven effective for Indigenous peoples living with addiction (APA). Effective healing or aftercare approaches must take into consideration the spiritual and cultural nature of all clients. Harmonizing Indigenous healing methods with western-based after care approaches may be key to sustained healing.

**Healing Options (Environmental Scan)**

In order for people living with addiction to receive treatment through a Canadian western-medical model, they are assigned a medical diagnosis through *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; DSM–5; APA, 2013). An addiction related diagnosis consists of meeting criteria associated with Substance Use, Intoxication, or Withdrawal. The DSM-5 (APA) states that, “The essential feature of a substance use disorder is a cluster of cognitive, behavioural, and physiological symptoms” (p. 483). It goes on to say that an “underlying change in brain circuits …
may persist beyond detoxification” (APA, p. 483). These circuitry changes indicate potential relapse and crave behaviours for which long-term treatment may be beneficial (APA). Still, excluding tolerance and withdrawal, nine of the eleven criteria for Use Disorder are behavioural indicators and not physiological markers. The DSM-5 identifies that “overall, the diagnosis of a substance use disorder is based on a pathological pattern of behaviors related to use of the substance” (APA, p. 483). Additionally, the Use Disorder diagnosis identifies whether the person is in early remission, sustained remission, and/or a controlled environment, and all stages are assessed by observing behaviour, not through physiological testing. Garland and Howard (2014) deem the DSM-5 as merely a field guide because of the “superficial symptomatic expression of psychiatric syndromes” (p. 142).

In his work in ascertaining addiction as a cultural concept, Peele (2006) explains, “The connection between actual administration of the drug and craving as described by the addicts was highly unreliable and subjective” (p. 205). This is important to distinguish as we move forward in understanding the science behind healing from addiction. Neuroscience attempts to understand how addiction physiologically affects the brain without a specific, scientific base of how to diagnose or describe the physiological changes of addiction. Intoxication and withdrawal are observable, measurable, and testable; however, they represent less than 10% of the diagnostic criteria. Without physiological criteria from the DSM-5, we look to neuroscience for an explanation of the assumed brain changes taking place when faced with a substance use issue to support assumptions of a physiological cause. Diagnosis of an acute addiction issue affords people the opportunity to access acute treatment programming. Once
treatment programming is complete, clients are often left to navigate healing in an
individual, isolated way. This next section explores current service provision and
aftercare needs for people healing from addiction and the need to decolonize one’s brain
to create sustained healing. This foundation leads the way to the objectives of this study
and the study questions.

**Service provision.**

The Canadian government separates services for Indigenous peoples by
distinguishing them as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples. Health Canada provides
services to First Nations peoples. The issue of addiction among First Nations peoples is
a priority concern (Health Canada, 2015). Keys to addressing mental wellness include
understanding Canada’s colonial history, providing culturally safe services, and valuing
cultural knowledge (Health Canada, 2015). As such, essential services should consist of
trauma-informed treatment, support, and aftercare. Health Canada (2015) recognizes
that culture is foundational in providing comprehensive services, stating that “This
means valuing First Nations knowledge and evidence similar to western scientific-
evidence and ensuring that it is evident throughout all mental wellness programs,
services, and supporting policies” (p. 3). Health Canada provides services to First
Nations and Inuit peoples through the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program
(NNADAP) and National Youth Solvent Abuse Program (NYSAP). Currently under the
direction of many First Nations communities, the NNADAP program (having once
followed the Alcoholics Anonymous model) is now slowly becoming imbued with First
Nations culture (Health Canada, 2011). Programming has begun to incorporate
cognitive behavioural approaches, strengthen culturally specific interventions, and
increase the focus on mental health (Health Canada, 2011). Health Canada (2011) reports that many Indigenous peoples who face addiction link their trauma and substance use issues back to assimilation practices. Aftercare is post-intervention support offered to First Nations and Inuit people once they have completed intensive treatment services (Health Canada, 2011). Aftercare supports may include self-help groups, cultural practitioners, community-based workers, and professional counsellors and are (considered to be) required for life (Health Canada, 2015). Health Canada (2015) identifies a gap in aftercare services by stating that the gap “can make it difficult to sustain the gains made by individuals and families through treatment or counselling” (p.19). Aftercare services should follow a wholistic model; however, most supports follow a western paradigm.

For Non-Status First Nations people, Métis, and non-Indigenous peoples, aftercare treatment is offered through provincial health regions, religious organizations, non-profit organizations, and private organizations. Open to everyone, the Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan Incorporated (MACSI) receives funding to support Métis peoples healing from addiction, and their services utilize some Indigenous approaches to healing from addiction. Aftercare services for Indigenous peoples are usually unsuccessful when only based on western models of recovery and relapse prevention. Whether federal or provincial, aftercare services should prioritize cultural safety and culturally responsive approaches because western approaches do not seem to be effective for most Indigenous peoples. The Saskatchewan Government identifies in the 2014 10-Year Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan (Stockdale Winder) the need to engage family members and caregivers into the Recovery-oriented Holistic
Model and partner with First Nations and Métis peoples in planning and delivery of services. Specifically, the action plan notes that what needs improving is cultural responsiveness that reflects one’s culture, the historical context, traditional care models, and understanding inter-generational trauma.

A scoping study examining the impact of cultural interventions on healing from addiction for Indigenous peoples suggests that culturally based interventions are beneficial (Rowan, et al. 2014). The study supports the knowledge that healing approaches work and research needs to explore which ones should be used. The authors encourage addiction researchers and service providers to work together to include multiple perspectives that are relational and contextual. Their work developed into a wellness framework that provides assessment for the four dimensions of self—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Based on the work from a partnership amongst Health Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, and the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation (previously the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation [NNAPF]) (Health Canada, 2011) *Honouring Our Strengths: Culture as Intervention in Addictions* Treatment framework was developed (Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, 2015). Hall, Dell, Fornssler, Hopkins, and Mushquash (2015) also present the need to apply ‘Two-eyed Seeing’ in addiction work. Two-eyed seeing ‘was coined’ by Albert Marshall to acknowledge that Indigenous peoples must walk in two worlds, Indigenous and western (Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015). Marshall teaches that two-eyed seeing is viewing with multiple perspectives and “is a guiding principle for bringing together different world views, different paradigms” (Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, p. 17). Dell and
Accose (2015), found limited empirical work illustrating the impact of Indigenous culture on healing from addiction.

**Aftercare.**

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has supported the recovery of millions of people since 1939 (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2017). Identified as the most popular twelve-step program, AA is offered internationally through non-profit organizations, private organizations, and provincial and federal institutions. Twelve-step recovery programs support relapse prevention through a mentoring program and acknowledgement of self as an addict. Most AA support groups and the medical model expect abstinence as foundational to recovery. Some research supports a harm-reduction model as opposed to abstinence; however, the Canadian medical model remains supportive of abstaining as the first step to recovery. In addition to abstinence, current western aftercare may include psychosocial intervention such as different models of counselling, specifically Brief Therapy, Motivational Interviewing, and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

Although research supports the use of these approaches, none has demonstrated sustained addiction reform (see examples APA, 2013; Ferri, M., Amato, L., Davoli, M., 2006; Hyde, Hankins, Deale, & Marteau, 2008; Klimas et al., 2012; Knapp, Soares, Farrell, & Silva de Lima, 2008; Manion, Short & Ferguson, 2013; Pearson & Lipton, 1999; Scott, Keener, & Manaugh, 1977; Witbrodt, J., Ye, Y., Bond, J., Chi, F., Weisner, C., & Mertens, J., 2014). Neurological researcher Levine (2010) explains how cognitive-based therapies may not be as effective in resolving trauma or addiction. Levine (2010) offers that the Broca area (responsible for speech production) is dim when the amygdala is activated by traumatic-events recall. When the amygdala is engaged the
autonomic nervous system responds by engaging the fight, flight or freeze response. A person is unable to focus on their thinking when they are experiencing physiological sensations of fear and flight from the trauma memory. Van der Kolk (2014) states, “Without a functioning Broca area, you cannot put your thoughts and feelings into words” (p. 43). He likened the effects of trauma on the Broca area to that of a stroke. Hesitation or an impasse in speech production limits efficacy for cognitive-based therapies where the key mode of processing is through speech. Van der Kolk suggests that people will create a “cover story” of the event but that it “rarely capture[s] the inner truth of the experience” (p. 43).

Knapp, Soares, Farrell, and Silva de Lima (2008) posit that no one treatment approach “is able to comprise the multidimensional facets of addiction patterns and to significantly yield better outcomes to resolve the chronic, relapsing nature of addiction, with all its correlates and consequences” (p. 2). Wiers, Gladwin, Hofmann, Salemink, and Ridderinkhof (2013) propose that dual processes drive our behaviour. The first is our motivation or impulse process and the second, the controlled or reflective process. Wiers et al. argue that when the resources needed to manage these processes are compromised through a weakened state produced by exhaustion, addiction, stress, or lack of sleep, addicts are unable to control pathological impulses. The authors advise that increasing working memory capacity through cognitive bias modification strengthens ego behaviours and thus may reduce alcohol consumption (Wiers et al.). Addiction may diminish motivation and reflective processes. Whereas, using cognitive bias modification may strengthen executive functioning, supporting the ability to stave off cravings for consumption. Neuro-regulation is an approach that is supported by
fMRI studies showing that it possibly improves executive functioning by settling nervous system unbalance, restoring neuro-pathway functioning, and retraining balanced amygdalae responses (Choi, Soyon, Tian Wang, & Phillips, 2014; Leeman & Potenz, 2013; Luijten et al, 2014; Szabadi, 2013; and Tovino, 2006; Winger, Woods, Galuska, & Wade-Galuska 2005). Creating this foundation allows cognitive bias modification to take place. Neuro-regulation is not a typical, western-based practice. Contemplative practices profess to introduce nervous system regulation and cognitive bias modification. Contemplative practices (e.g. mediation, Zen, Tia Chi) are regarded as an eastern tradition or New Age; however, Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, and Hetherington (2013) point out that many founders of contemplative practices were Indigenous peoples and that the western stream has embraced Indigenous practices as their own, labelling it as New Age. Reclaiming Indigenous practices as New Age perpetuates the misappropriation of revered traditions. Additionally, North American Indigenous peoples have always utilized these methods. They are neither New Age nor exclusively based on an eastern philosophy. Eastern practices are singular activities whereas North American Indigenous practices are mostly carried out as a collective. Acknowledging that best practice in aftercare services should be based on the paradigms of the person healing, this study explores approaches that support neuro-regulation through North American Indigenous peoples’ approaches harmonized14 with western approaches.

14 Coined by LaVallie (Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb, 2017; LaVallie & Sasakamoose 2016).
**Research Objectives**

Yellow Bird (2012) asserts that before we can begin to heal from addiction by harmonizing Indigenous and western knowledge, Indigenous peoples must decolonize their mind. Indigenous peoples can overcome negative feelings created by structural oppression maintained through colonialism, by exercising a practice called neurodecolonization (Yellow Bird, 2013, 2012). Thus, aftercare services for addiction control is greater than merely relapse prevention; it involves neurodecolonization.

Using Reflexive Reflection influenced by a relational ontology, this study explored the concept of uniting neuro-regulation and ceremony to meet spiritual needs required for healing from addiction. The aim of this study was to strengthen culturally responsive approaches through decolonizing aftercare and changing the dominant western discourse on recovery. This by raising awareness of how ceremony harmonized with western approaches may meet spiritual needs effective for promoting protective factors in healing from addiction. This study laid the foundation for future work in addiction by privileging the voices of the *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones) in how to proceed, while identifying where colonization interfered in Indigenous ways of being. The co-construction of knowledge (findings) creates a new way forward. The new way forward honours the work that Indigenous knowledge keepers are currently doing to help people heal from addiction by uniting Indigenous and western ways of healing and situating it within academia. This study also addressed the six research priorities identified by Health Canada (2011) to decolonize aftercare services and privilege the voices of the *Kehte-ayak*. The six priorities are (a) the use of Indigenous methodologies, (b) methods founded upon cultural knowledge, (c) the incorporation of cultural mainstream ideas, (d)
development of Indigenous knowledge, (e) development of Indigenous models of practice, and (f) the provision of two-way knowledge exchange with communities.

**Research Question**

This study answers the larger question ‘What do Kehte-ayak have to say about the relevance of harmonizing Indigenous ceremonial practices and western-based treatment approaches in healing from addiction?’ Semi-structured conversation questions were formulated following Tuhiwai-Smith\textsuperscript{15} Indigenous research agenda. The research questions were verified with the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) for suitability to ensure congruent research direction. The questions (Appendix D) were asked in two waves of conversation to respect Kehte-ayak (Old One) stamina and time commitments. The first wave of questions explored the decolonizing and healing processes inside Indigenous research agendas. These questions supported Kehte-ayak in voicing how colonization interfered with maskihkiy (medicine) as a protective factor and their personal reconciliation. Wave two moved the Kehte-ayak through transformation and mobilization by constructing knowledge on harmonizing Indigenous and proven western approaches to healing from addiction.

\textsuperscript{15} Tuhiwai-Smith coined four processes in Indigenous Research Agendas – Decolonizing, Healing, Transforming, and Mobilizing.
**Creating Ethical Space**

This study followed the Indigenous People’s Health Research Council (IPHRC) Ethical Guidelines Involving Indigenous Peoples, Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS), and The First Nations Information Governance Centre First Nations Principles of Ownership, Control, Acquisition, and Possession ([OCAP™] 2019). OCAP™ offers principles for data storage, distribution, access, and proprietorship. To reduce the misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge, I was conscientious about how I used the data. I offer this study as an example to support researchers looking to embrace Indigenous methodologies. Ethical considerations were reviewed and followed closely. Specific information regarding ceremony is confidential, as it is a sacred relationship between Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) and creator. The Kehte-ayak stated what would be shared throughout the process. They also gave permission to print their names in this study to honour their role as co-owners of the constructed knowledge.

The study obtained approval from the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on March 14, 2016 (Appendix A). The use of the five Kehte-ayak names and identities were approved through the Research Ethics Board and by each Kehtehi. The Kehte-ayak in this study were currently harmonizing Indigenous and western-aftercare approaches for people healing from addiction and considered experts in their field. All Kehte-ayak spoke English and had a post-secondary education. Through Indigenous methodologies, I invited the Kehte-ayak into the study as co-researchers. Willie Ermine (2007) describes the space of engagement for Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of
knowing as the Ethical Space. This Ethical Space is created as an opportunity to hear each other and to construct new knowledge. Within this Ethical Space, the Kehte-ayak were supported in identifying the study’s direction, questions, process, and consensus of the findings. I presented where I wanted to go and received feedback on where we should go. To address ownership, each Kehte-ayak received a digital and hard copy of their conversations and of the dissertation. I received guidance from them concerning where and how I should disseminate the findings. As an added layer of ethics, I had one of the Kehtehi (Allen), and two translators (Kehtehi Goulet and Cree speaker Carol Merasty) review Their Journey and Our Journey to ensure I had the correct interpretation of the teachings. The supervisory committee comprised of Indigenous peoples also provided feedback regarding my interpretations of the teachings.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states, “that research with indigenous peoples can be more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful” (p. 9). Constructing research ‘with’ creates a deeper process of getting to know and honours both ways of knowing rather than the many years of ‘done to’ or exploitation. The following steps were taken to ensure that the research was ‘done with’ as opposed to ‘done to.’ Two Kehte-ayak that I knew who were doing this work were invited to participate in this study, and from there, two more Kehte-ayak were suggested. Tobacco and cloth were offered at each step. All four shared their intention for constructing the research. I shared my intention, the expected length of the study, explained co-owning the data, and assured the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) that they were responsible to share only what they believed to be important. The Kehte-ayak were informed that the study received funding from the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit (SIDRU) to acknowledge any perceived
conflict of interest. Use of findings was discussed, approved, and informed consent was received from each participant to disseminate the information to Indigenous communities, addiction organizations, mental health organizations, and other academics.

Prior to starting the study, I approached a Kehtehi not involved in the study (who has since passed on) to confirm that my study was valuable. Kehtehi Florence took cloth and tobacco that I had presented into ceremony, to ask for guidance from our ancestors over the study. Cloth acknowledges the spirit world and held my intention for doing the work. Each Kehtehi took the tobacco and cloth that I presented to them (to show respect for their knowledge) into ceremony. I attended ceremony throughout the process to ensure that I was following the direction of my ancestors and to clarify my intention. I called upon two translators (with approval from the Kehte-ayak) to translate concepts and teachings and to validate my interpretations.

Kovach (2010b) suggests that Indigenous methodologies have the following ethical considerations: hold Indigenous values, ensure community accountability, ensure that the researcher gives back, and the researcher is a non-maleficent ally. As outlined in this study, I followed the four elements of relationship accountability and sought direction from my supervisor and Kehte-ayak (Old Ones). As this study was guided by ceremony and Kehte-ayak teachings, I received approval from my supervisory committee and the Kehte-ayak before and during the study. This met my intention of providing academic space for Indigenous knowledge and ways of being; I believe that I met Kovach’s ethical considerations.

Community accountability asks if this study is relevant, if it is helpful, and if it makes sense to the community (Kovach, 2010b). I believe that from dissemination, this
information will be beneficial to and respected by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the field of addiction. My way of giving back is supporting decolonizing research and aftercare approaches so that addiction workers and policy makers will have information that follows an Indigenous paradigm to support decision-making. As an ally, I am creating space for Indigenous peoples to be who they are as an equal ontology, ultimately challenging epistemic racism as identified by Reading (2013). This creation of space is not born of a privileged lens whereby I bestow place but from an acknowledgement of my privilege (as a white, western educated, health professional) and desire to harmonize both ways of knowing. Lastly, when sitting in the final pipe ceremony, I sought continued direction on giving back and future research. The final feast fed the ancestors who directed my study.

**Setting Boundaries**

This study honours a relational ontology and Northern Cree epistemologies, believing that there is no one truth, that we are all in relationship, and that knowledge is co-constructed, based on the four relationship tenants (reciprocity, relevance, respect, and responsibility), and is relevant to geographical location. Kovach (2010b) and Tuhiwai Smith (1999) advise three audiences for knowledge transfer to determine credibility: Indigenous community, non-Indigenous academy, and other Indigenous researchers. In summary, the research findings should be understood by and meaningful to the Indigenous community (trustworthy). How the researcher came to their findings is clearly communicated for traditional researchers to comprehend (credibility). Lastly, other Indigenous methodologists deem the research worthy (dependability).
Trustworthy.

To prevent a pan-Indigenous approach, Indigenous methodologies do not seek to generalize the findings. Generalizability is viewed as a pan-Indigenous approach meaning that the information gleaned can be used to understand or work with all Indigenous peoples in a prescriptive way. Indigenous knowledge should not be generalizable because the epistemological stance is regional. The general premise of the findings or teachings may be considered; however, the application and language may and should be different. The findings are an example of a Northern Cree epistemology specific to the Kehte-ayak spoken with. Each region is invited to explore the teachings and metaphors and draw on their own epistemology to create meaning to their community. To strengthen trustworthiness of this study, I am providing the steps I took in gleaning and reflecting upon the data. Data was collected, and I categorized the reflections on the research process developing insight into my interpretation. These are articulated as ‘findings’ and they are gleaned from what I found meaningful. My process shows my intention and my intention is considered by you the reader as trustworthy or not. Transparency of the researcher helps to strengthen trustworthiness. The teachings and metaphors I found significant came from the four Kehte-ayak and translators. A possible limitation is that I did not interview enough Kehte-ayak from this region. Absolon (2011) said that we should not turn down people who want to be part of the study. Unfortunately, one Kehtehi was unable to be a participant because his health was failing. I may have been able to interview more but time did not permit, and the study’s energy did not present anyone further during the period of data collection. Another limitation to trustworthiness is my interpretation of the data. To keep the interpretation
focused on my intention and situation in *Our Journey*, I alone interviewed all four *Kehte-ayak*, held the sharing circle, and met with the translators. I am not a Cree person, nor do I speak Cree. Therefore, I validated my findings through two translators, one of the participating *Kehtehi*, and my supervisory committee. Interviewing more *Kehte-ayak* may have built trustworthiness but I am confident that my findings will be understood and meaningful to Indigenous communities. Although not meant to be generalizable, my findings may be used as an example for which different regions may modify my approach or information to fit their epistemology. As I worked through the process, I noticed thoughts that came to me. I sought more information on my process or assumption and discovered that my responses were not unique. Finding out that others had written about my assumptions or approaches gave validity to my work. My findings in isolation may not be new but together they have been presented as a theory from which to develop further.

**Credible.**

Credibility of the research gauges confidence in the truth of the data and data interpretation. A limitation to the study’s credibility is the Reflexive Reflection used to contemplate the data. I developed Reflexive Reflection out of necessity. To honour the relational underpinnings of Indigenous methodologies, I had to create my own analysis method. This method loosely followed reflexive analysis and metaphor analysis (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Feeling that the term ‘analysis’ was post-positivistic, I chose the word ‘reflection’ instead. I am not an Indigenous person, and therefore, to reduce the risk of misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge, I saw myself as a listener, facilitator, and interpreter. I listened to the knowledge keepers, I facilitated the research process,
and I interpreted their teachings into western knowledge systems. The findings were given back to the Cree translator and Kehte-ayak (who all spoke Cree and English) to ensure the teachings were not misconstrued. This process was not followed as a form of racism (occurrence observed by Absolon, 2011) but to decolonize colonial systems. Reflexive Reflection relies on researcher bias in that the person reflecting is isolating the teachings and metaphors that were meaningful to him or her. This bias was checked by reviewing the findings with the Kehte-ayak and my supervisory committee. I was challenged at times to syphon through the noise of incoming data and cultural catalyst messages that I received. I began to ask myself, if the pebble in my shoe was just a pebble, or if I needed to slow down and pay attention. I eventually worked through the noise and found the rhythm within the research, a rhythm that supported me in finding meaningful encounters, metaphors, and teachings.

My reflection of findings shows how I did not attempt to reduce bias and that my findings are subjective. To illuminate my own bias, I first chose a methodology that honours an ontology and epistemology in which I was not raised. The Kehte-ayak in the study were introduced to an ontology/epistemology, had it challenged through colonialism, and spent many years re-awakening their knowledge. I had to listen closely and carefully to what they were telling me, and they were careful to share what should be shared in a way that I would understand. I could not force my own beliefs onto what they were teaching me because they used metaphors and teachings to convey their thoughts. I do not speak in metaphors and had to learn how to interpret and explain their meanings. The second step was acknowledging that my knowledge was also valuable to the process. I used my lens of over twenty-five years of psychiatric nursing experience.
I received *Kehte-ayak* teachings and attended ceremony when possible before I started this study. As the study progressed, I learned more about Northern Cree epistemology and received knowledge transfer gifts through people resources (committee, friends, editor, writing clinic support, and colleagues), animal visits, ancestor callings, and intuition when needed. I paid attention and chose what spoke to me. When I went off course, I received messages to put me back on the right path. Researcher bias is central to this work and when I was truly listening to what I was told then I realized that this is the work that wanted a voice. You the reader will also be biased in what you choose to take away from this study as influenced by your knowledge and belief systems. When you read the data, or I read it a second time, new knowledge will be created. Indigenous methodologies create a living process whereby knowledge is always being generated and relationships are re-influenced. Unlike some studies, this one has a responsibility beyond this portion of the study. It will create a ripple outward and continue to grow and change when and where it is deemed worthy and credible.

**Dependable.**

Dependability of this study is assessed through reflexivity informed by Absolon’s (2011) criteria of methodology (spirit, heart, body, mind), Kovach’s criteria of methodology (research is constructed, not conducted, follows the 4 elements, based in tribal knowledge, process of getting to know, and robust narrative component), and Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) research processes (healing, decolonizing, mobilizing, and transforming). The criteria are demonstrated throughout this study in narrative form and illustrations. The following steps were taken to strengthen reflexivity: I made notes after each conversation, read the transcripts, and gave copies to the *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones) to
ensure accuracy. To discover key findings, I read twice – first for teachings, then a second time for metaphors. I held a sharing circle\textsuperscript{16} with the Kehte-ayak to confirm the preliminary findings. I then took the metaphors and teachings to two translators (with approval from the Kehte-ayak) and back to one of the Kehtehi.

To meet Absolon’s (2011) criteria of ‘spirit,’ ‘mind,’ ‘body,’ and ‘heart.’ I connected with my ‘spirit’ and honoured the relationship created with the spirit realm through ceremony before, during, and after the research process. I used my ‘mind’ by respecting all ways of knowing and privileged the voices of the Kehte-ayak. My ‘body’ did the work and co-created new knowledge through this study. Lastly, I used my ‘heart’ by building relationships with the Kehte-ayak, the spirit world, and protocols. To meet the need for reciprocity, I will give this knowledge back to the community through understandable and meaningful methods such as written work, presentations, and research (as supported by the Kehte-ayak). It is my intention that this work will be deemed credible and that it will have meaning for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

\textsuperscript{16} Term coined by Laara Fitznor to represent Indigenous research focus groups with intention and cultural practices.
CHAPTER 2: Rationale (Literature Review)

Trauma Informed

The prevalence of Indigenous peoples experiencing specific mental health issues related to a colonial history such as addiction, post-traumatic stress, generational trauma, anxiety, and depression supports a strong need for aftercare that includes addressing mental wellness. Health Canada (2015) acknowledges the experiences voiced during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) hearings and recommends a trauma-informed approach to care. A trauma-informed approach means “placing priority on a trauma survivor’s safety, choice, and control” (Health Canada, p. 47). Trauma-informed care recognizes that as the experience of trauma is different for each person how one interprets an experience as traumatic may also be different. A trauma-informed approach acknowledges the historical impact colonization has on Indigenous health and that understanding intergenerational trauma may explain health behaviours. Intergenerational trauma is deleterious influences on groups of people passed down through generations because of historical oppression, systemic marginalization, and institutionalization (Naseba Marsh, Coholic, Cote-Meek, & Najavits, 2015). Harmful residential school experiences are understood as the leading cause of intergenerational trauma and poor mental health outcomes for Indigenous peoples (Naseba Marsh, Coholic, Cote-Meek, & Najavits). Authors such as Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, and McKay-McNabb (2017) and Snowshoe and Starblanket (2016) explain that learning about the impact of intergenerational trauma must be entwined into the theory behind all health programming directed toward Indigenous peoples. Therefore, through a trauma-informed lens, addiction workers should view behaviours as
expressions of neurological disruption as opposed to character or moral infractions. Instead of pathologizing behaviour, there is an effort to understand the expressions as reactions to disrupting experiences. Most importantly, a trauma-informed theory understands that the persons providing care are often participating in their own healing journey. Understanding that trauma underlies behaviour expressions and that the person providing care is healing from his or her own trauma becomes key in informing a trauma-care practice. The person seeking support from trauma and the person offering support may both be affected by personal trauma.

Aftercare for trauma work should start with neuro-regulation. Levine (2015) offers that Indigenous teachings given to him and western science support the notion that negative experiences may last generations (four to seven, depending on ancestral perspective). Through his participation in a warrior ceremony, Levine realized that ceremonies help to reduce the origin of trauma before it passes on to other generations. The first step in neuro-regulation involves restoring nervous system function by completing biological energies from the sympathetic and parasympathetic adaption response. Regulating the nervous system supports the trauma survivor in perceiving and adapting to his or her environment to address cognitive biases and potential recovery issues. Heller and LaPierre (2012) and Levine (2015) clarify the signs and symptoms of disrupted nervous systems and developmental milestones that help complete the interrupted adaption response (discussed later in sections on mindfulness and Somatic Experiencing®). Naseba Marsh, Coholic, Cote-Meek, and Najavits (2015) suggest traditional teachings may help ground and center people to calm the mind. Indigenous ceremonies produce situations to support neuro-regulation and meet disrupted spiritual
needs. Trauma disrupts one’s sense of belonging, love, purpose, meaning, creativity, forgiveness, and hope. Minimal input is offered on Two-eyed seeing regarding aftercare for concurrent disorders (mental health issues and addiction) in addressing spiritual needs.

**Strengthening Resilience**

The term resilience is considered the ability to acclimate and learn from some form of disruption to strengthen the ability to adapt to further disruptions (Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004). Resilience has evolved over the past sixty years through three waves—resilient traits, resilience process, and innate resilience (Richardson, 2002). Motivational or protective factors are explored as opposed to traits as influences in determining resilience (Richardson). Resilience is a complex process that encompasses characteristics, traits, and factors, driven by an inner spiritual, motivational factor that influences how one becomes resilient (Connor, Davidson & Lee, 2003; Humphreys, 2003). Depending on the discipline (e.g. philosophy, physics, anthropology, psychology, sociology, or theology), the term resilience may be called “self-actualization, altruism, wisdom, and harmony with a spiritual source of strength” (Richardson, p. 313). The spiritual motivational force is innate and part of “human capacity” (Richardson, p. 313). Intuition is an alignment with energy’s purpose and this purpose provides life direction. Disruptions occur and therefore aligning one’s behaviours with their spiritual energy assists the process of resilience. Resilience cannot be taught but can be tapped into and supported.

An individual’s range of resilience is his or her potential to cope, self-regulate, and self-soothe (Heller & LaPierre, 2012). Heller and LaPierre state, “High levels of
arousal, freeze, and dissociation held in the body foreclose a person’s access to his or her life force and create a diminished range of resiliency” (p. 121). Trauma and stress disrupt the opioid attachment-reward system, dopamine-based incentive-motivation apparatus, and the self-regulation areas of the prefrontal cortex (Mate, 2008). Self-medication through different stimuli (substance and non-drug, discussed later) pseudo-regulate the nervous system for brief periods. Mate suggests that early attachment helps strengthen resilient adaption. But even more than the biological effects of adjustment, it is a ‘spirit’ that affects transformation. People living with addiction attach themselves to things that fulfill the void of where divine knowledge should be (Mate). There is a resistance created toward spiritual awareness that is replaced with the ego-based addiction. People living with addiction can impede innate spiritual calling by focusing on the omnipotence or self-importance created through addiction. Strengthening community and individual resilience is a guiding principle for Health Canada’s (2011) *Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Issues Among First Nations People in Canada*. Required is research such as this study that explores how ‘spirit awakening’ and ‘spirit strengthening’ support resilience for people living with addiction through harmonization within an Indigenous framework. Harmonized approaches honour the wisdom and strength behind Indigenous ceremonies because they provide opportunities for divine knowledge. Harmonizing Indigenous teachings and ways of knowing is needed to decolonize the western perspective of resilience.
Ceremony

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society acknowledges ceremony and ritual as contemplative practices. Western science for the most part rebukes contemplative observations and is only beginning to support eastern practices. Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird (2012) argue that Northern American Indigenous peoples do not need to turn to the Eastern Indigenous peoples for guidance and that these eastern practices are in fact Indigenous practices. Indigenous peoples from North America have their own contemplative and mindfulness practices that they have been using “since time immemorial” ... “before, during, and after many of their secular and sacred ceremonies” (Yellow Bird, 2012, p. 81). To be effective in addressing addiction issues and healing from addiction, North American Indigenous peoples need to use their own traditions that target specific cultural responses to the addiction phenomena. Ceremonies reflect local knowledge and geographical contexts, supporting the capacity to mould aftercare approaches to individual needs.

Cultural practices and ceremonies of Indigenous peoples provide opportunities for connection to respected spiritual direction. For example, in some Indigenous communities, naming ceremonies provide new community members a sense of purpose and meaning. Sun dances bring the collective consciousness of the community together with other communities to offer a sense of belonging, forgiveness, and hope. Sweat lodges and pipe ceremonies help members ask the Kehte-ayak to speak to the ones who have passed to the spirit world, for support and guidance. Through Indigenous “oral tradition and appropriate rituals, traditions, ceremonies, and socialization, each generation transmitted the collective knowledge and heritage to the next” (Battiste, 2008,
Indigenous ceremonies provide the cultural context needed for Indigenous peoples to meet their own inherent spiritual needs and address areas of addiction. Culture incorporates spirituality, identity (individual, family, community, and Nation), and traditions (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay, & Hinson, 2015). Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay, and Hinson establish how culture and spirituality are expressed and their work is used to provide guidance to western helpers.

Duran and Duran (1995) state that Indigenous peoples “lost the ability to be in harmony with the life process” (p. 15) of which we are all a part. Through colonization, Indigenous cultural practices and ceremonies were all but eliminated due to the ethnocentric, Christian, and positivistic perspectives of the European settlers. Kehte-ayak hold the key to knowledge about ceremonial practices to heal from addiction. Much work has been done with Kehte-ayak in tailoring treatment centers and healing lodges to support detoxification and the healing journey. Little research has been done through an Indigenous methodology privileging the voices of Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) to provide a resource for the field of addiction with a focus on neuro-regulation, ceremony, spirituality, and cultural responsiveness, until now.

**Engaging the Voices of the Kehte-ayak**

Fitzgerald and Callard (2014) suggest the need for a new field, linking sociocultural and neurobiological knowledge. Denying that the two do not influence and intertwine with each other is no longer erudite. Fitzgerald and Callard state that both sociologists and biologists can benefit from the findings of each field in understanding the cultural, biological, and social contexts. Many authors support understanding cultural meanings, social meanings, and neuroscience (Deshauer, 2014; Gergen, 2010;
Kaye, 2012; Matto & Strolin-Goltzman, and Ballan, 2013). *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones) are underused resources who combine biological, mental, emotional, cultural, social, and spiritual understandings in their teachings. Their teachings can support harmonizing neurological understandings of addiction within a sociocultural framework.

The harmonized approach presented in this paper is exemplified by the teaching offered by *Kehtehi* Betty McKenna (JaquiBarn, 2012) regarding Mother Earth. *Kehtehi* Betty speaks about sitting on Mother Earth so that thoughts can come to you from the animals, the Universe, and our ancestors. She says that the act of going back to Mother Earth gives you what you need to start healing; ‘you just need to sit on Mother Earth.’ The teaching from *Kehtehi* Betty in addressing issues of addiction is supported by the literature presented in this study. *Kehtehi* Betty generally refers to neuro-regulation in that these methods are restoring cognitive function by tapping into involuntary attention through nature. Leading authors in addiction in Saskatchewan (Dell & Acoose, 2015; Fornssler, McKenzie, Dell, Laliberte, & Hopkins, 2014) call for the need to converge knowledge by utilizing *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones) and/or knowledge brokers to guide culture and to discuss what ceremony looks like in urban settings. Williamson (2013) describes the challenges Indigenous peoples now face such as options for buying traditional food or giving offerings in urban settings. Exploring how to ‘bend the rules,’ as Williamson describes, is a decolonizing process. Future work in addiction should center *Kehte-ayak* voices in describing an Indigenous/western blend, illustrating Indigenous evolution and scientific knowledge. *Kehte-ayak* teachings deliver figurative language that articulates both. This approach is not meant to suppress western-based treatment approaches but to converge the two epistemologies by respecting both ways of
knowing. Health Canada (2015) asserts that Kehte-ayak “have a critical role to play in individual, family, and community wellness” (p. 47) and that their knowledge must be recognized appropriately. This study centered Indigenous knowledge by being in relationship, speaking to the Kehte-ayak, and identifying what ceremony might look like through harmonizing approaches. This study makes clear the need to harmonize Indigenous and western approaches. This next portion of this paper provides an overview of the concept of addiction through a western perspective and the need for cultural responsiveness in providing aftercare services.

**Concept Analysis of Addiction**

Winger, Woods, Galuska, and Wade-Galuska (2005) clearly describe the challenge of performing a concept analysis of addiction when they say it has many different perspectives with no one taking the lead to create a united module. Wright (2006) identified two of three aspects of addiction: biochemical/physiological and psychological/social. Historically, addiction was considered a moral issue where the people showing signs of addiction had to hold themselves morally accountable in order to overcome their immoral behaviour. Viewing addiction as immoral leads to the belief that people living with addiction are purposefully choosing the wrong behaviour. Thus, addictive behaviour is viewed as criminal intent where people living with addiction should then be punished for their behaviour (Fleck, 2007). Addiction behaviour is more often than not amoral. Amoral behaviour reflects a lack of interpreting behaviour as good or bad but as a means to an end. Actions and thoughts stem from biological and neurological impulses and not intellectual awareness. Vetulani (2001) argues that addressing addiction as ‘criminal behaviour’ or ‘social issues’ is ineffective and that we
must incorporate neuroscience explanations and neuroplasticity methods instead. A controversial but increasingly popular view by neurologists and many health care professionals is the medical view that addiction is a disease (Leyton, 2013; World Health Organization, 2019). In viewing addiction as a disease, biological and possibly neurological markers present patterns of symptoms and behaviours, with genetic and environmental factors taken into consideration thus requiring treatment and understanding (not punishment and blame). People living with addiction, much like diabetes care, require medical and comprehensive treatment as opposed to relying solely on moral fortitude. However, explaining addiction through the medical model does little to provide a clear understanding of the concept. Leyton (2013) asks where the line is between addiction and recovery? Even with today’s technological advances, his question goes unanswered. Other questions asked in the field of addiction that remain unanswered are: What is the evolution of an addiction? Does the person purposefully choose to use? Do they always have a choice? And at what point is it no longer a choice? Medical explanations for understanding the concept of addiction are hard to explain and explanations vary due to the many areas within neuroscience and the social sciences.

**Neuroscience Perspective of Addiction**

Neuroscientists argue that addiction is an error in brain function stemming from a physiological response to a substance, whereas behavioural scientists attribute it to a behavioural response to stimuli (Winger, Woods, Galuska, & Wade-Galuska, 2005). Within both fields, a common physiological understanding is that the pre-frontal cortex and amygdalae play a large part in how addiction organizes in the brain (Kass, 2015;
Kober et al., 2010; Leyton, 2014; Luijten et al., 2014). It is understood that the amygdalae react to incoming stimuli in two ways, which in turn affect decision making and emotions. The left amygdala focuses on thoughts (typically pleasant), recall, and the reward system, whereas the right side responds with negative and aggressive physical reactions. As stimuli enter the brain’s awareness the amygdalae respond and shoot memories, reactions, and feelings to the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), hypothalamus, trigeminal nerves, ventral tegmental area, and locus coeruleus, amongst other areas. The amygdala forms, reacts, and then stores memories to aid in future use in reacting to stress and fear. The locus coeruleus responds with physiological changes from the autonomic nervous system, such as tachycardia, diaphoresis, slight cerebral hypoxia, and increased neuroendocrine, which increases glucose and cortisol. The reaction is commonly considered the fight, flight or freeze response. Emotionally charged events are retained more easily and are reacted to more quickly because previous negative experiences force the right amygdala to respond before the left can process with thoughts and details. When the amygdala becomes overtaxed with incoming stimuli or exhausted from continuous levels of crisis or stress, it begins to respond predominantly through the right side. Lesions or trauma to the left amygdala may be related to mental health issues. Amygdala shrinkage caused by too much stimuli or stress over time may also be related to mental health issues. Excessive responses from the left amygdala result in higher emotional reactions, whereas the right produces higher physical outcomes. The pre-frontal cortex is related to executive functioning and receives information from the amygdalae. Decision-making is hindered when the amygdalae send imbalanced responses to the pre-frontal cortex. To produce healthy impulses to stressors, there
should be a balanced, contemplative reaction from both left and right amygdalae that feed the pre-frontal cortex proper information.

Functional magnetic resonance imaging is used to map neural correlates for some mental health issues, including addiction. Luijten, Machielsen, Veltman, Hester, de Hann, and Franken (2014) explain, “An extensive basis of fMRI studies has consistently shown that activation in this cortical–striatal–thalamic network is linked to inhibitory control in healthy participants” (p. 151). This inhibitory control activation is different in addicts' brains and the difference “can be interpreted as the presence of neural deficits in inhibitory control in these individuals” (Luijten, et al., p. 151). Luijten et al. state, “The integration of ERP and fMRI findings for both inhibitory control and error processing results in the observation that most consistent findings in individuals with addiction are all related to dysfunction of the dACC” (the dACC is the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex) (p. 164). The following areas show activity in relation to substance use: brain stem, reward system, motivation area, and ventral tegmental area (Leeman & Potenza, 2013; Szabadi, 2013). Increased dopamine (DA) in the ventral striatum suggests an increase in the reward stimuli (Winger, Woods, Galuska, & Wade-Galuska, 2005).

Luijten et al. propose, “The neural deficits in the dorsal ACC may constitute a hallmark neurocognitive deficit underlying addictive behaviours, such as loss of control” (p. 149). Cues for the person living with addiction may prompt DA release, eliciting impulsive behaviour and substance use (Leyton, 2014; Luijten et al.). A key piece in addiction treatment is to understand the roll of dopamine. Many believe that the addictive substance provides an increased level of dopamine (Matthies et al., 2012); however, Leeman and Potenza articulate that “DA levels that are either too high or too low are
suboptimal and may lead to impulsive and risk-taking acts, including excessive substance use” (p. 261). Luijten et al. back this notion and mention, “Based on the postulated model it can be expected that improvement of dACC functioning, either through direct neuromodulation or indirect behavioural therapies would result in increased control over addictive behaviours” (p. 165). Medication and treatment focusing on improving brain function in relation to substance use disorders is emerging (Leeman & Potenza). Using medications to increase dopamine levels (e.g. amphetamines) in order to reduce substance cravings are on the rise (Choi, Soyon, Tian Wang, & Phillips, 2014). Lastly, Winger et al. (2005) suggest, "Dopamine release may underlie the development of addiction, but … permanent changes are related to protein … glutamate" (p. 672). Taken together, the research suggests that, addicts17 may lack inhibitory control related to a dysfunctional dACC and dopamine release or lack thereof, increasing impulsive behaviours. Retraining the brain through modulation such as neuro-regulation, cognitive, behavioural, or pharmaceutical methods may help an individual healing from addiction regain a level of control over cravings.

Dopamine released within the ventral striatum pathway appears to strengthen the effects of the stimuli thus reinforcing drug abuse (Winger et al., 2005). Leeman and Potenza (2013) advise, “Natural rewards and abused substances appear to induce similar activity in reward circulatory and connected regions…” (p. 261). Leeman and Potenza explain, “All drugs of abuse affect the brain’s reward circuit, with the mesolimbic DA

17 See glossary.
[Dopamine] pathway being of particular importance. This pathway includes dopaminergic neurons extending from the ventral tegmental area to the NAc [nucleus accumbens]” (p. 261). The American Society of Addiction Medicine (2011) also states that behavioural and substance use addiction both affect the reward circuitry system; however, unlike natural reward stimuli, addiction affects many areas of the brain and different relapse responses appear in different brain regions. This means that cues to reuse vary between the substance used or behaviour engaged, and therefore treatment must be individualized and triggers to use (substance or behaviour) are explored extensively as opposed to relying on abstinence alone.

**Neuro-regulation and Addiction**

With the notably recent, increasing acceptance of eastern-health practices into western health care, neuroscience seeks quantitative evidence to support the use of contemplative practices in changing brain function (Ning, 2013). Edward Tuab, behavioural neuroscientist, is regularly cited for cognitive treatment approaches and contributing greatly to the field of neuroscience with respect to neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the notion that the nervous system can be reformed; initial societal thinking was that once the brain formed, it remained fixed. Agren et al. (2012) states, “Memories become labile when recalled” (p. 1550) and offers extinction training to prevent undesirable recall. Through fMRI, the authors found that extinction training to reduce fear memories is only effective when employed within one hour of rehashing the memory. Their work “suggests that the amygdala could be the primary site of memory plasticity” (p. 1552) and that behavioural work can erase fear memories. Focusing on exposure-based techniques (Exposure therapy or Systematic desensitization) that engage
the prefrontal cortex (PFC) becomes obsolete. Instead the authors suggest that the focus becomes the amygdala; “timing extinction to coincide with the threat memory reconsolidation would prevent the return of defensive reactions and diminish PFC involvement” (Schiller, Kanen, LeDoux, Monfils, & Phelps, 2013, p. 20040). Many authors (Baker, McNally, and Richardson, 2013; Pineyro, Monti, Alfei, Bueno, & Urcelay, 2014; Schiller et al., 2013; Steinfurth, et al., 2014) are also looking at reconsolidating fear memories without pharmacological intervention for people living with post-traumatic stress, addiction, and anxiety or depression. Using non-pharmacological intervention is important for people living with addiction who try not to replace one substance with another.

Escapism through substance and non-substance stimuli help people transcend to an alternate level of consciousness. Lawlis and Martinez (2015) suggest that music and spiritual rituals can attain transcendence; however, they are not as efficient as stimuli that prompt addiction. Healing from addiction is perceived to be a lifelong program of regulating and maintaining neural pathways. Tuab, Steiner, Weingarten, and Walton’s 1994 study looked at harnessing brain plasticity in neurorehabilitation to assist stroke, cerebral palsy, and brain injured clients (as cited in Tuab, 2004). In 2004, Tuab’s work incorporated fMRI methods to observe cortical reorganization, suggesting therapy positively affects brain reorganization. Luijten et al. (2014) supported the efforts done in pharmacotherapy, cognitive behaviour therapy, and contingency management; however, they suggested the need for a form of neuromodulation in areas of the brain that are inactive. Neural network training supports neuromodulation, though the process is slow and takes many attempts over a long period. Neuroplasticity thus helps remove the
barriers in place to help people attend western-based programs such as AA or cognitive therapy (Lawlis & Martinez, 2015).

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to reorganize neurons and synapses, changing structure and function (Doidge, 2015). Music, neurofeedback, stimulating neuromodulation, and neuro-regulation may be avenues for neuro-plasticity. These avenues are available through ceremony. Addiction work must incorporate approaches that reorganize brain structure and function. Health Canada (2015) recommends learning to tap into intuition and connecting to the land to assist in healing from addiction. Intuition cannot be fully accessed when the nervous system is in a state of activation. Two contemplative approaches identified as reflective of neural network training in areas of the brain affected by addiction are mindfulness-based practice and Attention Restoration Theory (ART). Additionally, Somatic Experiencing® assists in regulating the disrupted nervous system caused by trauma, working toward building resilience. While it is beyond the scope of this review to explore all areas of complementary and alternative practices such as biological based, energy, or other mind/body medicines, this review focuses on the neuroscience behind three sub-areas expressed through ceremony: mindfulness practice, attention restoration theory, and Somatic Experiencing®.

**Mindfulness based practices.**

Lea, Cadman, and Philo (2014) provided a brief history on mindfulness-based practices emphasising that it is a religious, based on Buddhist practices (philosophy based), and a fusion of cognitive approaches from the West with meditative approaches from the East. Lea, Cadman, and Philo looked at exploring reflexive habits in transforming oneself; ultimately, healing from addiction is a transformative process.
whereby the addict is changing old habitual patterns. The authors concluded that our brain is prone to create negative judgments and that changing these habits is extremely difficult. Understanding habits involves exploring executive functioning, reward, motivation, inhibition, impulse control, and gratification; contemplative practices affect these areas of the brain and create positive adjustments.

Wiers et al. (2013) press for the need to understand the neurocognitive processes behind cognitive bias modification and cognitive control training when working with addiction. Lea, Cadman, and Philo (2014) contend that mindfulness is the convergence of western science and eastern practice. Studies scientifically supporting mindfulness are growing (Kass, 2015). Yellowbird (2012, 213) builds upon mindfulness in his work on neurodecolonization. Kass summarized how mindfulness affects certain areas of the brain, “(reductions in amygdala activity and density, increases in left hemisphere prefrontal cortex activity and insula density, and hemispheric synchrony) associated with accurate stress appraisal, awareness of sensations and thoughts, and improvements in cognitive attention” (p. 59-60). In summary, mindfulness reduces the crisis reaction stemming from the amygdalae, thus increasing neuron activity toward self-awareness and clear thinking in the pre-frontal cortex. Mindfulness, however, is a multi-dimensional practice that requires further neuromodulation to create long-lasting change.

**Attention Restoration Theory (ART).**

Kaplan and Berman’s (2010) work looks at the role of attention in addiction. They suggest that self-regulation and executive functioning share attention resources with executive functioning affecting changing habits or self-control. When called upon, one or both processes will perform less in the mind of someone living with addiction.
The author’s theory suggests that emotional distress threatens attention. Attention influences level of willpower and volition, of which both are shown to affect one’s ability to stave off cravings. There are two manners of attention—directed and involuntary (see Table 1). Directed attention is voluntary attention, whereas involuntary attention appears to have distinct psychological process mediation, meaning it facilitates brain function. Long tasks that involve cognition impair self-regulation because of lower-directed attention resources. They recommend that attracting directed attention using natural-environment-intervention may restore shared resources. Directed attention depletes resources whereas involuntary attention, when engaged, may restore resources. When directed attention focuses towards organic or basic environments, involuntary attention engages without bombarding directed attention thus restoring resources. Restoring directed attention is difficult because irrelevant stimuli bombard the brain, overtaxing directed attention, thus using resources meant to decipher what is important (Kaplan & Berman). Substance use disorders affect directed attention because the brain is navigating between feeling high and avoiding cravings (Kaplan & Berman). People living with addiction, worrying about staving off cravings or lack of attention when high, deplete directed attention resources. Depleted attention resources affect self-regulation and executive function, which in turn affects impulse control. Lack of impulse control may increase risky behaviours and addiction behaviours.

Kaplan & Berman (2010) categorize three methods to address directed attention deprivation—sleep, meditation, and increased use of involuntary attention (see Table 1). Kass (2015) looked at different brain waves suggesting that sleep and meditation dissolve self-awareness by decoupling from the frontal cortex to produce a unitive
experience. Sleep is a natural mediator for restoring involuntary attention resources; however, people seldom get the required amount or quality of sleep needed to accomplish this (Hurst, 2008). Kass notes that meditation is ineffective without person-centered spiritual maturation. There is minimal effect from meditation without the cognitive reshaping required with mindfulness. The authors propose that engaging involuntary attention can also restore executive functioning. Involuntary attention is awareness peaked without cognitive force, for example, stimuli that excite or intrigue elicit involuntary attention. Increasing the use of involuntary attention is an approach agreeable with contemplative practices; natural environments, as suggested by the authors, elicit involuntary attention responses. In natural environments, the brain seldom triages its surroundings. Involuntary attention is engaged without forced direction.

Natural environments reduce the use of directed attention, increasing engagement of involuntary attention through three factors: (a) fascination, (b) compatible environment, and (c) reflection called Attention Restoration Theory (ART; Kaplan & Berman, 2010) (see Table 1). All three factors constitute an ART based approach. This process is different from escapism or distraction. As an example, television is an assumed distraction of directed attention; however, the brain must decipher what is and is not important when commercials or messages appear. Television holds some involuntary attention but natural environments arouse the senses or neurons without the need for triage. The authors speak about studies on resource depletion such as life-threatening illness, caregiver, incarceration, career, or academic stress. These activities produce background stimuli, forcing the brain to negotiate between what is present and what is working behind the scenes. People negotiating cravings and relapse prevention
deplete directed attention and experience physiological changes affecting executive
functioning through the changing dopamine levels, dysfunctional dACC, and impaired
amygdalae responses. Understanding the compound factors presented is key to offering
beneficial aftercare.
Table 1 ART Resources and Factors

Attention Restoration Theory Table of Resources and Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Attention</th>
<th>Self-regulation and executive functioning share attention resources.</th>
<th>Willpower and volition are affected by Directed attention levels.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directed Attention (in-voluntary, forced attention)</td>
<td>Requires a forced effort to pay attention.</td>
<td>Three methods to replenish Directed Attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Indirect Attention (voluntary, non-forced attention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Attention (voluntary, non-forced attention)</td>
<td>Requires minimal effort to pay attention and may increase directed attention resources.</td>
<td>Attention Restoration Theory (ART) proposes three factors that engage indirect attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Fascination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Compatible environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Kaplan and Berman's (2010) Attention Restoration Theory.
Somatic Experiencing®.

When faced with threatening stimuli the body responds through the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Somatic Experiencing theory explains that acting as the gas pedal (sympathetic) and the brake pedal (parasympathetic), the two systems create a balanced response of fight, flight, or freeze in order to respond to the stimuli. Peter Levine (2015), founder of Somatic Experiencing®, noticed that animals have an organized response to traumatic incidents, allowing them to move past the incident, without pathosis. Interruptions to this response create body memories linked to the event, and cognitive appraisal of the event may be distorted or non-existent. Using cognitive therapy to address traumatic experiences becomes ineffective when the memory is overwhelming, faulty, non-existent, or biologically repressed. Heller and LaPierre (2012) highlight that when using somatic experiencing, attachment, emotional, or relational issues are absent from the initial focus. The goal is regulation and integration to restore resilience. After the trauma, the repressed memory becomes a behavioural loop whereby the person re-experiences the sensations of the trauma, the anxiety, the fear, or is unable to assess accurately his or her surroundings. Feelings of anxiety, fear, shame, anger, and horror dominate neural energy in trying to keep these emotions from taking over (Levine). The disrupted fight, flight, or freeze response prevents an honest appraisal of the traumatic event. Regulating the nervous system by working through the disrupted response helps relax the amygdala to allow a constructive review of the experience, either cognitively or experientially. Heller and LaPierre describe the process by explaining, “It is by facilitating a felt sense awareness that nonverbal experiences can become known, thereby developing the capacity for self-
knowledge and organization” (p. 113). Levine’s (2015) work is supported by Gabor Mate, one of the leading authors on the mind-body connection of trauma and addiction.

Van der Kolk (2014) submits that the medial prefrontal cortex and insula may be smaller in people with chronic PTSD. These areas express pain, distress, joy, pleasure, purpose, and relational connection (Levine, 2015). Limited neural activity in these areas allows the avoidance not only of pain and distress but also of pleasure, purpose, and connection (elements identified as spiritual needs inherent in everyone). Somatic experiencing® (Levine) explores “the subtle physical imprints of trauma and focus[es] on reconnecting the body with the mind” (p. xiii). Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau (2015) caution that contemplative practices may allow threatening memories to overwhelm and produce further suppression of feelings. The authors argue that neither overwhelming nor suppressing feelings is helpful. Somatic Experiencing® uses interoceptive and proprioceptive experiences to frame the experience in a meaningful way. Much work has been done comparing the three previously mentioned approaches with eastern practices. Very little has been expressed however, in relation to Northern American Indigenous ways of healing.

Neurodecolonization approach.

Prior to colonization, North American Indigenous peoples practiced traditional contemplative rituals that supported positive, healthy neural networks (Yellow Bird, 2013). Colonialism changes the brain’s neural pathways and neurodecolonization must take place within the colonized person to generate helpful, empowering thoughts (Yellow Bird, 2012, 2013). Described as a blend of meditation and traditional contemplative practices, mindfulness corrects cognitive biases and current western-
created mindlessness. Solutions through decolonization are indistinct and based upon looking and doing differently. Decolonization is creating change by forging a new-shared path as opposed to post-colonial work that adjusts but does not change the current arrangement. Yellow Bird (2012) cautions that it is not a matter of recovering or reviving traditional roles but a ‘remaking.’ Yellow Bird’s (2012, 2013) work utilizes findings from Sharon Begley and Norman Doige’s plasticity paradox, Rick Hanson and Richard Menduis’s history of the brain, and Yellow Bird’s own collective Indigenous knowledge and traditions. By blending Buddhist and Indigenous traditions, “mindfulness practice can minimize the negative sequelae of trauma related to colonization and enhance psychological and community well-being in Indigenous communities” (Yellow Bird, 2013, p. 294). The process of mindfulness is accessing, acknowledging, and then releasing unresolved or interfering feelings and judgements (Yellow Bird, 2013). Yellowbird (2013) states, “[mindfulness’s] aim is self-awareness so we might better serve others, consistent with Indigenous Peoples’ collective values and deep connection to the natural environment” (p. 295). Earth’s human collective is on the verge of a mental change; Yellow Bird (2013) suggests that we are moving away from the old, primitive brain, toward more compassionate, less aggressive emotional thinking. Through neurodecolonization, Indigenous peoples can harness positive thinking and challenge oppression through creative strategic approaches (Yellow Bird, 2013). Decolonizing is not about self-improvement but about envisioning futures “for which we currently have no language” (Smith, 2013, ¶ 17).
Neuromodulation to Moderate Addiction

Research reveals that predominant healing from addiction in North America is through abstinence, cognitive-behavioural therapy, and medication (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2017; APA, 2013; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017). Sustained long-term healing is challenging. To reduce responding to triggers and strengthen cognitive-behavioural efforts, addiction research is moving toward self-regulative practices such as mindfulness, ART, and Somatic Experiencing®. Retraining the brain through neuromodulation may help control cravings by reinforcing executive functioning. Neuroplasticity may enhance brain function through neural network training or neuromodulation by building directed attention. Directed attention bombarded by disruptive thoughts sent from the amygdala may affect executive functioning. Mindfulness and attention restoration theory (ART) are two potential contemplative practices that affect neuroplasticity. Both ART and mindfulness are employed through North American Indigenous ceremony. Yellow Bird (2012, 2013) offers that addiction control is greater than merely relapse prevention; he suggests it involves neurodecolonization. Colonization changes the brain's neural pathways and neurodecolonization must take place within the colonized person to generate positive, empowering thoughts (Yellow Bird, 2011, 2012, 2013). Yellow Bird (2013) contends that Indigenous peoples “… can use mind-brain strategies to empower themselves more creatively to change their understanding, actions and relationships to colonialism” (p. 299). Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird (2005) note that “decolonization must occur in our own minds” first by challenging colonization and oppression. Neurodecolonization is for Indigenous peoples; but non-Indigenous peoples can also use this process to move
away from the dominant western way of thinking to explore alternate ways of looking at addiction healing processes in a respectful, humble way. Yellow Bird’s (2013) use of neuromodulation is an active process where the person is present and acknowledges negative feelings while allowing healthy feelings to take over.

**Cultural Responsiveness**

Health Canada (2015) urges that those working with Indigenous people must be aware of their unique needs and provide culturally safe services. Cultural safety is a practice that originated in New Zealand by Maori peoples in response to adverse experiences in health care (NAHO, 2006). The theory was developed by Irihapeti Ramsden, a Maori nurse (NAHO) looking to guide helping professionals in working with Indigenous peoples. Cultural safety is the process of looking at how one’s culture influences one’s biases and interactions with patients. Through self-reflection, workers address unequal power relations created between western hegemony and Indigenous peoples. However, a current understanding of cultural safety allows western-dominant treatment programs and funding agencies to continue to legitimize the colonial labels and pathological notion of Indigenous behaviours. Care providers are encouraged to explore their biases when working with different cultures; however, western culture remains the invisible norm to which cultures are compared. The culturally diverse population is non-white and its behaviours are labelled diseased when expressed differently.

In Canada, the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Advisory committee of the Cultural Safety committee for the Cultural Safety Working Group (CSWG, 2013) identified that institutional barriers for Indigenous peoples were (a) lack of acknowledgment of the impact of colonization and assimilation policies, (b) lack of programs to meet the length
of time required to address historical trauma and reconciliation needs, and (c) lack of respect for Indigenous healing ways (p. 8). Chansonneuve (2007) states that while “addictions workers are unaware of this tragic history, they are also unaware of the unresolved trauma underlying addictive behaviours; nor are the origins of other social problems facing the Aboriginal population fully understood, such as suicide and violence” (p. 13). Addiction workers must be exposed to Canada’s colonial history and its effects (Health Canada, 2015, Naseba Marsh, Coholic, Cote-Meek, & Najavits, 2015; Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2002). ‘Soul wound,’ ‘injured soul,’ and ‘ancestral hurt’ describe the effects of colonization on Indigenous peoples (Duran, 2006; Naseba Marsh, Coholic, Cote-Meek, & Najavits, 2015). To support client insight on his or her possible issues of grief and pain due to multiple losses, it is important for addiction workers to develop a working knowledge of Indigenous peoples’ past who live in Canada. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF, 2006a) offers, “for individuals … who are attempting to work through other traumatic experiences, or who are dealing with severe psychological pain and addictions, understanding the dynamics and impact of history can be a part of the therapeutic healing process” (p. 42). The AHF recommends that a survivor’s healing journey starts with establishing safety, then moves on to remembrance and mourning. Once the survivor is able to reconcile with their past, reclamation of a new life begins, and eventually a capacity to heal begins (AHF).

The CSWG (2013) states that, “To be effective, care providers need to understand how the burden of unresolved personal and historical losses carried by many recipients of care may shape present behaviour” (p. 11). Addiction workers should have trauma knowledge and understand unresolved grief both related to colonization and
assimilation policies. The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres subcommittee (OFIFC, 2012) calls for, “Continued research to identify and develop skills to address impacts of residential schools on Aboriginal people” (p. 20). In addition to the addiction-shame/guilt spiral, society implies that Indigenous peoples are inherently diseased. Czyzewksi (2011) too states that mental health workers need to know about colonialism and understand the history of trauma related to colonialism that must be reconciled.

Incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing should be influenced by the words of the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) and knowledge keepers when combining western and traditional approaches. The Mental Health Commission of Canada (2012) recommends combining traditional and mainstream approaches, such as engaging Kehte-ayak as service providers. The CSWG (2013) urges a balance between western and traditional approaches. A balance is not augmentation nor is it complementary; it is a reworking of what is currently available by co-constructing a new way. One theory in progress is the Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Framework. This framework was developed through an initiative led by the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health (FSIN, 2013). The framework offers a model for client-centered care that engages community and Kehte-ayak voices. Naseba Marsh, Coholic, Cote-Meek, and Najavits (2015) note that alcohol use is seen with generational loss and trauma. They argue that Indigenous approaches must blend with western approaches to enhance and improve addiction and trauma work. Stemming from cultural safety, Cultural Responsiveness creates a middle ground that unites Indigenous and western ways of responding. Strengthening culturally safe practice requires a study such
as this that explores where colonization interrupted mediating factors for supporting restoration. Together with proven western approaches, traditional healing approaches as provided by Kehte-ayak may offer all people recovering from addiction the opportunity to develop sustained recovery methods.

The following section highlights the theoretical foundation of this study. The theoretical framework draws upon a decolonizing lens, highlighting the fact that defining the concept of decolonization is problematic. A brief overview of an Indigenous onto-epistemology and the four elements of a relational ontology contribute to explaining the role of a researcher in an Indigenous methodologies approach.
Theoretical Framework

A decolonizing process can advance ways of constructing addiction research with Indigenous peoples. A literature review brought forth several perspectives of understanding and approaching aftercare services through decolonizing ways. The review also recognized a strong need to explore harmonizing approaches through the voices of Kehte-ayak (Old Ones). To demonstrate a good heart and provide a clear purpose for this study, an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings is presented. This theoretical framework is the basis for a critical reflection on the decolonizing process of research with Indigenous peoples. The framework provides a method for co-constructed knowledge in this study to give voice to Indigenous paradigms and cultural ways of knowing within academia. The framework includes Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) articulation of decolonizing research methodologies, Sandy Grande’s (2004, 2008) notion of deconstructing methodologies, and Anne Waters (2004) and other Indigenous scholars’ view of Indigenous Onto-epistemology. The last part of this section integrates the identified perspectives with the four elements of a relationship under a relational ontology.

Decolonizing Research

Research on Indigenous peoples through western approaches is often insensitive and negative (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Indigenous people are often viewed as pathological or ‘other.’ Tuhiwai Smith points out that when Indigenous research participants are examined by non-Indigenous people that the findings are often wrong (Tuhiwai Smith). A western lens in research influences the explanation of behaviour. When participants perform differently from what western norms dictate, the researcher may classify the
participant as maladaptive. Research is not a western phenomenon (Wilson, 2008).

Nonetheless, western epistemologies and knowledge systems are privileged above non-western paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008b) in current research practices. Indigenous philosophers and methodologies encourage the use of research that empowers the participants, focuses on Indigenous knowledge and paradigms, and leads to healing (Battiste, 2008; Grande, 2004, 2008; Kovach, 2006, 2010a, 2010b; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Waters, 2004; Wilson, 2001, 2008). Research can be used to enhance life and strengthen processes. Wilson (2008) submits that “Research by and for Indigenous peoples is a ceremony that brings relationships together” (p. 8). In addition, Kovach (2010b) offers that, “The sacredness of Indigenous research is bound in ceremony, spirit, land, place, nature, relationships, language, dreams, humour, purpose, and stories in an inexplicable, holistic, non-fragmented way, and it is this sacredness that defies the conventional” (p. 140). Therefore, constructing research that affects Indigenous peoples is an exercise in political and social conditions, which is never benign (Tuhiwai Smith). Decolonizing methodologies can create space for a shift in the dominant discourse on research.

**Indigenous Research Agenda**

An Indigenous research agenda includes four processes—healing, decolonizing, transforming, and mobilizing (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) (see Figure 2). Tuhiwai Smith starts with asserting that researchers should begin by decolonizing one’s mind; also called post-colonial discourse. Tuhiwai Smith identifies that because they remain colonized, academics in post-colonial work can still silence the voices of Indigenous peoples. Getty (2010) recognises that “although postcolonialism has been used by White
researchers to deconstruct the influences of colonialism, it does not reflect Indigenous ways of knowing” (p. 7) and is suspect by some Indigenous scholars.

Figure 2 Illustration of Indigenous Research Agenda

Illustration of Indigenous Research Agendas

Decolonizing means “center[ing] and privilege[ing] Indigenous life, community, and epistemology” (Sium, Desai, & Ritskes, 2012, p. II). The terms ‘centering’ and ‘privileging’ are used in this context to remove Indigenous peoples from the western-created knowledge hierarchy and to bring Indigenous understanding into the circle, as opposed to being ignored or dismissed. Tuck and Yang (2012) explain “Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing...
discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks” (p. 3). A process of decolonization seems more suitable in that it explores what happened before and during colonization (Tuhiwai Smith). For example, in this study, the researcher and Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) reviewed traditional knowledge, questioned colonial knowledge on the matter, and then explored how to proceed into the future. Sium, Desai, and Ritskes (2013) state that searching for a clear theory on decolonization “does not fit the demands and expectations of the western Euroversity – it is alive and vibrant, being theorized and enacted in Indigenous communities around the globe through practices such as storytelling” (p. 10).

Decolonization creates a theoretical framework for analysis through an Indigenous methodology. This is different from the current way of applying colonial language to the concept from the beginning. Instead, the researcher and participant honour Indigenous knowledge and then construct new knowledge together.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has argued for the need to reclaim research using an Indigenous epistemology focusing on concerns important to community, exploring what to keep from the past and how it fits into the future. This exploration becomes a key step within the research. The researcher should meet the needs of the community, no longer conducting research for his or her own purposes. Every aspect of the research process becomes decolonized. Many confuse a decolonizing approach with an all-or-nothing dichotomy. The binary invariably pits imperialism against Indigenism, suggesting that Indigenous peoples seeking to decolonize institutions want to return to an era pre-industrialization and want to rebuke electronics, western medicine, and the English language. A binary is created when the reader attaches a hierarchical label or meaning to
the material presented in the dichotomy. This dichotomy censors the evolutionary experience of all cultures. Tuhiiwai Smith argues that this binary asserts “Indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse, or contradictory. Only the West has that privilege” (p. 74). Assuming that Indigenous peoples do not evolve perpetuates the myth of the savage, thus prompting a paternalistic and hegemonic power base from western systems. As with all people, Indigenous peoples hold knowledge that changes and evolves over time. Battiste (2008) states that Indigenous knowledge,

… is a dynamic knowledge constantly in use as well as in flux or change. It derives from the same source: the relationship within the global flux that needs to be renewed, kinship with the other living creatures and life energies embodied in their land, and kinship with the spirit world (p. 500).

This paradigm doubtlessly provides discomfort for the dominant, positivistic western research perspective because a relational ontology believes that nothing is definitive or hierarchical in the world’s essence (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011).

**Sandy Grande**

Grande (2008) offers that an Indigenous methodology “… begins with a ‘statement of the problem’ or a tracing of the historical disconnect between indigenous education and Western theory” (p. 234). Duran and Duran (1995) propose that an Indigenous paradigm believes that we are all related and therefore, most Indigenous peoples are process thinkers, not content thinkers. A relational paradigm through an Indigenous perspective requires reciprocity and responsibility when working in
Indigenous relationships. We cannot merely expose the snag (term used by Derrida; Jackson & Mazzie, 2012) in the dichotomy debate; we must include purpose and product from the uncovering of what was exposed. Grande (2004) suggests it is not a snag but a transgression; she has “learned that transgression is the root of emancipatory knowledge, and emancipatory knowledge is the basis of revolutionary pedagogy” (p. 5). In keeping with Grande’s notion, researchers therefore have an obligation to expand beyond deconstruction and make the process and results meaningful to the people involved. Grande suggests, “Not all critical scholars embrace the marriage of critical pedagogy to postmodern and post-structural theories”; they may have unearthed the “hidden trajectories of power,” (p. 23 - 24) but they forget to create transformative opportunities, instead becoming stuck in the politics of representation. Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014) echo this sentiment when they argue for a relational approach that disrupts power imbalances without creating binaries that are common to post-structuralist and deconstructivist theories. Decolonization is reconciling worldviews and creating a new way, with Indigenous participation and knowledge as principal. To decolonize is to challenge this process by viewing all epistemologies as valuable with a co-construction of new knowledge being favoured. This study argues that a new way moving forward is the grey. It is neither black nor white, but a harmonized blend of both ways of knowing through respectful relationship.

Colonization has left many Indigenous peoples struggling for a sense of purpose and meaning, asking themselves what it means to be Indigenous (Grande, 2004). Exploring performativity and areas of resistance presents opportunities for reflection and analysis. Social justice, self-determination, and decolonization take place from these
spaces of resistance, “The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices – all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 4). Imperialist researchers may argue that when approaches become decolonized, scientific rigor diminishes. This is not the case. Indigenous methodologies critically reflect on each aspect of the research process much like western approaches. Tuhiwai Smith offers,

... methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ, all become significant acts which need to be considered carefully and critically before being applied. In other words, they need to be ‘decolonized’ (p. 39).

Decolonizing research strengthens research and multiple ways of knowing. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) offers “... it is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspective and for our own purposes” (p. 39). Grande (2004) summarizes the concept by saying, “...the overarching nature of decolonization [is] – a totality that places capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and Western Christianity in radical contingency” (p. 51).

Decolonizing begins by exploring ontologies and then creates a collective step forward that honours and acknowledges the wisdom and worldviews of the Indigenous peoples with respectful and purposeful points of a western worldview. Deconstructing ends with a new co-construction of knowledge, articulating a new way forward. This may appear dichotomous to some; however, the intent is a convergence of knowledge while reconciling the historical and political contexts of the journey.
There is minimal research that employs Indigenous methodologies with Indigenous peoples. More research is required applying Indigenous methodologies that are healing and able to decolonize aftercare while honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and experiences. Exploring knowledge with Indigenous peoples requires respectful, reciprocal relationships. Indigenous peoples deserve research processes that value shared ownership and ethical participation because of the many years of harmful research practices. Research should no longer be ‘done to’ Indigenous peoples, but ‘with.’ An Indigenous research methodology using qualitative methods honours Indigenous ways of knowing when the research is respectful, decolonizing, and healing. Kovach (2010a) cautions that while a decolonizing framework is important it is not the epistemological center for the methodology. This study honours using an Indigenous methodology through an Indigenous onto-epistemology.

**Indigenous Onto-Epistemology**

A relational ontology characterizes an Indigenous paradigm, positing that all interactions are relationship based. A relational ontology within an Indigenous paradigm means that we are all fundamentally woven together. This connection challenges the current limited understanding of relational ontology as being an unequal interconnection with each other. Yellow Bird (2013) suggests that relational ontology is not a noun but a verb. We are not in a relationship; we are a relationship. Indigenous philosophers suggest that relationality is greater than merely between one and another, but that it includes our surroundings, the earth, the universe, and the creator. Indigenous spirituality follows the concept of “a shared ‘essence’ of life” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 74). Battiste (2008) describes Indigenous epistemology (how we know what we know,
our concept of knowledge) as “the immediate ecology; from peoples’ experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and memory, including experiences shared with others; and from the spiritual world discovered in dreams, visions, inspirations, and signs interpreted with the guidance of healers or Elders” (p. 499). This harmonious relationship between humans and the environment is shared through artistic means and oral language; “The personal and tribal experience with their immediate environment and with their personal and intense interaction with the spiritual world provided the core foundations for knowledge” (Battiste, p. 499).

An Indigenous epistemology is an imprecise, articulated way of knowing. The paradigm embraces the imprecision above absolute declarations. Indigenous epistemologies follow a collective knowledge based on region, clan, tribe, or nation. The terms tribal and clan are used in acknowledgment of Kehtehi Florence, Waters, Wilson, Battiste, and Kovach’s use of the terms representing the different Indigenous regional or community collectives. To understand Indigenous epistemologies, a review of the dominant ways of knowing (post-positivism and interpretivism) is offered.

**Situating relational onto-epistemology.**

Relationalism believes that all humans are intertwining in a relationship with the universe with multiple realities and multiple interpretations for understanding. An Indigenous epistemology is vastly different from other epistemologies presently leading research. Western epistemology founded in a post-positivist perspective tends to appreciate the categorization of things and absolutist assertions with a firm belief in that only one-true knowledge can be found, labeled, and explained objectively and thus dominates most academic processes. Slowly gaining momentum are two, more flexible,
experiential epistemological views – interpretivism and critical theory. Interpretivism understands meaning through socially constructed interactions influenced by constructivism or relativism ontologies. Realism or relativism doctrines in which humans are at the center or the ‘middle,’ is dissimilar to relationalism (the Indigenous ontology previously described). Critical theory is a burgeoning epistemology as it moves from a theoretical framework to a way of knowing. Grande (2004) describes critical theory as a collective process, critical, systematic, participatory, creative, and collective process (influenced by relativism or skepticism ontologies). Critical theory focuses on emancipation or giving back power taken through systemic oppressors, making critical participatory action theory a burgeoning methodology for working with Indigenous peoples. Table 2 represents the progression of ontological/epistemic perspectives.
Important Indigenous philosophers such as Anne Waters, Sandy Grande, and Marie Battiste, laid the groundwork for Indigenous epistemologies. LaNada Vernae Boyer, Maggie Walter, Margaret Kovach, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, and Shawn Wilson have been influential in the academic articulation of a relational paradigm and Indigenous methodology. A relational ontology believes that the connection is more than through discourse but a relationship with animals, intuition, dreams, and the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontology and Epistemology Perspective Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realism</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one universal truth can be known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positivist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fixed perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empiricism</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- knowledge is made known through observation and western based experimentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Universe to help form knowledge (Kovach, 2010b). Reality is experienced through all relationships (Wilson, 2008) and knowledge is created through sight, sound, senses, intuition, and experience. An Indigenous epistemology suggests that meanings are contextual, based on metaphors, verbs, and language that are created by its relationship to what is experienced, observed, and understood in a local or regional way (Kovach; Waters, 2004; Wilson).

Kovach (2010b), Waters (2004), and Wilson (2008) contend that all interactions are relationships. Poststructuralists and interpretivists will sense a similarity between the languages; however, the implication is different. Four elements within a relational ontology – reciprocity, relevance, respect, and responsibility – influence the creation, development, and maintenance of all relationships (Kovach, Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Waters, & Wilson). Observing the four elements support the researcher in creating an ethical research relationship that respects The First Nations Information Governance Centre First Nations Principles of Ownership, Control, Acquisition, and Possession ([OCAP™] 2019). van der Woerd, Cox, Reading, & Kmetic (2010) used the perspective of the four elements in their research and referenced Kirkness, & Barnhardt’s (1991) use of the four R’s. Labelling each element does not reduce them to singular, independent characters but acknowledges that all components are interrelated and dependent upon each other. In a relational epistemology, the four ‘Rs,’ are honoured within the research relationship (Kovach, 2010b; Waters, 2004; Wilson, 2008). These elements guide, direct, and support the relationship. Reciprocity is a sharing or exchange within the relationship. Relevance signifies that the purpose of the relationship has meaning to all involved. Respect honours each ‘energy’ brought to the relationship. Therefore, the
participants have a responsibility to the knowledge created and to each other. All relationships, whether it is with each other, the land, animals, or the spirit world, should follow the principles of the four elements. All ways of knowing are respected within this paradigm (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Four Elements of a Relationship.

Honouring the four elements directing relationships is foundational to the research process; therefore, the methodology should reflect a relationship among the researcher, the participants, their community, and external influences such as intuition, chance encounters, dreams, and animals. Kovach (2010b) offers, “The purpose is not to propagate unhelpful binaries, but to point out the Indigenous approaches to seeking
knowledge that are not of a Western worldview, a matter that colonialism (and its supporters) has long worked to confuse” (p.21). Understanding the four elements within the theoretical framework advances the discourse on how to create ethical space that honours an Indigenous paradigm. Honouring the four elements through the research process addresses issues of constructing research with vulnerable populations because the framework identifies that participants are not the ‘other’ but are within the relationship.

**Integration of Theoretical Perspective**

Respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility guide relationship in a relational ontology. Respect is influenced by cultural understandings and behaviours. Respect means to treat someone with esteem and to regard him or her as valuable. Each relationship is respected and honoured for what it helps produce and contribute to the greater consciousness. Indigenous peoples are not in relationships; they are relationships (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005). The first step in the research process is self-locating by the researcher. Self-locating is an intuitive act that prompts reflection and clarity as to why the researcher is interested in the chosen area and “show[s] respect for place and allows for [the] community to locate us” (Kovach, Carriere, Barrett, Montgomery, & Gillies, 2013, p. 491). The participant acknowledges the researcher’s intentions. In turn, the researcher regards the participant as equal and co-researcher (Kovach, 2010b). The participant counts for what they bring to the process and is valued for his or her knowledge. Gratitude is shown for the time the participant commits, what he or she offers or chooses not to offer, and what is created within the relationship; all information is appreciated and accepted as being required for the researcher to hear. The
researcher’s intention is forthright and non-judgmental of what unfolds. Conscious evaluation of misappropriation of knowledge is at the forefront of the researcher’s awareness, as well as the recognition that knowledge is a co-created, contemporaneous activity. The researcher acknowledges and respects intuition, sensations, images while asleep, and appearances of animals and other environmental cues as signs from the universe to assist him or her in understanding the phenomena under study. Keeping the participants abreast of the research process and researcher’s intentions are signs of a respectful relationship. Respectful relationships depend on a deep exchange of knowledge and information. This deep exchange is considered reciprocity.

Reciprocity is the act of pendulating privilege and ways of knowing. The shared exchange unites people. There is valued interconnection that is created. Reciprocity is a shared process that does not focus on producing equal outcomes, but instead, focuses on a blended result. Waters (2001) summarized Ryser’s view of the interconnection of relationships through a metaphor about the creation of water. Hydrogen and oxygen are unable to produce water on their own, but together, they create a relationship – a relationship that is co-constructed both individually and communally. “Drawing out the analysis of consciousness of self and community is intimately bound together” (p. 662), Waters refers to this consciousness as the universe. A drop of water is a personal consciousness within the communal consciousness. One cannot understand him or herself as the drop of water without relating to the larger body of water with which he or she interrelates. Different bodies of water will have different understandings of their surroundings and purpose; these different understandings are different ways of knowing (Water). The ocean does not dictate the ways of knowing for a river simply because the
ocean is the dominant body of water on the planet. The drop of water in a river may be compared to a drop of water in the ocean; however, it is not dualistic, nor is one better than is the other. There is a shared learning and growing within the relationship through reciprocal interactions. Waters (2001) presents Roberts and Wills’ perspective on the relationship of consciousness within an Indigenous paradigm; it is influenced by the animate, inanimate, divine power, and spiritual breath. The Universe provides guidance and knowledge as long as the process is relevant.

The issue under study, the process to construct information, and the information constructed should be applicable to the participants involved. Research cannot be done solely to do research; the research must be meaningful. To support meaning in the process, the researcher and participants look to communal knowledge, accessed through Indigenous ways of being and knowing. To glean meaning from the communal consciousness one must access ancestral knowledge. Ancestral knowledge is “passed on via oral narrative[s]… using poetry, place-names, song, oratory, metaphors, recitation, and visual cues” (Waters, 2001, p. 664). Elliot (2009) explains, “From a Western scientific perspective, metaphoric meaning is a type of symbolic thinking where our personally derived understanding of an event is represented by a symbol” (p. 289). This goes further than contextualizing the information for example, it means weaving in the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical parts of self. Barta, Jette, and Wiseman (2003) suggest that metaphors translate ideas and concepts. In a relationship-based paradigm, Indigenous peoples may use a picture or symbol to describe how they understand their world; symbols then transform intention into energy (Duran & Duran, 1995). The expression through symbols unites or engages the relationship amongst Indigenous
peoples and the universe. This is challenging for western scientists seeking noun-based descriptions or attempting to translate Indigenous language to western language because one word will often overlook the concept. However, it is the meaning, the understanding, and the ways of being that create the experience of the relationship. Relevance frames meaning and understanding. The researcher continuously monitors relevance throughout, modifying as needed and keenly aware that there is a level of responsibility taken when they construct research with Indigenous peoples.

One of the most powerful elements of relationship that moves the Indigenous paradigm forward from current relational or relativism ontological views is the notion of responsibility. The concept of ethics within research has evolved greatly away from the initial deceptive positivistic process. Critical theorists suggest that the research should be emancipatory and pragmatists may argue for concerns about the long-term effects of research. However, none of the perspectives acknowledges the influence of one’s consciousness on all aspects of the research. Waters (2001) asserts, “an Indigenous context brings knowledge of the past to the present by invoking ancestors and ancestral knowledge of all relations” (p. 665). She goes on to say that these spirit guides also influence the future. This “continuity of past, place, relations, and identity maintains a moral accountability to future generations” (Waters, p. 665). Many use the term ‘seven generations of responsibility’ to denote this relational connection. This outlook proposes that every choice or behaviour one makes will affect the next seven generations. This paradigm takes the wisdom from the past, reflects on the current context, and recognizes its consequences on the future. In effect, research should be purposeful, contextual,
reverential, and woven. Figure 4 illustrates the elements of Indigenous methodologies and their interconnection.

Figure 4 Theoretical Illustration for Indigenous Methodologies

Reciprocal, relevant, respectful, and responsible relationships lay the foundation for constructing new knowledge in this study. Cultural responsiveness can also guide researchers in respecting a decolonizing approach when working with Indigenous people in research. Cultural responsiveness arranges western and Indigenous knowledge systems as equal collaborators in developing effective aftercare services. The far-reaching effects of a dystopic colonization, disruptive residential school experiences,
assimilation policies (emulating cultural genocide), consequential generational trauma, and long-term exposure to multilayered racism, eroded the capacity of Indigenous peoples to meet spiritual needs as a protective factor, resulting in issues of addiction. The complexity in providing aftercare services for Indigenous peoples lends itself to research through a Cultural Responsiveness Framework. The Cultural Responsiveness Framework is a fitting methodological tool in critically reflecting on the historical context, layers of racism, and resulting compound trauma in relation to current harmonious aftercare healing practices.

**Cultural Responsiveness Theoretical Framework**

The Cultural Responsiveness Framework (FSIN, 2013) is “about restoring and enhancing First Nations’ own health systems” (p. 7) whereby “the two systems could come together as equals to work together in a way that would be to the benefit of all” (p. 6). Culture is accommodated by including it in the development and implementation of services (FSIN). FSIN suggests that the framework is a “foundational stage for reconciliation and respectful engagement [and] could be viewed as a sort of middle ground or ‘ethical space’” (p. 8). Figure 5 depicts a visualization of the regard and interchange between the two systems. Notice that neither system appears as a hierarchy but demonstrates mutual support (FSIN).
The framework situates Indigenous ways of knowing and western science in *miyosin/pimatisiwin*\(^{18}\) (a good way) respecting *two-eyed seeing* (Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb, 2017). Culture Responsiveness incorporates harmonizing Indigenous ways of knowing with proven western practices (LaVallie & Sasakamoose, 2016). Sasakamoose et al (2017) propose that the theory braids tribal\(^{19}\) knowledge and theories that follow trauma-informed strengths, culture as intervention, and culture-based healing.

\(^{18}\) Cree term meaning in a good way or good life as translated by Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb, 2017.

\(^{19}\) The term tribal is used to reflect the terminology used by the author of the citation.
Indigenous methodologies incorporating Cultural Responsiveness direct researchers to create aftercare approaches focused on reconciliation and directions from the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN). Three directions initiated by FSIN (FSIN, 2013; Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb, 2017) are (1) restoring First Nations community-based health, wellness, and education systems; (2) establishing a “middle ground” for engagement between mainstream and First Nations systems and worldviews; and (3) transforming mainstream health and education delivery so it becomes culturally responsive. Voicing current harmonized practices, Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) can offer guidance to workers providing aftercare in meeting spiritual needs of Indigenous peoples healing from addiction.
CHAPTER 3: Methodological Considerations

This study used Indigenous methodologies to privilege the voices of the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) in seeking decolonizing, addiction aftercare approaches. Indigenous methodologies are positioned within a relational ontology, valuing relationship, emancipation, and purpose (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Indigenous methodologies co-construct new knowledge, respecting all epistemologies, while privileging tribal\textsuperscript{20} knowledge, which will strengthen aftercare through healing approaches based on meeting spiritual needs. Addressing spiritual needs helps people healing from addiction to restore life balance. People do not need to look to eastern practices to meet spiritual needs. Ceremonies and activities employed by North American Indigenous peoples are effective ways of balancing life. National, provincial, and municipal organizations and leaders call for decolonizing research that recognizes Indigenous and proven non-Indigenous methods that support a culturally responsive approach for all people.

Providing effective, culturally responsive aftercare for people walking the good road is complex. Steeped in western philosophy, mainstream approaches have proven less effective for Indigenous peoples. Western aftercare approaches focus on psychology not spirituality. Cognitive based treatment practices ignore a relational ontology that many Indigenous peoples follow. Metaphors, dreams, intuition, sensations, and collective responsibility are ignored, instead placing emphasis on cerebral

\textsuperscript{20} Kovach uses the term Tribal knowledge to explain the epistemology of the participants involved in the study.
considerations. Articulating one’s experiences of embodied racism or intergenerational trauma is often problematic and may induce re-traumatization.

Through decolonizing an Indigenous paradigm, grounded in the four elements of relationship, Indigenous methodologies can articulate the harmonizing of current Indigenous and western approaches. Additionally, the voices of the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) can influence the articulation in order to meet the spiritual needs of people healing from addiction. This section presents the applicability of using Indigenous methodologies (see Figure 6) to provide trauma informed, resilience focused, decolonizing, neuroscience supported, aftercare approaches, based on the development of a deep, participatory-based relationship.
Indigenous Methodologies

Indigenous methodologies acknowledge that research is an important and great undertaking. In order to begin decolonizing the research process and policies affected by...
research, researchers have an ethical responsibility to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and local Indigenous approaches when working with Indigenous peoples. Through an anthropological perspective, Grenier (1998, p. 1 & 10) started the discussion about incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing by arguing that communities hold “traditional ecological knowledge” that can “improve scientific research.” Local customs and ceremonies represent knowledge required to heal in the area or region located. Accessing local knowledge lends itself to timely, environmentally sustaining, appropriate aftercare methods.

This methodology is beneficial for exploring ways of knowing outside of the dominant western Anglo-perspective, whereby equal partnerships develop knowledge. The researcher constructs, not conducts research. Discourse and power analyses are deepened by making the information relevant and purposeful, even if only to a small number of people. Discussion is not theoretical but applicable; the participant is the expert, not the researcher; there is a shared responsibility between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers in utilizing this epistemology. The purpose of the research is not to generalize but to present what was created for any reader so that they can reflect on what fits and what does not for their own becoming. Personal themes are sought and the researcher is the translator of those themes as to why they are meaningful. Ultimately, the methods and the process should have a healing quality (Kovach, 2010b). The research should help heal the effects of colonization and the broken relationships created from years of merciless research done previously. The research agenda is healing, decolonizing, mobilizing, and transforming through self-determination, development, recovery, and survival (Absolon, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).
Steeped in rich ancestral epistemologies, Indigenous methodologies have qualitative research characteristics and propose methods for research stemming from a knowledge system (encompassing an Indigenous paradigm) (Kovach, 2010b). Tuhiwai Smith (1999) suggests, “The term research is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (p. 1). In contrast, Wilson (2008) notes a history of Aboriginal research stemming from Australia in 1770, when Aboriginal peoples observed the Europeans during colonization. Wilson has shown that Indigenous peoples have been employing research for centuries, evolving over four phases with Indigenist research as the current phase. Absolon (2011) states that, “Traditionally, [Indigenous] research has been conducted to seek, counsel and consult; to learn about medicines, plants and animals; to scout and scan the land; to educate and pass on knowledge; and to inquire into cosmology” (p. 25). Tuhiwai Smith’s groundbreaking book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* created space in imperialist science for the discussion and employment of Indigenous methodologies on an international level. Critical Indigenous methodology “disrupts taken-for-granted epistemologies, by privileging indigenous interpretive pedagogies and inquiry practices” (Denzin & Lincoln, Preface, 2008, p. 5).

In Indigenous methodologies, the researcher is answerable to the research, the participants, and the collective through relationship accountability. Margaret Kovach (2010b), respected Indigenous scholar and Indigenous methodologist, suggests the methodology should be relational, responsible, based in tribal knowledge, a process of getting to know, and hold a robust narrative component. Kovach’s (2006) work stems from a dissertation focusing on a tribal methodology and her influential book (Kovach,
2010b) has received positive reviews in academic as well as Indigenous circles (Thompson Rand, 2011).

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) reminds us that we are answering to all our relations when we are doing research. Through an ontological perspective, we answer to our relations through reciprocity, relevance, respect, and responsibility. An Indigenous methodology articulates the research intention and process upfront so we can enter a coming-to-know together, honouring local Indigenous knowledge. The next section provides an overview of the evolution of Indigenous methodologies as a stand-alone research approach, building on familiar methodologies used when working with Indigenous peoples.

**Beyond Narrative and Critical Inquiry**

An Indigenous methodology might converge with other established western methodologies and ontologies when keeping in mind that it is a stand-alone research approach. Most western methodologists favour quantitative research with a systematic review of randomized-controlled trials as the gold standard (Polit & Tatano Beck, 2008). Researchers wanting to discover the lived experiences and constructed knowledge of Indigenous people turn to the two leading qualitative methodologies—Narrative Inquiry and Critical Participatory Action Research. Narrative Inquiry allows for the rich narrative piece that Indigenous methodologists encourage; however, narrative inquiry is only beginning to incorporate a decolonizing lens and is slow to explore emancipatory efforts of the participants within the study. Critical Participatory Action Research utilizes a critical theory approach seeking to create knowledge in an emancipatory way. Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) is a relational, critical inquiry-based, methodology appropriate for creating an ethical space to work with Indigenous peoples.
However, it often dismisses the ancestral knowledge and relational elements within an Indigenous paradigm. Additionally, CPAR does not fully address all decolonizing and relational considerations when working with Indigenous peoples.

Getty (2010) and Tobias, Richmond, and Luginaah (2013) discuss the benefits of incorporating an Indigenous paradigm or methodology into the current research environment. An Indigenous methodology may use elements of other methodologies as long as it meets the following recommendations: it is guided by the four relationship elements, has a healing quality, is based in Nationhood knowledge, is a process of getting to know, holds a robust narrative component, and is decolonizing. Indigenous methodologies have the same principles as narrative inquiry and CPAR; however, the methodology becomes relational by including the above-mentioned elements. The differences in ontology and epistemology are evident when these tenets are added. These criteria are not prescriptive but reflect important elements that honour an Indigenous paradigm. Table 3 illustrates Indigenous methodologies following a relational ontology alongside ontologies of Idealism and Criticalism.

Table 3 Research Paradigms

Illustration of Research Paradigms when Working with Indigenous Peoples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Narrative Inquiry</th>
<th>Critical Participatory Action Research</th>
<th>Indigenous Methodologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Idealism; critical rationalism; attempt to understand the other</td>
<td>Criticalism; We construct knowledge together; critical rationalism; multiple realities, situated in political, social, cultural</td>
<td>Relational; We are all connected; knowledge is co-constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axiology</td>
<td>Purposeful</td>
<td>contexts (one reality is privileged)</td>
<td>all realities are respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Constructionist or interpretivist</td>
<td>Transactional/Relational (objectivism/subjectivism)</td>
<td>Based in Nationhood knowledge, community supported, relational, constructionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>Pragmatic/Existential</td>
<td>Critical, Critical Race</td>
<td>Decolonizing, Indigenous paradigm, honors 4 elements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Key Elements |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Narrative Piece | Holds a rich narrative piece | May hold a rich narrative piece | Holds a rich narrative piece |
| Emancipation | Not a key element | Supports Emancipation | Supports Emancipation |
| Decolonizing | Only beginning to incorporate a decolonizing lens | Not a key element | Decolonizing |
| Nationhood Knowledge | Not a key element | Not a key element | Steeped in Nationhood knowledge |
| Healing | May be healing but not the focus | May be healing but not the focus | Healing |
| Guided by the four relationships | Not a key element | Not a key element | Guided by the four relationship elements |
As a stand-alone approach to guide researchers, Indigenous methodologies were the preferred method for this study. Indigenous methodologies lend themselves to a data analysis method that honours Cree epistemologies through narration and teachings. A narrative style that is reflexive and incorporates metaphor analysis is useful in co-constructing knowledge to build protective factors through maskihkiy (medicine) to n’duwihitowin (healing together). For this study, using Indigenous methodologies through a reflexive reflective stance I contemplated on how the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) suggest that trauma may be tethered to addiction through historical contexts. Also, reflexively reflected upon is how co-constructed knowledge through the voices of Kehte-ayak can transform addiction aftercare in working toward decolonizing current practices and strengthening cultural responsiveness.

**Reflexive Reflection (Data Analysis Method)**

Reflexive Reflection is a research analysis method that I created to respectfully represent the process of contemplating the data within Indigenous methodologies. It is loosely based on Narrative Analysis, Reflexive Analysis, and Metaphor Analysis. I found that no one method of consideration met the respectful, relational approach required for co-constructing knowledge. The term ‘analysis’ was not adequate in
accurately portraying the process. Therefore, I transformed conventional analysis into a reflective activity. Respecting the need for knowledge, sharing this reflective activity incorporated a ‘reflexive’ element. This newly constructed instrument renovates Narrative, Reflexive, and Metaphor analyses by privileging the relationship. The following section explains how current analyses were inadequate in articulating the contemplative process used in this study and the need to create Reflexive Reflection. Appendix E (Reflexive Reflection Examples) offers examples of the approach.

With the notion of deeper levels of conscious reflection, this study departs from quantitative or qualitative coding and instead moves toward exploring researcher reaction to the teachings that developed in their awareness. The researcher presents the ‘understandings’ received from contemplating reflexively and metaphors gleaned from the narratives. Indigenous methodologies lend themselves to reflection of the data that moves away from generalizability and challenges the researcher to explore teachings that were meaningful to them. Trustworthy, credibility, and dependability are evaluated by how well the researcher honoured the four relationship elements. The researcher uses their relationship with the data to find meaning. The themes become personal. It is through the personal that relational space is created. Meaningful information is thus presented through the lens of the researcher. In a somewhat autobiographical exploration, the researcher reflects on the data, identifying metaphors from the teachings, and explaining how the researcher was changed from the encounter. To honour the
relational nature of Indigenous methodologies, this reflection is done reflexively (see Table 4) through the process of Reflexive Reflection.

Table 4 Reflectivity and Reflexivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflectivity</th>
<th>Reflexivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I understand that and here is why or how. I may or may not have changed because of what I now know.</td>
<td>Yes, I understand that, and here is how it impacted me. I am a different person because of this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of Narrative Analysis, Metaphor Analysis, nor Reflexive Analysis alone offered an approach that contemplated well Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) teachings and the metaphors created. To create a new approach, the term data analysis needed to be changed to data reflection. The data in this study was not analyzed; it was reflected upon, through a reflexive mode. Reflectivity is an attempt to understand, with or without self-change, whereas, reflexivity is an attempt to understand something about oneself because of transformation.

Reflexive Reflection transforms Narrative Analysis, Reflexive Analysis, and Metaphor Analysis. No one approach met the relational nature required to apply respectfully to Indigenous methodologies; therefore, a new process was created. Indigenous methodologies hold a robust narrative component. Narrative analysis is a popular mode of data analysis within Indigenous methodologies. It affords the researcher an opportunity to present the data through meaningful stories or narratives. The story itself is the focal point with some insight into the researcher’s emotional reaction. Narrative analysis uses quotations and illustrations as reference points (Bird,
Wiles, Okalik, Kilabuk, and Egeland, 2009). Missing from Narrative Analysis is the effects of the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) teachings on the researcher. The researcher may reflect on the story presented but does not contemplate on the figurative language used to express cultural idioms and understandings.

Initial metaphor analysis efforts were criticized as being too subjective (Pragglejaz 2007; Pitcher, 2013) prompting the need to introduce a quantitative method to increase credibility. One such example is the metaphor identification procedure ([MIT] Pragglejaz). The MIT offers structured procedures and explication methods for metaphor identification. The next portion explores the evolution of Metaphor Analysis and how adapting Metaphor Analysis into Indigenous methodologies means to move the analysis away from a quantitative approach and back to a subjective process. The subjective contemplation supports the researcher to explain why they chose what they chose. The researcher uses their interpretation of the data to shine through as opposed to computer-generated software performing Metaphor Analyses. Through conversations, the researcher creates a relationship that is impactful. The impact of the relationship generates co-constructed knowledge.

Metaphors encourage people living with addiction to see pimatisiwin (good way/good life) as a process, not as a conclusion. For example, in one study, metaphors were considered through an online forum of smokeless tobacco users in the process of ending use. Akers, Gordon, Reyna, and Severson (2014) found that, “Tobacco and nicotine were conceptualized as an enemy, a crafty opponent, a demon, and a betraying friend” (p. 49). Metaphors allow the reader access to one’s subjective experience using contextual imagery. Akers, Gordon, Reyna, and Severson suggest, “A metaphor is a
figure of speech in which one concept is illuminated by reference to another with which it is not literally associated” (p. 49). Metaphor is a figurative expression used to explain something unfamiliar. Abrams (1993) explains that the tenor of the metaphor is the subject of the explanation and the figurative expression is named the vehicle. The vehicle is that which is borrowed to create context for the meaning. There are many forms of metaphors, for example, concept, dead, metonymy, and personification. Concept metaphor creates a map across conceptual domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Building on Lakoff and Johnson’s (2003) metaphor theory, the Pragglejaz Group developed a metaphor identification procedure (MIP; Pragglejaz Group, 2007) as a quantifiable method for metaphor analysis. Pitcher (2013) then developed a five-step system for employing the MIP. The Pragglejaz Group and Pitcher argued that the metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) was too subjective. Schmitt (2005) who conducted a systematic metaphor analysis as a method of qualitative research found that metaphors are often unconscious and may differ in meaning. Pitcher submits that in order to have objective, credible findings, the researcher must undertake quantitative methods in data analysis. The author argues that the analyzed, statistical results can be shown in a quantitative manner through graphs and tables. However, Moser (2000) proposes that metaphors are expressions of thought. Socially and culturally expressed as abstract representations of reality, they may be understood as cognitive schemas that influence action (Moser). Schmitt argues that metaphors should closely follow the participant’s worldview and language as opposed to the researcher’s perception of the phenomena. The researcher works to create a ‘cognitive map’ of the participant’s perception in order to make the phenomenon ‘understandable’ to the
researcher. Moser suggests that metaphors are used to access deeper levels of conscious reflection and discussion. Reflexive Reflection harmonizes both perspectives as important.

Indigenous knowledge is steeped in metaphors. Metaphor analysis has been used within addiction research to articulate the contextual experience of people living with addiction (Akers, Gordon, Rayna, & Severson, 2014; Koc, 2015; Shinebourne & Smith, 2010). It also lends itself well to this study because there are many addiction metaphors (Akers, Gordon, Rayna, & Severson). Indigenous methodologies encourage metaphors; however, little is published using Metaphor Analysis when reflecting on Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) knowledge. Moreover, metaphor analysis relies heavily on the quantitative nature of data analysis. Metaphors may help people healing from addiction make sense of their experience through narratives. Narrative analysis allows for metaphorical arrangement but misses the Reflexive Reflection offered by the researcher to co-construct new knowledge. Reflexive Analysis lends itself to a contemplative method; however, Reflexive Analysis focuses more on the researcher and less on the story or relationship.

This study uses the self-created Reflexive Reflection method of data contemplation. Researchers using Indigenous methodologies are encouraged to use intuition and reveal significant meanings as opposed to focusing on quantitative, generalizable findings. As the translator, researchers are expected to explore their reactions to the data gleaned from Kehte-ayak conversations to reframe understanding and terminology. An added respectful approach to the research process is to reflect on the conversations in contrast to analyzing them. The term ‘reflect’ meets epistemological underpinnings as opposed to the term ‘analyze.’
With Indigenous methodologies, it is expected that the researcher will change because of the co-constructed knowledge. The knowledge co-constructed from this research endeavor is purposeful and affects the practice of addiction workers providing aftercare. The researcher shares their personal reflection to offer space for the reader to reflect on what they are reading also in a ‘reflexive’ way. The reader explores how the researcher changed because of the stories. Significant examination takes place through reflexive work, but only when it is purposeful. Metaphors are shared only when their meaning influenced the researcher. Why and how they affected the researcher is offered in the reflection. The researcher is tasked with being objective in recounting their experience while providing subjective insights.

Indigenous methodologies encourage the use of intuition, animal callings, and dreams. Through these cultural catalysts and spirit guides, the researcher can explore the relationship they created with the data to offer new knowledge to the reader. Reflexive Reflection on the data allows the researcher to let go of concerns of generalization and open their experience to universal guidance. Instead of reflecting on the data, seeking metaphors, using a dictionary as prescribed by metaphor analysis methods, the researcher explores their own experiences and awakenings to reveal how they changed from the metaphors that spoke to them within the data. They are expected to explore why they chose a preferred statement, calling out their positionality, making it personal. Decolonizing research is the process of challenging researcher privilege through honest reflection of subjective reactions to the data. The work is subjective and the researcher can embrace the vulnerability of laying forth their understandings and their changes because of the ultimate partnership within their relational partnership.
The perspective used for this study for reflexivity was developed through culturally responsive and trauma informed theories. Employing Indigenous methodologies expects that decolonizing language will be privileged, allowing for, in this case, Cree language to express the metaphors. Specifically, Culturally Responsiveness Theoretical Framework (CRTF; FSIN, 2013) is the investigative tool used to reflect upon the conversations held with Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) to improve aftercare services provided to people healing from addiction. The CRTF directs researchers to create aftercare approaches focused on truth and reconciliation. The researcher contemplates first the data for ‘truth’ in the Kehtehi’s (Old One) stories about colonization. Kehte-ayak reveal the ‘truth’ in their experiences to stifle the settler nation stories of contact. Restoring Indigenous community-based health, establishing middle ground, and transforming health systems as culturally responsive seek to perform reconciliation. Researcher contemplations keep in mind the need to ensure a client centered, community engaged, culturally safe, and harmonized aftercare approach.

The next section represents the fieldwork undertaken to co-construct new knowledge for aftercare services that address spiritual needs of people seeking pimatisiwin (good way/good life). The fieldwork section imparts the method of data collection and key elements of data reflection. Principles of rigor, validity, transparency, and participant vulnerability comprise the section on creating ethical space. As previously stated, each segment reflects one undertaking of the journey in co-constructing new knowledge (the headers for the following sections reflect each piece of the four journeys—My Journey, Their Journey, Our Journey, and Your Journey) (see Figure 7).
Figure 7 Illustration of Indigenous Research Process

Illustration of Indigenous Research Process

- Mobilizing (Implication)
  - Your Journey
- Decolonizing (Methodology)
  - My Journey
- Transforming (Discussion)
  - Our Journey
- Healing (Results)
  - Their Journey
My Journey (Fieldwork/Research Design)

Following Indigenous methodologies, the research was constructed through a conversational method inquiry with Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) about who explored current western or colonial language around addiction and focussed on reframing the concepts using Indigenous paradigms. In My Journey, I describe the data collection method, how I set my intention in doing the research, met with Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) for guidance and approval and reflected upon the data. Throughout My Journey, I sought cultural activities such as ceremony, prayer, and calls to nature. I rooted myself in a relational ontology and Indigenous methodology, so that I conducted the work respectfully and in a good way.

Data Collection

This study used primary data sources realized through nine semi-structured conversations with four Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) who provide a harmonized approach to aftercare and one Kehtehi who provided translation of Cree concepts. The semi-structured conversation process for this study included three stages that formed a relationship–starting a preliminary conversation, employing semi-structured conversation, and closing the research process. The preliminary conversation involved introductions, identifying intention, building relationship, reviewing the project, collecting information, creating a timeline, and signing consent forms. Settings for the interview took place at locations comfortable to the Kehte-ayak and ceremonial locations. The Kehte-ayak directed the protocol for the conversations and ceremonies to attend, along with what was recordable. Following The First Nations Information Governance Centre First Nations Principles of Ownership, Control, Acquisition, and
Possession ([OCAP™] 2019), the Kehte-ayak and my supervisor assisted in deciding who owned the research and how it could be later accessed.

The conversations took place over nine months with formal consent given at the beginning and then verbal consent throughout the process. After the initial meetings with all the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones), I met with each Kehtehi twice, employing semi-structured conversations, and then a sharing circle with three of the Kehte-ayak to go through preliminary findings. All the Kehte-ayak appeared at ease during the conversations and individually identified the need for this study. The fourth Kehte-ayak was unable to attend the sharing circle; subsequently, they were given the information on a separate occasion. The fifth Kehte-ayak joined the study after the initial conversations and sharing circle. He was engaged to translate metaphors into Cree terms and provided context on Cree Epistemology and spirituality.

During the conversations, I created space for the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) to feel at ease and build rapport. I was sensitive to Kehte-ayak fatigue and gauged when the Kehte-ayak wanted to expand on an area or take it in a different direction. I asked the semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix D), supporting the discussion to go in different directions when directed by the Kehte-ayak. The conversations were recorded upon approval of the Kehte-ayak and my observations were reflected upon immediately after the interviews. Kovach (2010b) states that researchers should be prepared to deal with participant emotions and memories triggered when stories are revealed; the methods should have a healing quality. I provided trauma informed space for the Kehte-ayak to share their experiences in a safe place, keeping in mind the Kehte-ayak are the experts in this field.
As Wilson (2008) had presented, research is ceremony; the researcher and participant then articulate how the research and conversations will proceed. In this study, all conversations were opened with an offering of tobacco and my intentions clearly stated. One Kehte-ayak held a pipe ceremony before the conversations to ask both the Kehte-ayak’s ancestors and my ancestors for guidance. Before the conversations took place, one Kehte-ayak took cloth to a Kehte-ayak’s sweat to invite more ancestors in for guidance. I smudged before the conversations, attended Full Moon ceremonies, sweats, and pipe ceremonies throughout the process. I restated my intention and the purpose of the study at the beginning of each conversation and the sharing circle. To support the data to go where it needed to go, I encouraged the Kehte-ayak to respond how they saw fit and to provide information they deemed necessary. I reflected upon the data as it came in and compiled concepts and teachings that were meaningful to me. After the conversations were finished, I brought the preliminary findings back to the Kehte-ayak through a sharing circle. The circle started with an overview of the research process and intent and then a review of the preliminary findings. The Kehte-ayak were encouraged to modify or enhance the findings. I provided lunch half way through the process as a reciprocal gesture and supported breaks when needed. One Kehtehi identified that the process might change as the study developed and that the change would take it where it needed to go. One observation I had was that the study did indeed evolve in that supports and resources were provided to the Kehte-ayak and myself when needed. In addition, the conversations elicited teachings that were translated to Indigenous metaphors that prompted me to reflect further into the co-created knowledge.
Through approval from the *Kehte-ayak*, I deemed that enough data had been collected. I presented the initial findings at a focus group with the *Kehte-ayak* and to my committee. The preliminary findings articulated what the *Kehte-ayak* wanted known. Transcribing took place as soon as possible after each time the data were collected. The *Kehte-ayak* reviewed the transcripts for accuracy as a method of self-correcting. Although these data are created and owned by Northern Cree *Kehte-ayak*, these findings may be applicable to others.

It is paramount that the researcher closes the process in a respectful way. Through the creation of relationships, it is feasible and expected that the researcher will continue working with the *Kehte-ayak* from the study. The researcher has a responsibility to the relationship well beyond the completion of the research. However, the experience of this round of research closes through ceremony. I worked with my supervisor and the *Kehte-ayak* to determine the best process for closing the study, which was a pipe ceremony and feast. This study was opened with a pipe ceremony to invite the ancestors in for guidance. A pipe ceremony is used to close the study to thank the ancestors for the work done.

**Researcher Preparedness**

Before starting fieldwork grounded in a relational ontology, Indigenous methodology, and cultural responsiveness, I considered four themes to ensure preparedness—researcher intention, researcher fidelity, community connection, and quality research. Tapping into purpose or motivation is more than asking oneself why one is doing the research. Understanding one’s purpose is part of a relational ontology and critical reflection asked of Indigenous methodological researchers. Kovach (2010b)
suggests assembling intentionality involves performing “cultural catalyst activities” (p. 50). Special experiences, dreams, ceremony, inner voice, or prayers are a few examples of catalyst activities Indigenous methodologists can use to understand a deeper intention for conducting the research. Traditionally, western researchers choose their research topic based on a gap in the research or sometimes convenience (Kovach). Relationality in an Indigenous paradigm starts with the researcher’s relationship with the universe. Intention, purpose, or motive for the researcher stems from a connection with ancestors, universe, potential Kehte-ayak, and relations created. The topic is divinely purposeful, not chosen by accident. Performing cultural catalyst activities assisted me in fully articulating my intention. To choose my topic, I spent time in nature thinking about what was important for moving addiction aftercare forward. I then approached a now deceased Kehtehi to confirm that my topic was of value. Time was spent in deep contemplation on the scope of my study, who was needed to provide support (dissertation committee), and who should co-construct knowledge (Kehte-ayak). After my intention was clear and my research topic was deemed of value, I began the research process.

I presented my intention to the Kehte-ayak who agreed to participate in the study in order for them to assess my trustworthiness and fidelity. Presenting the intention also helped create a reciprocal, relevant, respectful, and responsible relationship. A researcher will be trusted when the participant determines the researcher’s motivation is credible (Kovach, 2010b). To determine fidelity, I first connected to the Kehte-ayak. Meeting them before the research process had started, attending ceremony when directed, and discussing research aims were a few examples of how I created
relationship. Creating relationship is foundational for co-constructing knowledge through Indigenous methodologies. All knowledge is valued in this method and the relationship encompasses the Universe, Creator, animate, inanimate, community, and others. This differs from post-positivist researchers in that they seek to remain objective and reduce relational bias. Intuition, animal signs, dreams, and inanimate manifestations are often not included. Harmin, Barrett and Hoessler (2017) speak to the need for worldview plurality to create space for subjugated knowledge forms. Interpretivists understand that knowledge is socially constructed but the researcher remains the center of the relationship and therefore, the center of knowledge creation. Researcher transparency helps direct credibility. To strengthen credibility I answered the Kehte-ayak questions about the research process and about myself. I demonstrated respectful, sound, ethical research principals, supporting Nationhood knowledge when discussing my intents and overview of the fieldwork. Tuhiiwai Smith (1999) suggests that members will gauge whether the researcher’s spirit is clear, when they have a good heart, and whether they will be effective in making change, before they approve the researcher to begin the study. Through relationship building, transparency, and humility, I received approval from the Kehte-ayak to move forward.

Participants

Within the Indigenous paradigm, as Kovach (2010b) identifies, participants are chosen “for what they can bring to the study as opposed to random sampling” (p. 51). The criteria used for this study in focusing on what they can bring are that they are respected as Kehte-ayak by their community and are knowledgeable about joining both ceremony and western-based approaches to recover from addiction (substance or
behavioural). The Kehte-ayak chosen worked or continue to work in treatment facilities, healing lodges, forensic programs, and non-profit organizations that focus on aftercare. Some of the Kehte-ayak were on a healing path and used both approaches in their own recovery. All Kehte-ayak offered aftercare services through cultural responsiveness.

Four Kehte-ayak were chosen to support an appropriate amount of time to create a relationship with each Kehte-ayak, attend ceremony as requested, and to accommodate personal and professional time requirements. A fifth Kehtehi was chosen to assist with translating metaphors into Cree terms. Predominantly, aftercare services are provided through western-based epistemologies. Dotting the landscape are services that introduce a harmonized approach. NNADP infuses Indigenous rituals and practices with an Alcoholics Anonymous model and the Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan supports Métis and non-Métis peoples following similar western-based approaches. Relational and contextual approaches to healing are encouraged. Therefore, to recruit possible participants, posters were disseminated to organizations accessed by Kehte-ayak, who provide Indigenous and western-based healing approaches. Through a Kehte-ayak’s helper, Kehte-ayak known to the researcher were purposely chosen for their contributions to the field of addiction. Employers and community members recognized their work. Kehte-ayak and health care professionals suggested additional names of other potential Kehte-ayak, creating a snowball effect. The study purpose, methodology, and outcome intents were described to the Kehte-ayak. The study purpose was to transform relapse prevention measures and enhance knowledge of cultural safety among addiction workers to strengthen aftercare services. This research created a privileged
situation for studying the voices of the *Kehte-ayak* who have engaged or are currently engaging in both approaches.

The research sites were comprised of locations the *Kehte-ayak* in which felt comfortable or where ceremony took place. These appropriate locales point to research settings best suited for a culturally responsive perspective in reframing concepts and aftercare approaches for building *maskihkiy* (protective factors) and *pimatisiwin* (good way/good life) after addiction. After a reframing of the language took place, our conversations focused on healing approaches that address spiritual needs following both Indigenous and western means – in other words, harmonizing.

In order to be fully involved in the research, Kovach (2010b) suggests an experiential aspect in which the researcher participates. Therefore, I was a subjective observer and a partisan co-constructor of meaning during the conversations, sharing circle, and ceremonies (my opinion mattered). Fitznor (2002) explains the sharing circle model “helps participants to ‘see’ and ‘speak’ about their experiences centered in their own knowing and processes” (p. 69). Sharing circles are preferred to focus groups because each person has an opportunity to share knowledge without judgement, interruption, or opinion (Fitznor). Information is shared that may evoke an emotion or memory for the others within the circle. The pace and structure of the circle support the members in processing the information in a relational way. I explored my inner knowledge of the process and relationships created. Schram (2006) recognizes the researcher’s presence will influence the study regardless of how objective and distant he or she appears. As an involved contributor in this study, I expected that my presence might have altered the participants’ behaviour. It was my intention that I was a
facilitator during this study and that the Kehte-ayak saw me as an ally. The Kehte-ayak helped direct the process of data collection and the intent of the study, as co-researchers. Although they did not determine the research focus, they participated because they were genuinely interested in uncovering meaning and creating change. As the facilitator, I was responsible to ensure the process covered the academic requirements of credible research. The elements identified in the next section demonstrate a process for credible research.

**Researcher as Tool**

In utilizing Indigenous methodologies, I used my skills and abilities to build relationships and undertake structured conversations. As a psychiatric nurse, I have over twenty-five years of experience in the counseling field. I teach communication and counselling skills at the University level. I have an ability to listen well and to use probing questions to access data. My inquisitive nature and capacity to utilize minimal encouragers created a balance so that I did not interfere with the Kehte-ayak’s thoughts, allowing the Kehte-ayak to express themselves freely. From many years of experience, I can navigate the session and perceive when the client has exhausted the discussion or is reluctant to delve into certain issues during the study. I also maintained a balance in responding empathically and in upholding a researcher role by referring to outside resources when required. Kovach (2010b) suggested that who we are as researchers emerges “via motivations, critical reflection, engagement with others, and overall research choices” (p. 42). In the end, my education, work practice, and subjective and objective experiences afforded me an opportunity to seek a deeper understanding of this research area.
Absolon (2011) encourages researchers to be conscious of Spirit and follow a process that respects the laws of nature. I was familiar with ceremonies that I attended during the process and gained a deeper understanding of the teachings behind the ceremonies and their effects on the study. Before the research study was developed, I approached a *Kehte-ayak* to ensure the study was warranted. Cloth was cut and placed upon the researcher’s work throughout the process. It was hung on a south facing tree when the study closed. As I was developing the questions, a woodpecker made its appearance known (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 The Pileated Woodpecker Represents the Need to Dig Deeper.

Andrews (1999) suggests that when a woodpecker enters your awareness, then you are asked to dig deeper to expand your analysis. I reflected upon the intention behind the
questions and created a second phase. This is not the only time the woodpecker entered the study. She made an appearance when I was reflecting on the datum (discussed later). When exploring intent, Schram (2006) suggests that the researcher asks how the fieldwork will serve their research aims and how will it be quality research. I intended that the fieldwork in this project would bring to light the experiences of Indigenous peoples using ceremony and western treatment options in recovering from addiction. I worked with Kehte-ayak who offered to walk with me and hope that the knowledge developed from the fieldwork will be beneficial to Indigenous and non-Indigenous helping professionals. Lastly, I opened myself to the rhythm of the process and acknowledged the animal guides and human resources that made themselves known to me.

**Inquiry Strategies**

Indigenous methodologies recognize that relationships are initiated and grounded in relational accountability. Wilson (2008) proposes that accountability requires the researcher to form relationships that are based on respect and reciprocity, developed through trust and rapport. Following Wilson’s guidance, I spent time meeting with the Kehte-ayak through ceremony and visits. Time was spent building relationships not avoiding them as is desired in post-positivist work. Wilson notes that “some methods and strategies have inherent in them more relationship building and relational accountability than others and therefore may be more attractive in an Indigenous paradigm” (p. 39). Testimonies, storytelling, celebrating survival, remembering, and indigenizing are elements of Indigenous data-collection methods (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).
Kovach (2010a) states “Indigenous knowledges comprise a specific way of knowing based upon oral tradition of sharing knowledge” (p. 40). The conversational method is a way of collecting data, or getting to know, through storytelling. Other terms may be yarning, weaving, re-membering, or meaning making. Conversations, not interviews, were both scheduled and spontaneous throughout the process. By building relationship, I was able to meet with the *Kehte-ayak* through informal gatherings. During the informal gatherings, the *Kehte-ayak* would discuss the study with me when they deemed information sharing was important. For example, *Kehtehi* Florence revealed that she was to share information with me from a dream she had the day before. This was an informal, spontaneous form of data collection. The relational nature of Indigenous methodologies lent itself to the opportunity to deepen the co-construction of knowledge because the data was not collected as a sterile, unbiased unit of information but an ever-evolving construction of knowledge. During the semi-structured conversations, the *Kehte-ayak* were encouraged to take the conversation in a direction they deemed also important. There was no wrong answer or wrong direction within the conversations; all information provided was honoured. Kovach (2010b) suggests, “An open structured conversational method shows respect for the participant’s story and allows research participants greater control over what they wish to share with respect to the research questions” (p. 124). Kovach (2010b) goes on to say that, open structured conversation “methods are more elastic, and this gives research participants an opportunity to share their story on a specific topic without the periodic disruptions involved in adhering to a structured approach, as in an interview format” (p. 124). The discussion can therefore become more focused, targeting the purpose of the study. This
study used semi-structured conversations that followed the same questions for each person but supported the Kehte-ayak in changing the questions or taking the conversation in a different direction. I practiced reflexive journaling through a process of reflecting on the datum and weaving what changes I encountered through the process. This form of knowledge gathering is relational and matches an Indigenous paradigm (Kovach, 2010a). Conversational method is relational and is important in that the participants and researcher work together to weave or construct knowledge. A form of collectivism takes place in that no one person is deemed the expert but together our work is deemed important. Indigenous methodologies using conversational method and cultural responsiveness are suitable frameworks for research to tackle colonial residue and addiction issues affecting Indigenous peoples. Developed through a Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) initiative, cultural responsiveness can expand healing miyosin/pimatisiwin.

Grenier (1998) suggests utilizing self-correcting (“rereading notes on a regular basis to correct errors and identify problems and solutions,” p. 61) field notes to maintain an accurate and current reflection of what has transpired. The researcher should have an open-ended dialogue for reciprocal discussion and share the subject of their study in order to deepen the relationship and research (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Kovach, 2010b; & Wilson, 2008). Instead of the dominant western view of the researcher predicting cause, the researcher seeks meaning from how things are connected and refrains from creating themes or generalizations. Imperial researchers believe that they are discovering truth, if only probable, when doing research. Most neglect to realize that the meaning they glean from the research is housed within a dominant western paradigm and that other ways of
knowing that could contribute or have an alternate meaning have been downplayed and ignored. Using an open-ended dialogue allows the creation of meaning through multiple ways of knowing, thus inviting a decolonizing approach to research. After collecting perspectives from the *Kehte-ayak*, I presented my observation of what spoke to me, allowing ‘you’ the reader to continue creating knowledge by reflecting on how ‘you’ interpreted the information presented. Addiction workers will hear perspectives of healing and aftercare that may be used for all people healing from addiction while respecting and acknowledging both Indigenous and western approaches.

**Data Reflection**

The data reflection process used was the self-created Reflexive Reflection. Through *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones) teachings, I found metaphors that were meaningful to me, keeping in mind the need to provide cultural responsiveness and be trauma informed. I read the transcripts categorizing teachings and metaphors, reflected on the different findings, and then met with a *Kehte-ayak* to discuss Cree terms to reframe the language. I purposefully focused on metaphors that applied to spirituality, colonization, and Indigenous ways of being. To consider the data, I used Reflexive Reflection, inviting an Indigenous epistemology that seeks meanings and notions of decolonized healing practices grounded in Indigenous scholars,’ and philosophers’ theoretical underpinnings. An Indigenous paradigm involves exploring a way of knowing that is antithetical to the dominant discourse. For this study, that way of knowing remains steeped in tribal knowledge (coined by Kovach, 2010b). The Nationhood knowledge was gleaned from each *Kehte-ayak* and was further reflected upon and discussed with translators. A Reflexive Reflection framework finds common concepts and constructs a
coherent story attempting to maintain participant voice. Loosely using Kovach’s (2010a, 2010b) method, results are presented as condensed conversations couched between an introduction and reflexive commentary, determining the teachings that were particularly relevant to me. This study first explores the participants’ beliefs and where “colonialism has interfered” (Kovach, 2010b, p. 59) in the process.

This Reflexive Reflection format positions both researcher and participant perspectives together and allows readers to make their own interpretation, taking their own teachings from the narrative (Kovach, 2010b). An Indigenous research agenda includes four processes—healing, decolonizing, transforming, and mobilizing (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Reflexive Reflection formulates observations around these four agenda (see Figure 2). For example, the data is presented first from the participant’s perspectives, allowing for healing—Their Journey. Second, a discussion that started in this chapter centered on how colonization or assimilation practices may have influenced the process is included and supports reconciliation. This process is viewed as decolonizing and labeled My Journey. Third, the research and participant co-constructed new information to create a transformative process called Our Journey. Lastly, I offer my reflexive narrative on implications, creating an opportunity for mobilization identified as Your Journey. The reader reviews the information presented and creates his or her own meaning to construct new information in a decolonized, culturally responsive way.

Indigenous methodologists understand that when a story is shared, the researcher is responsible for the respectful treatment of that story, and a relationship emerges (Kovach, 2010b). This relationship is amongst the members of the study and the
responsibility of the researcher is to ensure the knowledge or story created is respected and passed on to those who need to hear it. In this study, the final reflection establishes the Kehte-ayak’s perspectives on the approaches to healing and how these approaches address spiritual needs in recovery. To respect the relationships created, I present the stories and teachings based on an intuitive process and offer ‘you,’ the readers, an opportunity to gather meaning your own way. Wilson (2008) proposes that, “stories allow listeners to draw their own conclusions and to gain life lessons from a more personal perspective” (p. 17). The purpose of this study is not to generalize but to present co-constructed knowledge for the reader to reflect upon to determine what fits and what does not. I invite readers as Kovach puts it “to walk inside the story to find their own teachings” (2010b, p. 60). Western-based research tends to focus on generalizations as prescribed results for the reader to take. Indigenous methodologies encourage that the researcher avoids generalizing but explains the information as it is situated at this time. The data is a snapshot of what took place and each person involved is developing the picture through his or her own lens. The story then becomes multiple images whereby new information and perspectives are created. This study is meant to create a foundation based on a decolonizing research process that begins constructing new information with both Indigenous and western approaches honoured. The researcher translates the meanings that were personal to them, inviting a deeper exploration of the results.
CHAPTER 4: Their Journey (Results/Findings)

Nine audio-recorded conversations and one sharing circle were transcribed. The Kehte-ayak received electronic copies of the transcripts to ensure accuracy. Using the ‘Reflexive Reflection’ method, the transcribed conversations and my ongoing contemplations were considered. ‘Reflexive Reflection’ was self-created for this study and roughly followed Narrative, Reflexive, and Metaphor analyses; I then focused on the conversations that I found meaningful. I located four main metaphors supported by many Kehte-ayak teachings. This study communicates abstract concepts surrounding addiction through personification, metonymy, allegory, and symbolism. Personification characterizes an abstract quality in human form, for example, human behaviours. This study understands personification as the spirit entity ‘acting’ as human and is not anthropomorphized. The spirit is not ‘made’ human but ‘acts’ human to allow humans to receive their transcendent gifts. Figurative language such as metaphors allows the reader to learn a new language. This section explores the meaningful figurative language that provides insight into the journey of healing from addiction. Each metaphor is an invitation to explore what was meaningful to ‘you,’ the reader. These meanings will help you to continue developing the construction of knowledge to provide trauma-informed, culturally responsive, harmonized, aftercare. The four metaphors from this study are ‘Achak (spirit) Disrupted,’ ‘Achak (spirit) Connection Closing,’ ‘Walking the White Road,’ and ‘Need to Harmonize Ways.’ Figure 9 Illustration of the Themes depicts a circle showing the four metaphors. The circle symbolizes a concentric representation of the cyclical, non-linear, interdependence of relationships standing independently and interdependently adjoining each other.
Addiction as Achak (spirit) Distress in the Journey of Healing

This section tells of the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) journey in the co-construction of knowledge (see Figure 9) and represents the healing process when engaging Indigenous
methodologies. The results revealed that much *Maci-maskihkiy*\(^{21}\) (bad medicine) acting as disruptive factors happened that prevented Indigenous peoples from meeting inherent spiritual needs. Love and belonging, forgiveness, purpose and meaning, and hope and creativity are spiritual needs that act as protective factors through *Maskihkiy* (medicine) from addiction. The inability to meet these spiritual needs created *Waneneetumowin (achak [spirit] distress)*. Through metaphor and *Kehte-ayak* teachings, we understand that *achak* (spirit) distress was manifested by *achak* (spirit) interference, *achak* (spirit) connection closing, and walking the white road. *Waneneetumowin (achak [spirit] distress)* is a metaphor for the pain or suffering inflicted on the exuberance of life within a person. A western understanding may explain this suffering as a combination of dysfunction in the reward system, reduced executive function, and imbalance between the amygdalae. A call for harmonizing Indigenous and western ways was made by the *Kehte-ayak* to assist people living with addiction to achieve *pimatisiwin* (good life). Through understanding both ways of knowing and privileging the voices of the *Kehte-ayak*, aftercare services can start to support effectively all people healing from addiction. The following metaphors identify the disruption that led to *Waneneetumowin (achak [spirit] distress)*, the spiritual need affected, and the *Kehte-ayak* teachings that explain the concept.

\(^{21}\) Cree term meaning bad medicine. Adapted to mean disruptive factors, see glossary.
The first conceptual metaphor, ‘Achak (spirit) Disrupted,’ offers a historical understanding of the Kehte-ayak’s perceptions of the impact of colonization on their families and communities and subsequent spiritual distress. The tenor of this metaphor is the concept distress. Kehtehi Keith explained that achak (spirit), first as a tenor, is the exuberance of life; however, it is also interpreted as the vehicle of a living entity (the form it takes). The phrase, ‘achak (spirit) disrupted,’ proposes that the function of this living entity has been interrupted. Paramount to the function of achak (spirit) is meeting the needs of love and belonging. Destructive experiences of colonization almost eliminated the activities, ceremonies, and ways of knowing and being that Indigenous peoples expressed. These ways of being strengthen a sense of love and belonging. A sense of love and belonging as maskihkiy (medicine) used to provide a protective factor is interrupted. The Kehte-ayak spoke about their understanding of what life was like before the arrival of settlers. They stated that Indigenous peoples faced personal and community challenges. Nonetheless, there were ceremonies and activities in place that created belonging and love (maskihkiy22; medicine) that acted as protective factors, reducing adverse impact.

During the conversations, the Kehte-ayak affirmed that disruptive residential school experiences affected their parents and their communities. They revealed that most experiences within residential school were damaging and that the overall

22 Cree term meaning medicine. Snowshoe and Starblanket (2016) suggest that medicine can be used as a protective factor. See glossary of Cree terms.
experience disrupted multiple pieces of themselves and their families. Their stories echoed the results shared through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) reports. Our conversations uncovered multiple losses generated by trauma such as loss of culture, loss of family connection, loss of identity, and loss of language. This section offers Kehte-ayak teachings on how colonization, residential school experiences, and generational trauma threatened self-determination and disrupted a sense of love and belonging leading to waneneetumowin (achak (spirit) distress).

The way it was.

In my conversations with the Kehte-ayak (Old Ones), I heard both utopian and dystopian visions of pre-contact. Prior to contact, Indigenous peoples suffered jealously, performed divorces, and experienced addictive behaviours (Kehte-ayak Florence). The Kehte-ayak underscored the importance of implementing and strengthening protective factors through maskihkiy (medicine) to lessen the power of harmful encounters. Through relational beliefs, community members used medicines and ceremonies to shape their perception of growth experiences and lesson the impact of those harmful experiences. In this section, I review conversations that summarize life prior to colonization. Part one establishes how the information presented by the Kehte-ayak is often third hand. Part two explains that medicines were abundant and through personification, described as used to tackle factors that influenced addiction. The once strongly supported spiritual need of a sense of love and belonging was nurtured prior to

\[\text{Translated by Kehtehi Keith Goulet.}\]
contact. Through colonization, supports began to erode consequently leading to ‘achak (spirit) interference.’

**These are the stories that I’ve been told.**

North American Indigenous knowledge once heavily relied on stories and metaphors. Storytellers, knowledge keepers, and Kehte-ayak (Old Ones) shared teachings over generations. Teachings were handed down and knowledge keepers were well respected. Colonization almost eliminated beliefs about maskihkiy (medicine) as protective factors used to maintain a healthy community. Colonization is pervasive in our modern North American way of life; however, society does little to acknowledge its impact. The adverse effects of forced assimilation and colonization have heavily influenced the narrative on ways of being within Indigenous communities. When asked to recall what they knew about addiction prior to colonization, the Kehte-ayak qualified their stories by saying that ‘this is what they were told.’ Kehtehi Florence explains:

> But during those times of hardships and conflict within each community, they were given gifts, like this one time this man came to the - this is what I was told. All these stories, these are the stories that I’ve been told.

Kehtehi Rose too expresses that this was second hand information when she says:

> And a long time ago our people, when the Europeans came there was nothing like that. You know, there was – we lived in harmony. And I remember because my grandparents and my mom would tell us.

I realized it was difficult to imagine those realities now. The negative stereotypes created by the settler narrative to perpetuate the erasure of strong Indigenous peoples and
replace it with the addict identity, create a contrast to the healthy, productive community their parents described. Hearing these stories creates a paradox between how they once used to educate and mentor community members and how stories are now used to dispel the negative portrayal created by colonial propaganda. The function of the storytelling remains the same: teaching, but the paradox is to whom they are teaching. The irony is that teachings are no longer used to pass developmental knowledge to new members but to arm members with healthy anecdotes once experienced. The Kehte-ayak do not share these teachings because this is what they personally experienced; they shared these teachings to represent what pre-contact looked like. Regrettably, these stories may become myth when Indigenous peoples are unsupported in harmonizing Indigenous and western ways of knowing.

As we reflect on the circumstance of most Indigenous peoples in Canada, the metaphor of lost culture comes to mind. The tenor (subject) represents the concept of a way of being that was adaptive and resilience is symbolically lost, suggesting a tangible item that can go missing and be found. To hear stories of harmony and strength provides hope that this vision can once again be realized that culture can once again be found. Kehtehi Rose summarized what she was told about pre-contact:

The only stories I know is from what I heard from the [Kehte-ayak], and they used to always say that all a long we lived in harmony. We had doctors, we had teachers and we had all these professionals that they have now. And there was no school in those days; there was the old people that were teaching the next generation from them. And then they would pass on down all the teachings and
whatever, ceremonies. And we never had problems in those days because we were hunters and gatherers and we lived off the land.

Kehtehi Rose’s description drove home the destruction that took place through colonization. Once a thriving, self-determining gathering of societies able to connect with a sense of purpose, meaning, and spiritual maintenance, many Indigenous peoples now have minimal resources for spiritual protection.

Kehtehi Rose recalls growing up with Indigenous maskihkiy (medicine) as a normal part of the landscape in her surroundings before residential school:

I remember that part because that was before I went to residential school. We used to go and see my grandmother on the reserve. At that time, they had log houses and they had a big log house. All around the house inside, there were medicines hanging, and I used to wonder why those medicines were hanging like that. She would go out and make bannock out in the open fire and I remember her telling my mom to teach me on what she was teaching my mom. But that's all I remember. I didn't know any ceremonies. All I remember is the sun dance ceremony that they did on the reserve. But I was never told anything more than what I know here. What I learned later in life as what the [Kehte-ayak] have taught me, that I do today, the little stories from the [Kehte-ayak], and a little bit from my grandparents, who are traditional. That's all I know. But European times, like what I learned in university, the history of it, you know, we lived in harmony in those days. And it must have been beautiful because I remember I used to run around with bare feet. We had no shoes. And we used to go and have little picnics by the lake there. My mom would bake pies and then she'd sell
them, yeah. There's not very much that – … because I wasn't told, you know? I was told by different [Kehte-ayak] though of what used to be.

Kehtehi Rose tells of the process of sharing the knowledge with the next generation and how this process was disrupted. Before Kehtehi Rose had a chance to learn about the medicines, she was sent to residential school. She left with images of medicine hanging from the ceiling with hopes of one day learning about their purpose; damaging residential school experiences replaced these images. Importantly, she learned a lot about pre-colonization when she went to university. The disconnection between the traumatic upbringing Kehtehi Rose experienced in residential school and the historical records of healthy Indigenous ways of being that she should have experienced is staggering.

Self-determination and a strong sense of love and belonging are protective factors in staving off ‘achak (spirit) distress’ (manifested as addiction). Culturally specific methods of storytelling to instruct community members into specific roles were interrupted, thus removing established shielding features. Through decolonizing strategies, Indigenous peoples are re-igniting traditional knowledges and ways of being. The Kehte-ayak identified that some knowledge keepers went into hiding to ensure that the knowledge was protected. The next section conveys the role medicine played in reducing the risk for addiction by preventing a disrupted achak (spirit).

Those medicines came to help us.

Sacred medicine is a familiar term amongst many Indigenous peoples. Through a relational ontology, it is believed that plants have energy and provide healing qualities.
These medicines were honoured and viewed in relationship with the medicine providers and users. Through emodiement, sacred *maskihkiy* (medicine) provided protective factors against addiction. *Kehtehi* Florence taught me how sweetgrass was given to Indigenous inhabitants as a tool to be used for cleansing one’s *achak* (spirit) or energy:

This man, who's all by himself. He didn't have anything and he was hungry. He came into the village and he was taken in by everyone. And he got to meet everyone, talked to everybody, and I don't know if it was to get the feel of the community. And they fed him. They clothed him. They gave him shelter. And then at a point he had to go. He continued his journey. And when he left, he left medicine for them. He left them sweet grass. So, when he left that village he started to dance. And wherever his foot come down, that's where the sweet grass was. And that sweet grass was used as a form of cleansing when you were not of a good mind. So, whenever we had hard times, those medicines came. To help us.

This teaching uses imagery to provide a picture of sweet grass growing across our prairie landscape in the form of *maskihkiy* (medicine) accessible and useful in clearing one's mind. This *maskihkiy* (medicine) is inaccessible through a pharmacy but through nature. This story may appear as a creation story for sweetgrass; however, it metaphorically represents hope and wish fulfillment. The essence of the universe saw that the community needed assistance and responded accordingly. Through a relational ontology, for the medicine to be effective, the recipient follows the protocols of acknowledging the person who planted the *maskihkiy* (medicine), nature that keeps it growing, and the energy within. With this intention in mind, the *maskihkiy* (medicine) is
a protective factor in stopping a disrupted *achak* (spirit) from intensifying and preventing *Waneneetumowin* (*achak* (spirit) distress). *Maskihkiy* (medicine) is not a substitute for chemical stimuli. It is a spiritual connection between the Universe, nature, the producer, and the recipient, to strengthen and prevent ‘*achak* (spirit) interference.’ The recipient articulates their intention and the producer plants the *maskihkiy* with good intention, both strengthening its efficacy. Following a relational belief, we begin to see that healing requires a connection. In this instance, it is a connection with the community, nature, the plant’s energy, and the Universe.

Explained in the rationale of this study, the medical model focuses on the substances or stimuli as the problem in understanding addiction, for example, the drug is the problem, not the many aspects involved in the relationship. Typically, addiction is defined as the continued ingestion and then severe dependence of a substance (APA, 2013). Using this definition, relying on a substance to meet spiritual needs and the body’s need to continue using the substance is considered addiction. Therefore, I was curious as to whether using the sacred plant medicines would eventually cause addiction. Many Indigenous groups used medicines that are thought today to be addictive. Mate (2008) asserts that prior to contact these plants were used in ceremony and were non-addictive. In my conversation with Kehtehi Preston, he shared his knowledge about plants used as medicines with little fear of addiction. Our conversation suggested that the addictive nature of these plants does not derive from the chemical compound from which they are made but from the effects, they have on the brain in meeting the disrupted spiritual need.
Kehtehi Preston - For me there, going right to the beginning, about the peyote, yeah. It was believed not to be addictive. There is an opiate plant that's thought to be addictive. And the opiate plant also has a partner in Canada that is a mushroom. They look identical so the opiate plant is used for pain and so was the mushroom.

Carrie - So people used it for pain relief?

Kehtehi Preston - Yeah, and as far as I know years ago. I wasn't even born.

Carrie - So do you think that people became addicted to it? Do you think that happened?

Kehtehi Preston - I don't know if they were addicted to it [peyote and mushrooms]. I'm sure it was the Chiefs or else the female [Kehte-ayak] that distributed it. But with the opiate plant, the drugs, the painkillers, they're now abused.

In my conversation with Kehtehi Preston, I understood that the plants used in North America had similar therapeutic properties as the opiate plant but not the same addictive properties. Mate (2008) discusses the level of dopamine produced in the reward system in the brain when comparing non-chemical stimuli versus chemical stimuli such as opium. He supports the findings that the chemical itself is non-addictive, but it is how the brain perceives the response from the chemical. The brain’s perception of the supposed chemical response is similar to non-substance induced responses observed when meeting spiritual needs. The relationship with the sacred maskihkiy (medicine)
creates the difference in the susceptibility to addiction. Discussed later is a metaphorical exploration of the relationship with sacred maskihkiy (medicine).

**Disruption.**

For many North Americans, the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) process were shocking. The experiences of many Indigenous peoples attending residential school were damaging and created lasting wounds. *Kehtehi* Florence and Rose recall that both parents went to residential school, as well as aunts and uncles. *Kehte-ayak* Rose and Preston, along with their siblings, went to residential school. *Kehtehi* Irene started in residential school, but then attended day school. What came out of the Truth and Reconciliation process was that many went to residential school but very few spoke about it. The *Kehte-ayak* in this study note that no one in their family spoke about their experiences; they learned of the ‘truths’\(^{24}\) through their training. *Kehtehi* Rose explains,

Yeah, my mom never talked about when my dad was in residential school. He never talked about it. My grandparents never said anything about things like that. And then I went into residential school and I never wanted to talk about it until I started my journey.

The admission that very few if any of the people the *Kehte-ayak* knew spoke about their experiences in residential school helped me understand the deep level of trauma they

---

\(^{24}\) Term used to depict the stories shared of the residential school experiences through the Truth and Reconciliation process.
experienced. Remaining silent about one’s suffering often happens with strong deleterious feelings attached to the trauma such as shame, guilt, anger, and fear. Some people respond to disruptive incidents by repressing the memory. Many survivors are unable to speak about the trauma because they are incapable of remembering at a conscious level (van der Kolk, 2014). As echoed through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) findings, the experiences of the Kehte-ayak in this study were both averse and agreeable. Our discussion about the positive and negative residential school experiences lays the groundwork for understanding the roots of addiction within the framework of lost spiritual elements resulting in ‘achak (spirit) interference.’

**Strengthened faith.**

Overwhelmingly, Indigenous peoples had harmful experiences within the unregulated church run residential schools. Through a relational ontology, balance of emotional and mental perception is achieved by expressing both positive and negative sides to any incident. This first section articulates the affirming occurrences expressed by the Kehte-ayak. Kehtehi Irene recalls that one of the most profound experiences she had was in residential school when she was a child. She used to stutter to the point that, at times, she could not say her name. Her stuttering started before she went to residential school. Through the experience of prayer, she tapped into her faith. From this faith, she was able to build her resilience as a child and help ‘her people’ later in life. Here is Kehtehi Irene’s recollection:

I learned to have faith. I used to be the person that stuttered, and by praying and believing that God – in those days was God, the Word of God – that He had healed me. And it actually happened. Today when I look at it, I am thankful that
I stuttered, I am thankful that I got healed, I am thankful that it took a residential school to bring me to this point, you know. So yeah, it was bad; I had a lot of things that happened to me at the residential school, but there were a lot of good things that I learned besides it. I learned to be a hard worker, I learned to be independent and I learned, even to this day, to work and socialize with people, you know.

This conversation was meaningful because it illustrates the need for balance in storytelling. The Kehte-ayak convey that all experiences can teach us something. Seeing both the beneficial and uninvited in each situation creates deeper learning and encourages us to understand more. Kehtehi Irene was able to meet the spiritual need of hope in order to endure her experience and ward off ‘achak (spirit) distress.’ She experienced what she felt was the Creator’s ability to heal her. To maintain a strong sense of hope, she relies on fasting and shares her own story to those struggling with addiction. Exploring the affirming experiences in residential school allows her to balance the interpretation of the trauma, thus promoting healing.

My intention in sharing positive stories of residential school does not excuse or condone the negative experiences that took place. Exploring small blessings allows for understanding larger teachings. Using the metaphor ‘tapping into hope,’ Kehtehi Irene explained that she was able to navigate harmonizing a Catholic upbringing with the re-introduction of Indigenous ways. ‘Tapping into hope’ suggests a rich abundance of this protective factor (hope) that can be accessed by extraction as the metaphor’s vehicle. Presenting this metaphor ultimately provides a language of hopefulness for people living with addiction in that healing is accessible even in extremely difficult circumstances. By
symbolizing a positive experience, the journey can begin. An important factor in healing is to re-explore adverse experiences without re-traumatizing oneself. Sharing favourable experiences helps balance healing. Trauma informed and resilient based approaches build on the favourable experiences while looking at the unfavourable experiences. This approach is used with many trauma-based therapies and a founding belief within many Indigenous ways of knowing. Realizing that both western and Indigenous helpers use this method is a worthy step towards decolonizing and harmonizing aftercare services.

The next section presents conversations on the adverse incidents in residential school in order to challenge the damaging stereotypes of Indigenous peoples perpetuated by settler narratives. Issues of addiction amongst Indigenous peoples should be viewed within the context of colonization and forced assimilation, contrary to moral failings or racial pathology, as much of society and some medical models currently hold. Quintero (2001) offers that current treatment programs follow colonial knowledge. Indigenous people attending treatment programs begin to adopt colonial language of addict, user, and addiction. Using a scientifically supported disease model propagates that Indigenous drinking is pathological. Quintero asks, “We should critically evaluate why the disease concept of alcoholism, a dominant category derived from Euro-American culture, is applied to Native Americans. Is the use of this category appropriate in Native American contexts?” (p. 62). By taking on the colonial terms, Indigenous people who drink legitimize the labels of sick, unable to care for themselves, and needing western intervention (Quintero). Western models of addiction “too often make the Indian into a passive victim of drinking” (Quintero, p. 62). Believing that the client is a passive,
uncontrollable, unchangeable recipient of care creates a paternalistic and judgemental reaction from healthcare workers.

*Shattered faith.*

The conversations about residential school all revealed the same inevitability: it marked the journey of Indigenous peoples away from self-determination toward communal trauma. *Kehtehi* Preston recollects his first thoughts about residential school:

Going into the residential school is all just mind blowing when you first go in. And it was quite different. Much of it was good but much of it was wrong, was bad. There were all kinds of abuse.

*Kehtehi* Preston spoke about growing up with alcohol and violence in his family; however, when he went to residential school, he realized that the residential school exposed a different form of violence and abuse. Through the metonymy ‘mind blowing,’ Preston submits that the vehicle of exploding or breaking the mind apart is essentially shattering its function. There is a sense of shock or disorientation from the psychological disruption. This metaphor represents the inability to process the information taken in. He knew the difference in what they were experiencing compared to what took place at home. In Preston’s situation, as with many people who experience trauma, the contradiction created cognitive dissonance that fed his suffering.

*Kehtehi* Preston reflects on the internal tension that many Indigenous peoples experience after residential school. He recalled that only some members were taught Indigenous ways before they went to school because of generations raised in residential schools. In experiencing the often violent and toxic situations in residential school,
students were left confused as to how to act. Through the process of cultural genocide, students were no longer able to rely on traditional teachings but were expected to embrace white settler ways. Kehte hi Preston presented this mental conflict in how he addresses emotions:

We were brought up [in residential school], raised it's not right for a man to cry, you know, things like that, yeah. I didn’t know any better too; I believed that; until I cried for one hour straight. And I couldn’t stop crying and I knew it was different, there was something that was wrong. I was taught wrong. And today I don’t care, I'll just go and bawl my eyes out inside a sweat. [laughs] I'm not going to change, I'm not going to change it. I don’t care if you call me a big cry baby. I saw a lot of things in my life, I saw people getting stabbed, I got stabbed, getting shot. I got shot at, beaten, that's my proof.

Kehte hi Preston’s resolution to engage an Indigenous approach to healing through tears, demonstrates that he somehow understood that what he was taught and what he experienced in residential school went against his ontology. This small admission illustrates that need to understand the dissonance Indigenous peoples healing from addiction may experience and the necessity for harmonizing Indigenous healing approaches. Crying tends not to be nurtured when one is an adult following a western perspective. Even in therapeutic sessions, crying is often curtailed. Kehte hi Rose teaches that tears are sacred and should be respected as such. This teaching identifies the importance of respecting traditional knowledge in the sacredness of tears and that they should not be stemmed but valued. Stifling tears increases one’s chance for ‘achak
(spirit) distress’ due to the cognitive dissonance created by imposing a non-relational belief system on the healing process.

A ‘disrupted achak (spirit)’ fosters an environment in which addiction can form. This idea is supported by Mate’s (2008) work in that the drug is not the focus. Limited familial connections test a sense of belonging and love, challenging an intact spirit. Two of the Kehte-ayak had amiable relationships with their parents and two had strained relationships. Kehtehi Rose spoke at length about her once severed relationship with her mother and its influence on her substance use. In our conversations, she recalled her mother’s decision to send her to residential school. Rose attributed her resulting resentment to that decision:

So, she had a choice. She had a choice of being with him or putting us in to a residential school, so my mom made that choice of putting me and my brother in residential school. And for years, I couldn't forgive her.

In our conversation, it was revealed that Kehtehi Rose’s mom was destitute, and they briefly lived with different families every few weeks. Kehtehi Rose’s mother met someone who could look after her but did not want to look after Rose. A conflict arose between Rose and the man and the mother placed Rose in residential school, essentially choosing the man over Rose. Through adulthood, Rose and her mother were never close. On her healing journey, Kehtehi Rose looked back at the colonial situation created and the attempts at assimilation her mother experienced. When Kehtehi Rose realized that, she was able to forgive her mother and support her on her deathbed. Kehtehi Rose revealed that because she carried the resentment for her mother abandoning her to residential school, she used substances to help ease some of those feelings. Living with
a burden of guilt and shame is a common cost of attending residential school.

Understanding the cost of colonization and forced assimilation through the metaphor of ‘*achak* (spirit) disrupted’ is paramount in addressing issues of ‘*achak* (spirit) distressed’ (manifested as addiction).

Resulting from their loss of identity and troubling experiences with violence and cultural genocide, many Indigenous peoples left residential school emotionally, mentally, and spiritually shattered. *Kehtehi* Florence described the discord of people after leaving:

And … they came out … they seemed to lose contact … or that connection with their families. Like, you’re on the outside looking in. So, they didn't quite belong in the white society and they didn't quite belong in the Indigenous society, so they were in no man's land.…

Residential school proposed to support Indigenous peoples in being productive members of the ‘new society.’ Historical records and survivor accounts reveal that the true intention of assimilation was not immersion but in fact “cultural genocide” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission b, 2015, p. 1). The loss of culture that once supported connection, love, and belonging, is a result of the ethnic cleansing completed through unfettered, forced assimilation. The government relinquished the task of assimilation to religious organizations with minimal regulatory oversight. As a result, the challenge in looking at addressing spiritual needs, particularly ‘*achak* (spirit) interference,’ is that many Indigenous peoples received incongruent teachings about spirituality.
Lost Spiritual Elements.

The term ‘elements’ represent characteristics of something abstract. It also signifies the chemical make up or matter of the Earth’s substances. A relational ontology believes that we are connected through the atomic level of matter. Using figurative language, the spiritual elements represent the tangible infinitesimal matter of the achak (spirit)–the exuberance of self. Deleterious experiences in residential school cause these pieces of the achak (spirit) to go missing. These missing pieces may represent the spiritual needs for belonging and feeling loved. Through the Kehte-ayak’s account of residential school, we see that the disruptive experiences threatened their sense of love and belonging thus leading to ‘achak (spirit) distress.’

The Kehte-ayak assert that they went into residential school with their own understanding of a higher power and that perception was destroyed by the residential school teachings. The Kehte-ayak became confused about what was considered God’s love when God’s disciples were the ones inflicting the abuse. The violence and abuse experienced, particularly at the hands of the priests, were concealed within and outside of school. In our conversations, it was their understanding that even the police had no authority over incidents taking place at the residential schools. Kehtehi Florence recalled the resulting perplexity:

So … in those times of need, Creator is very loving, very forgiving. But in the Church way, it's not. It's like God is holding you by the scruff of the neck, and he'll drop you for the least thing. And this is what the priests and the nuns would do. Well, if you don't do that, God is going to do this, eh? God is going to do that. You're going to get punished. So that fear of punishment, from that one
that gave us that breath of life is very scary. They didn't talk about them. Because they were next to God. They were doing God's work. So, who do you turn to? … Who do you turn to? And he's a man of God; he can take lives. He can kill, and it's okay.

Once channels of comfort and solace, the missing spiritual elements became sources of turmoil. The relational ontology, with which the Kehte-ayak had grown, eroded when experiences taught them that the higher power they must abide by could also assign people to hurt them without constraint. Kehtehi Preston recalls his outlook on religious matters after residential school:

I didn’t even care for churches. I didn’t want anything to do with churches and they’re all wrong. That’s how it was in my head. One time I even went inside of a church, just to go and say a lot of negative things in there. I walked in because churches are normally open all night. So, I went in there and I just went to everything negative.

In our conversation, he revealed that he did not go into the church to seek solace or find support; he went to demonstrate his rage. Spiritual elements such as connection and the Creator’s unconditional love are key to an Indigenous paradigm. Residential schools erased those protective factors, initiating ‘achak (spirit) interference.’ As we will discuss later, some Indigenous peoples converted to Christianity believing that Indigenous knowledge and practices were demonic.
After many years of living with addiction, going to jail, and realizing a need to begin the ‘journey’ of healing, Kehtehi Rose tells of her reintroduction to some higher power thus re-engaging spiritual elements:

And I thought if there's a God up there; help me. That was the only time I'd pray was when I went to jail. Never prayed before that because I didn't believe in that one up there. So, I went back to [jail] and got accepted at the lodge.

In my conversations with Kehtehi Rose, she spoke about distrusting Indigenous peoples. Alcoholics Anonymous was always suggested to her but she found it ineffective. She did not speak with Kehte-ayak or other Indigenous inmates to explore traditional methods. When she felt that she could not continue down the path she was on, she prayed and the gift she received was acceptance to a healing lodge. The gift of the healing lodge strengthened Kehtehi Rose’s ability to regain the lost spiritual elements. Indigenous approaches understood through metaphoric teachings may help people heal from addiction. In this section, we looked at the impact residential school had on the achak (spirit) and the notion of lost elements. The Kehte-ayak also presented a landscape of generational trauma and more losses that intensified ‘achak (spirit) interference.’

For generations.

A relational ontology believes that we are connected to the generations before us and the generations after us. Prayers and experiences influence and affect the relationship across generations. Generational trauma is the expression of suffering demonstrated by a unit of people (family and/or community members) over multiple age
groups. Paradies (2016) argues that, “Colonisation underpins Indigenous ill-health” (p. 86). The resulting ill health suffered through historical trauma is established from various layers of discord and loss. Political disempowerment, loss of collective identity, and genocide influences community disorganization, family dysfunction, mental health problems, and epigenetic changes (Paradies). Epigenetics explains changes to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) activation and inactivation behaviours. Still under development, epigenetics may explain how people respond to stressors based on genetic predisposition (Brockie, Heinzelmann, & Gill, 2013). The conceptual notion of adverse or traumatic events influencing genetic function was known by Kehte-ayak before colonization; western-based science is only beginning to uncover this view. Kehtehi Preston aptly articulated how far ‘generational trauma’ reaches:

   Everybody, yeah. And you don’t know if you don’t attend residential school. If your parents did, okay you did. [Carrie - Or even your grandparents?]. Yes, [then] you also did too.

Kehtehi Preston explains that if the parents or grandparents attended residential school, then their children’s behaviours and experiences will express as if they too attended. This is not in the literal sense but in an intangible way, such that their behaviour, their experiences shaped their relationship with their children and changed DNA responses. The tenor (metaphor or literary expression generational trauma) represents many groups of people related to the individuals before them and after. Metaphorically, they have experienced the conceptual notion of wounds and shock from the original trauma. Multiple losses influenced generational trauma and generational trauma created multiple losses. Epigenetics supports the notion that generational trauma changes genetic coding
resulting in trauma responses without direct exposure to the initial trauma (Youssef, Lockwood, Su, Hao, & Rutten, 2018). Losses such as identity, healthy parental influence, self-determination, ability to meet spiritual needs, interrupt the ability to protect from ‘achak (spirit) interference.’

The medical field is beginning to acknowledge the concept of ‘generational trauma’ through an understanding of epigenetics, such as the study done by Brockie et al. (2013). For the most part, however, the perception of behaviours expressed by Indigenous peoples remains as moral failings or genetic pathologies; both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples hold this view. Multiple losses and ‘generational trauma’ that go unaddressed created an environment that appears as the norm. My conversations with the Kehte-ayak expose the fallout of failed forced assimilation and its influence on addiction through multiple losses and the impression that detrimental behaviours are the norm based on racialized explanations.

Multiple losses.

Research supports the theory that communities that incorporate cultural continuity help health and wellness (Auger, 2016). Chandler and LaLonde (2008) contend that cultural continuity includes self-determination, linked community members, following cultural ways, and restoring language. A strong sense of self, steeped in one’s ancestral language is also a protective factor against addiction. Colonization and failed attempts at assimilation resulted in multiple losses. The multiple losses identified in this study were disconnected family, loss of culture, loss of identity, and loss of language. These multiple losses affect spiritual elements in that they continue to strip away the
minute molecules of the *achak* (spirit). Strengthening cultural continuity will lessen or prevent ‘*achak* (spirit) interference.’

One of many losses experienced by Indigenous peoples through negative residential school experiences is disconnected family. *Kehtehi* Florence clarified this concept:

> You dehumanize a population and the end result is this. ... Chaos. And there's nobody they can turn to, so this is perpetuated from one generation to the next. And they love their children, they do the best they can, and they love their kids dearly, but then they still carry that burden.

*Kehtehi* Florence’s words expose the unspoken reality of the intent and effect of residential school. The intent was to assimilate Indigenous peoples and it was done through dehumanizing means (Truth and Reconciliation Commission b, 2015). A result of their methods was chaos – spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional. *Kehtehi* Florence clearly stated that the harmful effects from residential school prevented attendees from expressing love to the children they created years later. This disconnect is then passed down from generation to generation, as each new child carries the burden.

Attempts at cultural genocide through unregulated residential schools and the Indian Act (2018) also worked to disconnect families. The damaging effects of the Indian Act and residential schools on some communities were swift, interrupting family connection resulting in addiction and disrupted parenting. *Kehtehi* Preston provided an example of the disconnected family:
Already in ’74 they were separated, my parents, and my other siblings were never really around. And my dad was always around but he was never ‘around.’ I don’t know if that makes sense but he was a big alcoholic. He wasn’t present. The only time he’d come home is pretty much just to come and pass out kind of thing, you know. And then first thing in the morning he’d be out the door again, running for his fix or something. But I knew he was lonely, from the separation. You could see it. You could see it in him.

Through his parents’ separation, his family became more detached. His father came home at night but was not present for his children. Kehtehi Preston recalls that his other siblings were also gone. There is a strong likelihood that his father used substances to cope with the overwhelming feelings and memories of residential school and possibly the disconnected relationship from his own parents. When parenting and love are not modelled at home, the child has a greater chance of lacking loving or supportive parenting skills. In addition, without a strong family bond, adolescents lean on peers for comfort and support. This results in children/adolescents raising themselves or raising other children/adolescents, which can lead to the reliance on gang affiliation. Gangs provide a sense of connection and support and predictably, there is a high gang rate amongst Indigenous peoples (Goodwill, 2009; Northcott, 2018).

Loss of parenting skills while in residential school did not mean automatic retrieval of these skills once back in community. Abject poverty because of the conditions created by the Indian Act exacerbated the trauma caused by residential school. The cycle then becomes one of detrimental behaviour as opposed to thriving,
thus further fracturing familial connection. Kehtehi Rose recalls living with her mom prior to attending residential school:

And they remembered us and the [Kehte-ayak] that told me about [us moving from] tent to tent was the one that told me that my mom was struggling. My dad was in the war at that time and so I don't know if she got income for dad being in the war, but we were starving. So, we would move from tent to tent so we could have something to eat or sleep somewhere. And so, I lived like that with my mom. It was really not a tight-knit connection with my mom. And she had a lot of knowledge that I would hear her talking to other people about, you know? Like family or relatives and that but she never shared that knowledge with me. And even medicine-wise, she never shared it with me and so I always felt left out. I didn't feel like a daughter and so there was a lot of emotions in me.

Recalling that Kehtehi Rose held great resentment toward her mother for placing her in residential school, I am struck by her recollection of the destitution they experienced. In this conversation, Kehtehi Rose recognizes no close bond between the two: her mom was not present to her needs, nor did she see her as someone to extend traditional teachings. Family members encouraged her mom to provide teachings to her; however, one can only assume that this was not done because her mom was focused on survival and the emotional and spiritual burden of her own negative residential school experiences. White settlers looking at her mom’s behaviour may assume that the cause was based on genetics—something many Indigenous peoples also began to believe through the racialized narratives. Racialized narratives were delivered through residential school,
through the Indian Act, and through settler propaganda. Many racialized narratives continue today (de Leeuw, Greenwood, & Cameron, 2009; Tang & Browne, 2008).

Kehtehi Irene describes the inconsistent process of assimilation. She attended residential school and then day school; however, her younger siblings were not forced to go to residential school or day school. Able to remain at home, her younger siblings learned traditional Indigenous ways of being:

Carrie - So you were saying how the older siblings had to connect with the younger ones, because the younger ones were living a good way. Who taught them that way?

Kehtehi Irene - My mom, my dad. They were real good teachers and they taught us good things, but being in the residential school, it took that away. We had to learn the other way around there.

Kehtehi Irene’s dad lost his culture in residential school; however, he immediately began reclaiming the traditional ways. Kehtehi Irene’s family was able to learn from each other, harmonizing what was good from residential school with their culture. Cultural knowledge was forcibly stripped from Indigenous students in residential school and not everyone was able to rediscover their culture once they left school.

The Indian Act prevented Indigenous peoples from gathering and conducting ceremony. Believing that it was easier to assimilate children than adults, the federal government delegated the process to Christian-based churches. Kehtehi Irene recalls that her dad attended residential school for a long time and his cultural knowledge was all but eliminated:
He lost his culture, because he was [in residential school] too long – he was an orphan, and he lost his culture, he lost his language. My dad is part Sioux and Dakota, and when he was at the residential school - my dad’s dad was Cree, and the grandmother was Dakota. So, he used to talk his language, but when his mom died at an early age, he [started to lose] his language, his culture. And his dad placed him in the residential school at a young age, so he was orphaned till he was like twenty-three years old.

*Kehte* Irene’s experience sets the groundwork for creating a ‘disrupted *achak* (spirit).’ Her father’s mother passed away at an early age and her father was sent to residential school. Without family, Irene’s father would have spent summers at residential school. The longer he stayed at the school, the further removed he would feel from his community. He was removed from his culture for many years and indoctrinated to believe his community’s ways were wrong. The failed assimilation left many students confused, angry, and shameful about what they experienced. Later, her father attempted to regain his culture; nevertheless, Irene’s attendance in residential school continued the destruction of cultural knowledge for her generation. The difference between her and her younger siblings demonstrates the variance between going to residential school and not going.

Disconnected family and loss of culture contributed to a loss of identity. These losses set the stage for understanding the prevalence of addiction among Indigenous peoples. Each loss interferes with the harmony of the *achak* (spirit). *Kehte* Florence describes that most Kehte-ayak are unaware of the ceremonies because they had been banned. ‘*Achak* (spirit) interference’ increases when strong protective factors are absent
against increased losses. Harmonizing approaches may be challenging in that the practice of ceremonies that was lost is difficult to regain; however, the Kehte-ayak reported that the knowledge is there, it just needs to be rediscovered. Rediscovering traditional knowledge will lead to a reclamation of identity.

Through the practice of forced assimilation, many Indigenous peoples lost their identity. Kehtehi Rose speaks about employing multiple aliases during the time she was using substances.

I drank a lot because I missed my sons, you know, my two boys. And I started doing drugs and that really, really – I didn't have to think about anything in life? I just wanted to be out in the big city and be lost and no one to know me. And I would use different names. Even when I got picked up, I [would] use different names. … I had about maybe ten different aliases. And I had to get used to those names, you know, when I got picked up and that and when I got incarcerated. … this went on for 30 years of my life, in and out of institutions and drinking, drugging, blacking out.

Without a strong sense of self, Kehtehi Rose was able to hide behind multiple identities, essentially running away from her awareness of how things should have been as opposed to how they were. Feeling abandoned by her mom, subjected to forced assimilation, stripped of her culture, and cut off from her family, Kehtehi Rose experienced a ‘disrupted achak (spirit)’ until she re-claimed her identity, in part, through ceremony.

Taught that being an Indigenous person is pathological opens many philosophical issues, for example, several Indigenous peoples struggle with identifying not only with
their own self but also with other Indigenous peoples. Following Christianity or western ways of being, Indigenous peoples may seek a perception of comfort by rejecting their own culture. Kehtehi Rose speaks about her experience:

I didn't hang around with Native people; it was always white people and I trusted them more because of what happened to me by the two men, two Native men. I wanted nothing to do with Natives and I was ashamed of being a Native woman because of what happened in my past. And so, I wouldn't hang around with them. And even when I went to jail, I wouldn't hang around with Native people. I hated them, you know? I thought they were all the same. It's like nowadays some people think all Natives are the same because they drink and they're lazy and whatever. That's how I was and so I can understand that part of when people think like that, because at one time I was like that.

The stereotypical ‘Native’ became part of western narratives to such an extent that many Indigenous peoples also came to believe these misconceptions. A ‘disrupted achak (spirit)’ may prevent changing the belief that someone is anything other than a disease. When the behaviours of an addict – such as lying, hiding, steal, or ignoring – intensify, the layers of guilt and shame build. Without a strong sense of identity and connection to family and/or culture, the achak (spirit) will remain disrupted. Identity is a protective factor against addiction that is supported by meeting spiritual needs. Generational trauma strips away at family connection, culture, identity, and language. Cultural continuity offers a sense of identity through cultural practices and language.
Knowing one’s language is a protective factor in preventing ‘achak (spirit) interference.’ Kehtehi Irene’s father instilled in her the importance of retaining her language. Her experience in residential school challenged that praxis:

And I learned; as time went along, I learned to talk Cree, but I was raised with white people, so there again, I was at the residential school and after I was taken from residential school, I was admitted to go to a day school. … So, we went there and being with the residential school, you had to take orders that you can't talk Cree; you have to talk English, so it continued and I started losing my words, all of us in my family. And then after school we’d try and talk to each other, you know. Because my dad told us, never, never lose your tongue; you were born to be a native; stay like that, talk like that, you know. So, we tried.

Kehtehi Irene laments her dad’s acknowledgement that as hard as he tried to instil the importance of maintaining an Indigenous identity and language in his children, he was unable to change some of the assimilation that took place within him at residential school:

Well many years ago I wasn't too much in my culture … I lost it to a residential school, and my dad lost his language, because my dad is Dakota, and … he lost his culture, totally lost it. He didn't know how to pray in his language, but he was always positive of things, you know. And he’d always tell you, I lost my culture, my language, my praying habits. Now I have to pray the White Man's way.

Many testimonies of how forced assimilation and colonization disrupted Indigenous language also demonstrate the effects of generational trauma. The pervasive adverse
experiences contribute to the dystopian conditions of Indigenous communities along with the barriers to advance their community created by government policies and multiple layers of racism. Generation after generation, members of the community experienced the consequences of the original trauma and contributed to lost spiritual elements. A distressing finding from the reflection is that the *Kehte-ayak* experienced the disruption around them as normal. By not speaking about generational trauma, harmful residential school experiences, and the disruptive consequences of colonization, Indigenous peoples may have believed that the dystopia was an inherent trait in Indigenous peoples.

The *Kehte-ayak* identified varying upbringings before residential school. Those who grew up without alcohol in their family saw it within the community. When asked about addiction prior to colonization, the *Kehte-ayak* identified that it had become suffused with the community before they themselves went to residential school to the point that it appeared to be the norm. *Kehtehi* Preston reflects on addiction in his community:

I had that around me all my life growing up as a child. And early in age my parents separated, I saw a lot of alcohol, not too much with drugs. Yeah, just a lot of alcohol. I really thought that everybody did it and everybody’s going to do it anyway. And there was just poverty I guess living out on the reserve, and abuse, a lot of abuse. But I never understood any of that. I thought it was just a normal thing that always happened.

*Kehtehi* Irene’s community was divided between abstainers and users. She reflects on her internal tension:
I heard about the – like we lived on the southern part of [the community], where there were no people that lived close by, but the minute we went to church on the north side, then we heard stories about people drinking and doing that, doing this, and being bad. You know, it was totally different from our southern area to the north. It was like a, I don’t know – it was like a boundary. We had people – nice people – we aren’t high [snobbish] people; we were just being–clean people. We didn’t have addictions out there. Sure, they had smoking cigarettes, tobacco. Yeah, that was their bad addictions, even my dad. How come we lived so peacefully and the minute we come to a church, already we see the difference. And it was sad, because most of my uncles were the ones too ---That were on the other side.

Although Kehtehi Rose’s father did not drink when she was young, as our conversation deepened, she recounted the impetus:

Yeah, he volunteered and he was in both World Wars, and so we never really saw him. And when he did come home – he never drank before he went to war, he never drank. When he came back from war, he was an alcoholic. He drank, and that's when they separated. And so, I never heard anything on my dad's side. I don't even know my grandparents from my dad's side, I just know the names, and that's as far as it goes. I don't know the history of his family.

When Kehtehi Rose’s father was called to war, her mother had to fend for herself and she and her children moved from tent to tent. Kehtehi Rose’s father returned home from the war, her parents separated, and as previously reported, her mother sent her to residential school. Kehtehi Rose resented her mother until much later when she learned
about residential school experiences and colonization. She carried her resentment to other Indigenous peoples, believing that they were all the same, and that sameness was bad.

The silent shame of residential school experiences was seldom discussed with each new generation leaving the school. The disruptive happenings from residential school also became the norm. *Kehtehi* Irene speaks about growing up without alcohol but that she started using after residential school, when she married:

But then too, I had my share of drinking. You know, I didn’t know how – what alcohol was back home; because I come from [community name] and my parents were abstainers – they never touched any alcohol, especially my mom.

The landscape of her community would continue to change with each generation that returned home from residential school. Irene married and the new norm was drinking. *Kehtehi* Rose echoes Irene’s abstinence until the accumulation of rejection through her mother abandoning her, damaging experiences in residential school, and family disconnect started the ‘spiral:’

Yeah, I was 15 years old when I was given away a long time ago. That was a tradition. When a man wanted a woman, the father would ask for that woman for their son, and that's what happened with me. And there was no love, no connection at all because I was only 15. And so, when I left I had no feelings. There was no love there; there was no communication. I was just there, you know, with my sons. And so, it really bothered me to leave him because of my boys and there was security, you know? And when I went on my own, I didn't
have that but I didn't want to see that man again, because of what happened. He
used to drink but he would work all week and go out on weekends, and I would
stay home with my boys because I didn't drink or smoke.

Kehtehi Rose’s memory explains how multiple losses cause achak (spirit) to spiral into
despair. The term ‘spiral’ is common in the addiction universe. In this study, to spiral
suggests a continual movement downward, away from pimatisiwin (good life). Multiple
losses metaphorically represented as a ‘downward spiral,’ portray the achak (spirit) as
moving toward disharmony, digging deeper into despair. This represents the western-
conceptual metaphor of cognitive dissonance – a state of tension created by holding
conflicting thoughts. Individual portrayals, illustrate the creep of addiction into the
community, exacerbated by disruptive residential school experiences, family
disconnection, and the removal of cultural ways. Kehtehi Rose is a generation older than
Kehtehi Preston, and she grew up without alcohol, whereas Preston saw it everywhere.

Kehtehi Irene shared the divide in the community between those who abstained and
those who used, only to see many people using when she married. Through the voices of
the Kehte-ayak, this study begins to lay the foundation for understanding how protective
factors that once met spiritual needs began to erode through the process of colonization,
disruptive residential school experiences, and resulting generational trauma. Multiple
losses, suffering, and addiction ‘were the norm,’ constructed by supposed racial markers
and moral failings.

The Kehte-ayak explained how colonization, residential school experiences, and
generational trauma helped create a ‘disrupted achak (spirit)’ by preventing the use of
Indigenous methods to meet spiritual needs. The metaphor ‘disrupted achak (spirit)’
clarifies the process of the slow deterioration of a sense of love and belonging brought on by Canada’s colonial history and racial narratives. A ‘disrupted achak (spirit)’ may lead to the ‘closing of the achak (spirit) connection.’ The metaphor ‘achak (spirit) connection closing’ illuminates the slow process towards addiction when spiritual needs continue to go unmet.

**Achak (spirit) Connection Closing (Forgiveness)**

The Reflexive Reflection used in this study discovered the metaphor of ‘achak (spirit) connection closing.’ ‘Achak (spirit) connection closing’ is a consequence of ‘achak (spirit) interference’ caused by Canada’s colonial history, ultimately supporting the formation of addiction. In this section, ‘achak (spirit) connection closing’ signifies the disintegration in the ability to meet spiritual needs to live in a good way (pimatisiwin) by not maintaining connection with the greater spirit and the universe. Forgiveness is the spiritual need not met when spiritual maskihkiy (medicine) is interrupted. Contact with the Creator and the Universe to explore avenues to release shame and guilt are lost when that connection is interrupted. The term forgiveness is used to depict the act of acknowledging one’s transgressions or another’s transgressions and releasing the notion of shame and guilt that is attached. To forgive self or others is a form of maskihkiy (medicine) used as a protective factor to promote pimatisiwin (living the good life).

‘Achak (spirit) connection’ allows the achak (spirit) access to communicate with the universe. Kehtehi Florence teaches that the connection is not a specific location but everywhere around us. The achak (spirit) connection is right out there and here at the same time. When we ask for prayers, our thoughts go through the achak (spirit)
connection, to whomever or wherever it needs to go. The metaphor’s vehicle of closing suggests that the connection to the achak (spirit) physically prevents passage between two areas. This metaphorically represents the western concepts of the cause for addiction whether understood as a disease or a hijacking of brain function. Individuals healing from addiction are understood to have no control of their cravings because the nucleus accumbens and the prefrontal cortex have created a pleasurable memory from the response to the stimuli or behaviour (Winger et al, 2005). Over time the dopamine surge used to enact the reward system becomes ineffective causing compulsive behaviours to repeat the desired effect (Leeman & Potenza, 2013). Environmental cues that stimulate the amygdale and hippocampus causes craving responses (Leyton, 2014; Luijten et al. 2015). The achak (spirit) connection closing represents the inability for neurological functioning to process the environmental cues and override the craving sensations. When the brain is focused on the urge to use then the person is unable to pay attention to spiritual needs. Without this connection one is unable to forgive self and others. Several causes influence neurological functioning or ‘achak (spirit) connection closing.’ Through the voices of the Kehte-ayak, this section makes known the construction of the concepts of achak (spirit), achak (spirit) distress, and addiction. A series of metaphors – ‘Achak (spirit) Connection Closing,’ ‘Achak (spirit)s Guarding the Connection,’ and ‘Keeping the Connection Closed’ – are given to illustrate the potential consequences of ‘achak (spirit) interference’ understood through an Indigenous paradigm.
The exuberance of life.

The data reflection indicated that the Kehte-ayak appeared reluctant to describe the concept of spirituality. With their approval, I sought Cree Kehtehi Keith to translate metaphors and concepts. Through Kehtehi Keith’s translations and teachings, I more deeply understood the concept of achak (spirit) within a relational ontology. Kehtehi Keith provided the following teaching regarding the difficulty in articulating spirituality:

I understand that some of the people were reluctant to specify what it [spirituality] was as well as the problem of translation. Generically, spirituality is a concept that is problematic not only in the Indigenous cultures. It is also problematic with other cultures. In a sense, spirituality tends to be looked at in a variety of ways. The spirit of the individual, the spirit of groups, the spirit of Nations, and even the spirit of the world. People have all kinds of concepts of spirituality. In most cases, it has come to be narrowed down to religious beliefs. Spirituality is a broader concept in a sense that, [it] cannot be narrowed down to a debate between religious people, agnostics, and atheists. For example, the spiritual exuberance of life is reflected by children in the process of playing. It is also reflected in the complex cognitive grammatical structure of existence as reflected in the Nehinuw Cree life force system that is often called the animate-inanimate system.

During my conversations with the Kehte-ayak, they all spoke about maintaining a connection to that essence of life. Even through difficult times that challenged their faith, their healing journey at some point brought them back to a connection with their achak (spirit). The concept of ‘achak (spirit)’ is used figuratively because it is intangible
and its use conjures up many images. In this study, the achak (spirit) is a metaphor for the essence of life and the universe. The Kehte-ayak spoke of a connection between one’s achak (spirit) and the Universe or greater spirit. In the following conversation, Kehtehi Preston tells of an ‘achak (spirit) connection’ from when he was a small child to adulthood:

Kehtehi Preston - I don’t know what [made] it happen in my head through the beginning of the years. I knew there was something out there. One time I went on my knees, yeah. I was just a kid. And I started praying because, what the heck was happening? Something bad was happening. So, I went and I did that, and that thing stopped. And I said ‘Wow’ you know. That’s what I said, ‘Wow.’ And then that’s how I lived. I partied quite a bit and I started early in age trying to have a family. And I promised God, that I wouldn’t do anything like how I was raised you know, things like that.

Carrie - So you still engage in conversations with God?

Kehtehi Preston - Yes.

Carrie - Even though you didn’t agree with Christianity and the church.

Kehtehi Preston - Yeah, yeah. I knew there was a higher power somewhere but I didn’t know what it was, you know. I remember going into treatment in ’96, I was probably the only one that answered it. They asked who’s your higher power and everybody wrote down God, Lord, Jesus, Creator, things like that. And I just said the spirit within me.
In this example, his achak (spirit) is personified as ‘living’ within Preston. Thus, achak (spirit) can take up residence and maintain an existence somewhere inside the body. Kehtehi Preston’s achak (spirit) is connected to ‘God’ and this connection feels like one entity.

Kehtehi Rose echoes Kehtehi Preston’s exuberance for connecting with the notion of achak (spirit) when she says, “I love my spiritual part, you know, because it feels so good and I have that peace here that I was looking for.” Through Reflexive Reflection, synonyms such as ‘peace,’ ‘love,’ ‘life,’ and ‘essence’ elucidate the feeling that achak (spirit) creates. Kehtehi Keith provided the following teachings about achak (spirit) forms:

The idea of spirit is embedded in all the Cree narrative forms but the level of abstraction is even greater in the stories of the ancient legendary beings. You can find spirituality in its various forms in achimowin and ahtotumowin but achunoogeihina, the stories of legendary beings like the contradictory Weesagechak provide a countervailing view to European thought. The frontal stem achun in achunoogeihina means ‘other.’ So, these are special other beings, legendary beings, or other spirit beings.

Once again, the teachings about achak (spirit) press the notion of a second presence, which may affect our mental, emotional, and spiritual behaviours and well-being.

Kehtehi Keith provided another teaching that examined the concept of achak (spirit):

When you leave the earth or land, you go back through Cheepuhimeskunuw or the Milky Way; Cheepuy is the other spirit word for spirit beings. Your personal
spirit being achak leaves you when you pass away but can become cheepuy when it lingers on the earth and the Milky Way. It appears that cheepuy must become fully achak again when the journey is completed to Keechigeesigohk, the Great Sky. When Cheepuy lingers in the area surrounding the gravesite and other locations it is similar to the English concept of ghost. There are other spirit beings as well but those are the ones that are most commonly thought. There are other spirit beings like Pagak, a spirit that resides in the forest or bush and Meemeegesiyuk, the little special beings who are connected to medicine and health.

His insight into the many achaguk (spirits) beings supports the metaphors the Kehte-ayak used, identified through the Reflexive Reflection. In understanding the multiple achak (spirit) beings, people healing from addiction begin to explore the relationships they have with the many achaguk (spirits). Acknowledging relationship is performed through protocols that may be done alone or within a group. Understanding that pimatisiwin (in a good way/good life) requires n’duwihitowin (healing together) makes known the evolutionary changes required for addiction work to become efficacious for Indigenous peoples. This knowledge is both for working with Indigenous peoples and for harmonizing western ways to help anyone healing from addiction. The example lets us understand the ontological difference between positivist and relational beliefs.

Kehtehi Keith’s opportunity to retain his language had allowed him to explore Cree concepts relating to western concepts:

I know about these concepts because I was lucky to be raised in a Cree language speaking community. Although the nuns who taught us and the priests in the
local community came from the residential schools, we attended a local school and not a residential school in [the community]. We were also at a crossroads community where the majority were N dialect speakers but there were also Y dialect, and TH dialect people living there. So, we had a great opportunity to experience all the dialects.

This next teaching brings to light the grammatical structure of Cree language in understanding terms and the deeper relationships within those phrases:

So, you saw the differences in the Cree world view in which it related to, conceptual structures such as kinship. Europeans tend to focus on parents and the Cree tend to focus, ideologically, more on grandparents, grandfathers, and grandmothers. The idea of Mother Earth duplicates the same grammatical form as found in the Our Father or the Lord’s Prayer. Rather than a Cree focus on grandparents or grandmothers, the new concept of Mother Earth (Nigawinan Uskee) is built on a hybrid Euro Christian/Cree form, which focuses on the parent. Rather than the earth being connected to grandmother, the earth is represented as mother. Yet in our Cree origin story of Eeyap, the Spider, the Cree word for spider is Koogominagesees, which includes the word grandmother (Koogominuw is our grandmother).

Kehtehi Keith presents that multiple achak (spirit) beings are at play through the concept of achak (spirit) and the relational understanding of achak (spirit). Understanding multiple achak (spirit) beings by addiction workers is imperative in harmonizing aftercare. People living with addiction may have experienced ‘achak (spirit) interference’ and the process of the ‘achak (spirit) connection closing,’ expressed
through ‘achak (spirit) distress’ (waneneetumowin). The term achak (spirit) connection metaphorically represents the way that allows the achak (spirit) access to communicate with the universe. Kehtehi Keith Goulet attempts to translate the term achak (spirit) connection:

In terms of relational openness, there is kinship, partnership, and alliance as well as weechihitowin, the helping supporting relationship. Very importantly, there is a concept of openness to others. The term oootemitowin or oootemiskatowin acknowledges openness whether or not you are related or whether or not you are from outside or inside the community. It may evolve into friendship but it actually precedes friendship. It is also used for diplomacy. In terms of a home or some other place, a person usually greets a person or persons with “peetige, tawow.” Come inside, my place is wide open.

The achak (spirit) connection is not a specific place but is everywhere as explained by Kehtehi Florence. She revealed that the achak (spirit) connection is not a physical location but ubiquitous. It is a metaphor for the access point to the exuberance of life. My western perspective may interpret this as the process to develop neurological function.

In my conversations with the Kehte-ayak, the metaphor of ‘achak (spirit) distress’ was elucidated. Kehtehi Keith provides a teaching on ‘achak (spirit) distress:’

Right. In times of distress, people will call it waneneetumowin. First, it is used when you faint and lose consciousness but it is also used in times of stress when one is unable to think clearly, because the mind is clouded and going around in
circles. It is similar to the fear of being lost in the bush and not knowing where to turn. *Waneneetumowin* not only affects the physical but most importantly the mental wellbeing. And the other thing is that when a person is in great distress we say *mooskateneetumowin*. It comes from *mooskomowin* [crying out] means that the stress is making you cry. *Mooskateneetumowin* literally means crying out thinking. And what I always like about that term is that it puts together mental turmoil, emotion, and the physical act of crying. There’s a biological, socio-cultural, emotional, and psychological aspect to this very critical word.

‘*Achak* (spirit) *waneneetumowin* (distress)’ is a result in the loss of protective factors through limited access to Indigenous *maskihkiy* (medicine). The *achak* (spirit) is personified as showing suffering, pain, sorrow, or anguish. The *achak* (spirit) is distressed or ‘*achak* (spirit) *waneneetumowin*’ may threaten access through the ‘*achak* (spirit) connection.’ People experiencing *achak* (spirit) *waneneetumowin* (distress)’ may attempt to meet spiritual needs by way of substances or behaviours that engage the reward function within the brain. The substance or behaviour is used to help avoid painful memories, guilt, and shame, or create an artificial sense of love or belonging or synthetic forgiveness (avoidance). These reactions artificially create the experiences common when connection is made through an ‘open *achak* (spirit) connection’ or naturally engaged reward system. Continued use of these pathways through artificial means may lead to addiction. Attention restoration theory, mindfulness, dysfunctional reward system pathway, and depleted executive functioning are theories used to treat or explain the addiction process. I suggest that these models may also be explained through metaphor and treated through such Indigenous practices as relationship protocols and
ceremony. Harmonizing the two perspectives may offer powerful, effectual ways to support the healing journey.

**Achak (spirit) waneneetumowin (distress).**

The Kehte-ayak spoke about the concept of addiction. They assert that substance dependence does not manifest the desire to continue using; instead, it is the need to block unwanted memories, pain, and trauma or waneneetumowin (distress). Substances that enter the body are often considered maskihkiy (medicine). The life in the plant, when ingested, is interpreted as offering a transformative energy or maskihkiy (medicine) spirit. Alcohol, opium, and marijuana affect the body as does sage, rat root, or Labrador tea. Kehtehi Rose illustrated how using maskihkiy (medicine) to address unwanted emotional and spiritual issues is different from using maskihkiy (medicine) to heal. She suggested that the healing from the maskihkiy (medicine) does not stop, whereas with the addiction stimuli, there is no more healing after the first ‘hit\(^{25}\):

And if you want to – for myself, I strongly believed it was going to help me you know and which it did. But drug wise, you get – you only can tolerate so many highs and then you don’t have that feeling again. The first time I ever fixed …with the needle. That was the first and last time I ever had that same high. After that it was, I had to keep doing it you know because I never got that high again. And then it just becomes an addiction, you know you want that fix. But in traditional healing, it’s there, you know, and you believe in it and you get – you

---

\(^{25}\) The term hit is used amongst substance users to depict the initial high received after the substance is taken. The high reaction is sought after as a way of knowing that the substance is working.
might have another sickness and you’ll go to that medicine man to get doctored
and then it happens again, you get healed. You know it’s over and over again.

The notion that the stimuli do not cause addiction itself is supported through current
addiction research. Behavioural addiction such as shopping, gambling, gaming, or
eating also elicits the brain’s reward system response. Kehtehi Rose suggested that
addiction formation is less prominent when using maskihkiy (medicine) to heal than it is
when attempting to cover spiritual suffering. The ‘achak (spirit) connection closing’
brought on by unaddressed ‘spiritual interference’ may cause ‘achak (spirit)
waneenetsumowin (distress).

Colonization, disruptive residential school experiences, government acts, and
policies affect the ability to meet inherent spiritual needs. These disruptive factors are
expressed through multiple layers of trauma. Addiction can be understood as one
method of attempting to meet spiritual needs in order to help address trauma–individual,
community, and generational. Using imagery, Kehtehi Florence illustrates that the
anchor of addiction is often tethered to trauma:

When I see someone … that has an addiction, I try and go to the root problem. I
know it's not the addiction but there's a root problem. And I always let them
know that you'll heal until the day you die. I said we all do it. It doesn't matter
how old you are. And I call them stories so it's not as frightening. So, I say, we
carry stuff in our body. Because our body is [cyclical], it goes in a circular way.
I said when you carry trauma or anything in your body that doesn't belong, [your
body] flows like this and then when it hits that place where you carry your
trauma, then it starts to hit your body like this, and in that area, that's where you're going to carry your sickness.

Kehtehi Florence’s statement echoes research that studies unregulated nervous systems associated with unaddressed trauma. She suggests that focusing on the fact that you have an addiction is not as effective as focusing on what is triggering the addiction. In her experience, trauma triggers addiction. The metaphor as ‘addiction anchored to trauma’ represents affixing a heavy, hard to remove object connecting two concepts – addiction and trauma. Addiction as previously explained is the neurological process of a dysfunctional reward system. The reaction of the reward system and amygdalae response is a result of trying to correct the disrupted autonomic nervous system (trauma). Before colonization, Indigenous cultural protocols and rituals corrected interference in the autonomic nervous system (trauma). The inability to meet spiritual needs has increased one’s vulnerability to trauma and decreased one’s availability of resilience to recover from trauma.

Kehtehi Rose reiterated Kehtehi Florence’s theory of addressing trauma through addiction (artificially met spiritual needs) in this next conversation, where she described how she only wanted to get high to block the pain and suffering she experienced:

And when I started my drugs, I moved to Toronto because it was a bigger city and I was still having all those feelings, you know? And I wanted to block everything out, even my family, my home, everything, I wanted to block that all out and I learned how to do it – started doing the needle. And when I started doing the needle, I lived in Toronto for eight years, just doing my drugs and surviving on the streets. And it was a bigger city so I was able to go around all
over and nobody could really get to know me, you know, because like I said I was always alone and I did things alone.

The stimuli *Kehtehi* Rose used prevented her from feeling her suffering (her trauma) assuming it would disappear or improve. *Kehtehi* Preston, echoed this occurrence in that he thought he was reducing the pain by healing it only to discover that he too was ignoring the underlying suffering:

> I think it was, yeah, yeah that and it also mended my heart we’ll say. I was mending my heart. I thought I was mending my heart, because that pain was slowly disappearing. It just depends on what drug it was.

*Kehtehi* Preston uses the image of ‘mending his heart.’ Mending as the vehicle elicits images of sewing or darning a torn apart muscle, broken, or shredded by multiple losses. Metaphorically, this represents the process of working on helpful feelings. The process of mending the heart was done artificially by the feelings generated from the reward system. He interpreted his substance use as an unconscious process to meet spiritual needs of love, belonging, and forgiveness. His spiritual distress was tended to through his addiction. As *Kehtehi* Rose previously stated, addiction is different from using *maskihkiy* (medicine) to heal. The *Kehte-ayak* reveal that the cycle of addiction does not meet spiritual needs in a good way, thus prolonging the cycle. Where *Kehtehi* Rose was using substances to block the suffering, believing that this was fixing the problem, *Kehtehi* Preston thought that reduced feelings were healing only later to discover it was really blocking.
Through conversation, Kehtehi Rose, Kehtehi Florence, and I explored how the addiction stimuli become the priority in one’s life to block out psychological pain from the trauma:

Kehtehi Florence – Because of that sacred law of free will. So, they declined it. I don't know if it was due to the pain being too horrific and that they wanted it … done away with. They just don't want to remember.

Kehtehi Rose - Yeah, because that's terrible when you're addicted, you know. You have a hard time.

Carrie - That's your priority.

Kehtehi Rose - Yeah, doesn't matter if you're hungry. You'll go for that bottle or that pill to get you high, or your needle. And that's how it was for me. I didn't have a life. Same thing over and over again. Drinking, drinking, drinking.

The hippocampus and amygdalae work together to elicit neurological responses to support activation toward addressing cravings. The drive to reduce the craving becomes the priority of the executive function. Deleterious behaviours to meet cravings exhibited by people living with addiction are confusing to aftercare providers, family, and friends. When described as ‘spiritual distress,’ support systems can shift their approach toward helping in a harmonizing way. Understanding that people living with addiction can only focus on addressing waneneetumowin (distress) through their addiction, can help shift aftercare supports toward meeting spiritual needs. The methods of meeting spiritual needs through western means can be attention restoration theory, mindfulness,
modulating reward pathway systems, and restoring executive functioning. Employed through ceremony, Indigenous ways can be harmonized with western ways as both processes are similar, just qualified differently.

We can focus on the whole client when we understand that addiction may manifest from unresolved trauma. Western-based addiction recovery approaches have heavily focused on the physical and mental aspects of one’s self. Kehtehi Florence explains her approach to helping heal from addiction by addressing the blocks in all areas, including spiritual:

Okay, well in the Indigenous approaches we look at the holistic model. When somebody is suffering, we look at the whole picture, not just focussing on the one aspect, but say the addiction is physical, okay, because you see this person out of control, so then you look at the physical and you look at the emotional and the mental and the spiritual, and you look at those areas through interacting with the person. When I talk to someone, I want their life story. I'll say what was it like when you were growing up in these different areas, and then you can see, right away, where things went wrong, and then sometimes people are so much in pain that they're stuck and everything is a blank.

The strong tether between addiction and trauma prompts a need for a complex approach to healing from addiction.

To have a clear understanding of the findings in this study, we must understand the concepts of spirit and addiction as provided by the Kehte-ayak. Through their wisdoms, the Reflexive Reflection of the data revealed the metaphors ‘achak (spirit)
interference,’ ‘achak (spirit) connection closing,’ and ‘achak (spirit) guarding the connection.’ These metaphors create a path to address the spiritual needs of someone healing from addiction.

**Achak (spirit) connection closing.**

This study explains the concept of addiction by using a metaphor identified through the Reflexive Reflection – ‘achak (spirit) connection closing.’ Kehtehi Florence provided teachings on the many levels of awareness. The first four physical levels are on earth. The first level above earth holds the sky level (sun, moon, stars); the second level is where the ancestors sit. Kehtehi Florence articulates what happens to our achak (spirit) when facing addiction:

So, each of us has a spirit, and it resides here, and the spirit helps us too. … when we get lost, it tries to redirect us, eh? But when we fall into an addiction, we close that door and we're vulnerable to those entities caught between worlds. And then there are people that will take their anger and internalize it and it turns to hate, and the same way, they just lock their spirit up. That spirit. I see that spirit that's very sacred and strong. But they've locked it up. They've jailed it, eh?

Multiple aspects gleaned from the Reflexive Reflection articulated how the spirit becomes disrupted, possibly resulting in the ‘achak (spirit) connection closing.’ This section explores the metaphor of the ‘achak (spirit) connection closing.’ Kehtehi Rose recalled the progression of her achak (spirit) connection closing:
Because we were at the residential school for six years, you know, and not a visit from my mom. And I forgot how she looked. I couldn't remember how she looked. So, I blocked a lot of things out, and I still can't remember to this day what actually really happened and so I couldn't forgive her for years. I couldn't even call her mom for years. And there was no connection between mother and daughter, you know? Just me and my brother. So, there was a lot of pain, a lot of anger, a lot of emotions that I went through and that, and I hated people. I hated my own people. And [then] it all began when I separated from my common-law [at the age of 21] and …, I hung around big cities where I could get lost I guess. You know, I didn't want anybody to know where I was, not even my family because I was so lonely for my sons. I had two boys from this relationship and he took the boys. And I was lonely, I was lost, I didn't want to be around the reserve or where he was. … And then from there I went to Edmonton and that's where everything began. Because before that I never drank or I never smoked. …I worked on the streets too, eh, for my addictions. But at that time, I never heard about AA or rehab centres or anything like that. Nobody ever told me anything. I'd never heard of it so I ended up going to jail and that's how I would clean up my act, you know.

It takes a lot of work to close the achak (spirit) connection. Cultural idioms offer the notion that the achak (spirit) connection in children is strong and they are able to communicate with all levels. As the brain develops and children experience interrupted trauma responses, are exposed to negative social narratives, or become aware of moral behaviour and expectations directed by society, the achak (spirit) connection begins to
In Kehtehi Rose’s case she encountered negative residential school experiences. This conceptual metaphor proposes that the connection between the essence of the universe and one’s own essence is interrupted by any of the above potential disruptions, thus preventing clear access to connect. The encounters create cognitive disturbances that limit access. Access supports communication between the soul and the Universe. Cognitive disturbances develop and increase when there is restricted or no *maskihkiy* (medicine) to strengthen protective factors.

Once out of jail, with the *achak* (spirit) connection closed, Rose would continue to ‘use’ to try to avoid the feelings of loneliness, abandonment, shame, and guilt. Rose was not alone in her feelings of guilt. Also with a ‘closed *achak* (spirit) connection’ because of shame and guilt, Kehtehi Preston recalled that during one of his first healing ceremonies, he became fearful of not being able to heal from his past:

And I just kind of hung in there and I just raised my kids. I had a lot of support in [town], for, I guess we’ll say for accepting me because I had a [jail] record about like this [spreads arms apart to show a large space]. I was still punishing myself for the many things I’d done wrong in my life. And that was all my life. So, raising my kids … I knew I had to make a really big change. And then it comes to me now. He [the Kehtehi] starts talking to me. And first of all, I found that a little, you know, maybe a little disrespectful. The first thing that came into my mind is ‘Oh shit, this guy knows that I was a bad person all my life,’ you know. And ‘Am I ever going to be forgiven?’

Feelings of abandonment, shame, and guilt help keep the *achak* (spirit) connection closed. Metaphorically, these negative feelings have the physical ability to prevent the
connection from opening. Furthermore, these words may be personifications of stronger tenors. When working with addiction, there may be something greater preventing the connection from opening. Kehtehi Keith suggests a spirit being in the way of opening the *achak* (spirit) connection. These spirit beings may be summoned as *muskegee* (medicine) or *muchi-muskegee* (bad medicine). Spirits have a purpose and when left too long at the connection, this purpose may cause disruption through *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine). Through Kehtehi Keith’s Cree epistemology, we understand that there may be more than one spirit being guarding the connection.

**Achak (spirit) blocking the connection.**

Reflexive Reflection from the conversations with the *Kehte-ayak* proposed that there might be something keeping the *achak* (spirit) connection from linking to the Universe in people healing from addiction. The metaphor ‘*achaguk* (spirits) blocking the connection’ arose from the Reflexive Reflection and depict that the challenge of healing from addiction is not merely done through willpower. Someone may have thrown bad medicine in the form of trauma on the person living with addiction or that person may have invited in a spirit guide. The guide influences or directs the course of action for the spirit. If thrown upon or called upon, the guide causes cognitive distortion which in turn interrupts access and increases mental divergence. The spirit guide will disrupt the connection because they too are a *maskihkiy* (medicine) spirit. Spirit guides such as drugs or alcohol are personified at first as helpers; their *maskihkiy* (medicine) is used to maintain allostasis, one’s stability or integrity. Through Reflexive Reflection, many potential spirit guardians were identified as interrupting the connection. When not respected for their initial call for healing work or continuously called upon, the spirit
guides become guards now preventing a relationship with the great spirit. Along with multiple *achaguk* (spirits), the person healing from addiction may be unconsciously blocking their own *achak* (spirit) (soul) connection, forcing it to remain restricted. The connection may be blocked by adverse feelings attributed to the damaging experiences or suffering. Explored next are the two metaphors ‘*achak* (spirit) connection guardians’ and ‘keeping the connection closed.’

**Achak (spirit) connection guardians.**

Edward Duran (n.d., 2006) speaks about *achaguk* (spirits) that may be besieging someone who is living with addiction. These *achaguk* (spirits), at some point, cause a hinderance in one’s spirit connection to the greater spirit or Universe. The metaphor they represent is ‘*achak* (spirit) connection guardians.’ These external *achaguk* (spirits) become protectors of the soul from the Universe. Duran suggests that each *maskihkiy* medicine has an *achak* (spirit) that needs to be acknowledged, such as the alcohol *achak* (spirit), tobacco *achak* (spirit), or numerous different drug *achaguk* (spirits). Duran (2006) asserts that substance-based *maskihkiy* (medicines) each have a different spirit. Individually, they have unique purposes and influences. Medicine as the western term for herbs or drugs may be thought at play here; however, the Cree term for medicine is personified as a spirit. The spirit acts as a guide to influence thinking and behaviour. The body reacts differently to the gift offered by the various *achaguk* (spirits) of the medicines. Through a relational belief, these *achaguk* (spirits) should be respected for the work they do. When not respected, they will remain, thus creating *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine), causing a hinderance with the soul connecting to the Universe. Additionally, the Reflexive Reflection suggests *achaguk* (spirits) that are not associated
with a consumed substance represent an experience or cognitive manifestation. An example of these manifestation *achaguk* (spirits) may be the trauma *achak* (spirit), suicide *achak* (spirit), or depression *achak* (spirit). *Maskihkiy* (medicine) *achaguk* (spirits) or manifested *achaguk* (spirits) block the connection from one’s spirit to the Universe. Lastly, the person inflicted may not have summoned an *achak* (spirit) guarding the connection but an *achak* (spirit) was thrown at them. Thrown or transferred *achaguk* (spirits) hold the same power as invited or manifested *achaguk* (spirits); they are all capable of reducing connection between the soul and the Universe. This study expands on ‘spirit connection guardians’ identified as *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine), suicide *achak* (spirit), plant *achak* (spirit), and trauma *achak* (spirit).

*Maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine).*

‘*Maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine)*’ is a common term among many different Indigenous groups. Understood as a superstition, ‘*maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine)*’ is often dismissed in aftercare plans. Appreciating the symbolism of ‘*maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine)*’ deepens the complexity of living towards *pimatisiwin*. The notion of ‘*maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine)*’ is explained through my conversation with Kehtehi Keith:

*Kehtehi Keith* - When a person becomes mysteriously ill people will sometimes say, “*e muchi-muskeeegeeguhooot,*” that s/he had been thrown bad medicine. *Muskeeegee* is medicine, *muchi* means is bad while the ending - *geguhoot* refers to something that is thrown or transferred.
Carrie - So if somebody has this negative energy *muchi-muskegee* on them, what caused it? Like somebody threw that on them, and then they have an addiction.

*Kektehi Keith* - Yeah. It’s a lot like prayer for people in a positive sense, but this is the reverse of that, it’s a negative sense.

It is important to start with the concept of ‘*maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine)’ when considering ‘*achaguk* (spirits) interrupting the connection.’ This metaphor personifies *maskihkiy* (medicine) as justly helpful or harmful. In this context, the *maskihkiy* (medicine) is troublesome. This exchange was meaningful to me in that it demonstrated the balance expressed through a relational ontology. Prayer is a cornerstone in accessing the multiple layers of relationship. Teachings offered to me have always revolved around positive prayers that are healing—helpful medicine. The concept of harmful prayers took me aback. This notion helped clarify my understanding of addiction in that positive prayers are powerful and undesirable prayers would hold the same weight. Bad prayers or ‘*maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine)’ can equally affect access to the ‘*achak* spirit connection.’ The energy from bad prayer may alter one’s resonance. Negative self-talk is equally as powerful in manifesting *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine). The neuropathways that exercise deleterious thoughts remain strong when continuously accessed. The shame and guilt manifested from trauma, abuse, addiction behaviour, and/or mental health issues utilize the same neuropathways as negative self-talk and bad prayers. Deepening pathways in the brain that sustain *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) interferes with one’s achak connecting to the greater spirit. *Maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) when manifested by him or herself is often called upon to support allostasis.
The negative thinking unconsciously attempts to calm the cognitive distortion created from the abuse, trauma, addiction behaviour, or mental health issue. Understanding that *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) is preventing *pimatisiwin* (good way/good life) reduces false beliefs of amorality. To be clear, the person who manifests maci-maskihkiy is not intentionally harming themselves; they are seeking guidance to address a disrupted spirit that has attached itself to the person. The called upon or manifested spirit is initially requested as a guide. The spirit stays because the relationship was not honoured.

Using symbolism, the person healing from addiction may be free to release some of the guilt and shame. The connection to the work of forgiveness is powerful in reconciling disruptive factors from *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine). When someone is unable to forgive himself, herself, or someone else, the disruptive factors from *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) remain. Western notions may view their struggle as cognitive distortion; however, offering a deeper, relational understanding through metaphor strengthens the imagery of what is taking place. A western perspective of cognitive distortion suggests that the person healing from addiction is intellectually weak in that he or she cannot think more positively or let go of negative thoughts. Bringing to light that *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) is at play allows the person healing from addiction to release the burden of being the one to fix the situation. When *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) is at work, the person cannot heal themselves alone. Discussed in the findings is theory that we need to heal together to release the *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) from the *achak* (spirit) connection. The concept of healing together is profound in that it acknowledges the requirement of others to support the person healing from addiction and maintains that person cannot do it alone. Forgiveness used as *maskihkiy* (medicine) is an
element of removing maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine). The key findings section explores methods to open the achak (spirit) connection by meeting such spiritual needs as forgiveness through ceremony and prayer.

**Suicide spirit.**

During the conversations, the Kehte-ayak talked about the issue of suicide. The Reflexive Reflection determined that people might manifest a ‘Suicide Achak (Spirit),’ an achak (spirit) that resides within him or herself propagating suicidal ideation. The conjuring of the ‘suicide achak (spirit)’ may start with undesirable feelings attributed to harsh experiences or trauma. The suicide spirit is unconsciously called to help provide a solution to the situation. This may be seen as metaphorically throwing ‘maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine)’ on one’s self. The solution is not beneficial but is an attempt to relieve spiritual waneneetumowin (distress). According to Kehtehi Florence, when someone commits suicide, then his or her achak (spirit) is sent to limbo. Kehtehi Florence reveals that “Suicide is another thing too that has to be cleaned out. … Because a person cannot move forward.” The suicide achak (spirit) may also be thrown onto those around the person who committed suicide, because the achak (spirit) was not respected for the work that it did. Unable to incorporate Indigenous methods that follow relational protocols and target ways to meet spiritual needs has impeded people from cleaning away the ‘suicide achak (spirit).’ The Reflexive Reflection revealed the struggles many Indigenous peoples experience with suicide, including the Kehtehi in this study.

The issue of suicide is prevalent among Indigenous peoples in North America. The risk of completing suicide is higher when such mental health issues as trauma or addiction are involved. Kehtehi Preston recalls his experience with suicidal thoughts:
I even put a gun to my head, yeah, and it clicked, click; loaded up again, click. Then I checked, boom, fired when I pointed it out. It only took one bullet that went into the forest. [Carrie - Or something stopped it from firing.] Yes, yes. And that’s what I took after that, you know. And then I knew I had to make a change in my life, but there were too many drugs in my life. And it took a separation, that’s all it took was a separation [from his children’s mom] to straighten me out. Yeah [then] I got really sick. I don’t know what it was from, could have been chemicals that I was breathing in or it could have been drugs that I was using. Right from 200 plus [pounds] I dropped right down to 124 [pounds]. And I thought I was dying. And they said I was dying. Okay, all right perfect.

Preston experienced relief when finding out that he may be dying and then frustration when it did not happen. Understanding the feelings associated with suicide metaphorically as ‘suicide achak (spirit),’ represent the essence of the universe as personified in intending to propagate the need to end one’s life. This metaphor provides insight into helping remove the stigma of what is thought to be a moral weakness. This metaphor presents an entity suggesting a state of utopia by inducing notions of self-harm. The brain is tricked into believing that this is a solution thus providing temporary relief. Stigma, therefore, can also be addressed by regarding the achak (spirit) as an energy that needs to be removed through ceremony or cleansing. Generally, one cannot relieve themselves of suicidal ideations alone. The belief that an energy is influencing your behaviour, which requires the assistance of someone else to help eradicate that behaviour, may lessen self-judgement and guilt, allowing that ‘achak (spirit) connection’
to open. Resulting from colonization, access to good maskihkiy (medicine) such as ceremony and cleansing was limited.

*Kehthi* Rose understood that strengthening a sense of belonging, connection, and meaning could help keep the ‘achak (spirit) connection strong. However, when this connection weakens due to a break down of maskihkiy (medicine as protective factors), the suicide spirit can step forward:

Oh, this all came after, okay? But I didn't think about this kind of stuff because I was drinking and that and I didn't care if I died or what. Because a lot of times I wanted to – I tried to commit suicide twice because of my hurt and pain and anger. I just wanted to give up. I wanted to die. And so, I didn't care how I looked. And I remember a long time ago my mom used to always – before she was that way too – she would always dress us up, me and my brother. Comb our hair and look after us really good, even though we were poor. And she still did that when I lived with her for a while. I would watch her. She would get cleaned up and dress up, and so I would do the same thing. … And she taught me how to cook, taught me how to dress nice, to look after myself, hygiene, and that. But when a person is drinking, doing drugs, they don't care, and that's what happened with me. I didn't care at the end because I didn't have anything to live for. I never saw my sons and I didn't have a place to call home. All I had was these friends of mine that we're doing the same thing as I was, and that's all I knew.

Nobody ever took me aside and said, ‘Rose, come, I'll help you.’

The person visited by a ‘suicide achak (spirit)’ may have manifested the energy through their own disrupted sense of self and thoughts or may have acquired the achak (spirit)
through thrown *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine). The suicide *achak* (spirit) assists with the overwhelming cognitive dissonance taking place. Neurologically, the disrupted autonomic nervous system and imbalanced neurotransmitters create a lack of memory, reasoning, and perceptual fitness. *Kehtehi* Irene’s explains how the suicide *achak* (spirit) may be thrown on someone as a way of self-protection:

> And there's so much bullying, and that's when addictions – bullying is an addiction to young people. And they forced themselves – being so bullied – they force these classmates to do things that hurts, you know. Even suicide. They can do suicide because of their hurt they develop.

*Kehtehi* Irene speaks about how bullying is a form of addiction and the consequence is that the object of the bullying harm themselves. The bullying is throwing *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) on the other. That bad-medicine (negative prayers, energy, or treatment by others) may manifest a ‘suicide spirit.’ These conversations were impactful in that they helped me understand that one may have to address the manifested *achak* (spirit) residing in front one’s own *achak* (spirit) as a first step in healing from addiction. When the *achak* (spirit) connection between soul and Universe is limited and there is a spirit hindering the connection, the chances of staying on a healing journey are less successful. Often with addiction, more than one *achak* (spirit) interrupts the connection. The previous two examples suggest *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) and a ‘suicide *achak* (spirit)’ are present. Through a relational ontology, we understand that removing these *achaguk* (spirits) requires the assistance of others; it cannot be done alone. As I learned more about *achaguk* (spirits) residing in front of the *achak* (spirit) connection, the challenge in addressing them became more complicated.
**Plant achak (spirit).**

The conversations articulated the view that all plants are considered *maskihkiy* (medicines), that they have a purpose, and that they are respected for that purpose. The metaphor of ‘plants as *maskihkiy* (medicines)’ is not understood as a literal presentation of a preparation used to treat ill health but a representation of the relationship between the spiritual essence of the plant and its personified purpose of healing. The relationship may be something as simple as sustaining life to something as complex as a ‘sacred *maskihkiy* (medicine).’ The term ‘sacred’ indicates a direct connection to the universe. Understanding the link to alcohol as misusing a ‘sacred *maskihkiy* (medicine)’ reminds the person that using protocols can repair the injured relationship. A plant’s purpose is not eliminated once the plant becomes the addictive stimuli. From the initial intake, the plant is doing what it is meant to do. Alcohol is a *maskihkiy* (medicine) and before the ‘Alcohol achak (spirit)’ can be removed, it should be honoured through ceremony and asked what it needs to leave. *Kehtehi* Irene explained how alcohol addiction endures:

Yeah. They're never clean. Like, when you hold a bottle like this, it's never clean, because *Muchayis* [devil or evil spirit] is in that bottle. You know. And it's the one that encourages you [Carrie - To drink more?] Yeah. Yeah. Same thing with the pills, drugs. Same thing. You're doing things that are not healthy and clean to you.

As revealed through my interviews, the ‘Alcohol achak (spirit)’ and other medicine spirits such as tobacco spirit, opium spirit, or hallucinogen spirit are guarding the ‘spirit connection’ and encouraging the continued behaviour because they have a need that is not being met. The embodiment of another essence of the universe manifests as an
achak (spirit). The alcohol achak (spirit) brings feelings of euphoria, self-importance, and uninhibition. Because the relationship is not honoured, the reward system develops tolerance to the effects and more maskihkiy (medicine) is required.

These spirits do not affect only the person using; their influence reaches to the person’s partner, family, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances. Kehtehi Irene speaks about the achak (spirit) affecting everyone:

I suffered because my husband suffered – his enemy was alcohol – and then two people couldn’t be together when one is drinking and the other one isn't. So, I suffered.

Evidence to support that alcohol affects more than just the person drinking is plentiful. Helping professionals are not immune to someone’s drinking and a metaphorical lens may help explain this phenomenon. The ‘alcohol achak (spirit)’ depletes the resilience of the person using and it depletes the helping professionals’ energy. Duran (2006) compare the alcohol achak (spirit) to a vampire. The personification of the ‘alcohol achak (spirit)’ as depleting someone’s energy provides a visual example of removing one’s resources to the point of exhaustion or giving up. Clients who have alienated their families and friends rely heavily on the system for support. This may include social workers, clergy, hospital staff, police, and fire services.

Kehtehi Florence teaches that the tobacco achak (spirit) gave its life to help the people. When people use tobacco in an addictive way, the relationship with that sacred maskihkiy (medicine) achak (spirit) becomes multifaceted. Kehtehi Florence speaks to the role of tobacco as a sacred maskihkiy (medicine):
And a lot of our people will smoke. They don’t know why they smoke. I’ve got to quit smoking. I would say, well why do you smoke? I don’t know why. And then I tell them why. That at the beginning of time everybody was given a role. And that was the time Creator walked on Earth. And Creator said, who will give up their lives for the people. And that’s when the tobacco came forward and said, “I’ll give up my life for the people.” So … when you get that tobacco and smoke it, it goes up there, and everything you [pray for] will come to you, because it goes to those eight levels. The top is [where] that one that made everything sits and will answer all those prayers.

The vehicle as a sacred connection to the universe supports the tenor, the personified  

*achak* (spirit) as tobacco, as a compound used to treat imbalance. The tobacco *achak* (spirit) induces feelings of relaxation, motivation, and mood elevation. These feelings are produced when the nicotine in the blood stream mimics acetylcholine that in turn elicits dopamine in the reward center. *Kehtehi* Florence makes clear that what you pray for may not come back to you in the way that you hoped but will come back to you in the way that you need and through pure love. The ‘tobacco *achak* (spirit)’ interferes with the connection because it needs to be honoured for the work it has done and something else it needs you to acknowledge or do. As the level of tolerance to the presence of dopamine increases, the less effective the reward system response becomes therefore requiring more nicotine. The tobacco *achak* (spirit) becomes ineffectual in its purpose but is unable to leave until it is respected for its contribution. Addiction workers suggest that stopping tobacco use is more difficult than stopping cocaine. Using an Indigenous ontology and Cree epistemology, we can understand the difficulty because we now know
that tobacco is a sacred maskihkiy (medicine) and requires more protocol than some other achaguk (spirits). When the achak (spirit) connection remains closed and the achak (spirit) guarding the connection is in place, the more challenging pimatisiwin (good life) will be. Through the conversations, I learned that addiction is tethered to trauma. There is an achak (spirit) or many blocking the connection or energy center relating to the addiction and another spirit related to the trauma.

Trauma spirit.

A literature review conducted for this study produced no significant information about ‘trauma spirit.’ The Kehte-ayak gave examples of many spirits that interfere with ‘achak (spirit) connection.’ Not specifically stated, the notion of ‘trauma spirit’ was gleaned through the Reflexive Reflection. This study introduces the concept of ‘trauma achak (spirit)’ to explain the cognitive process that takes place after trauma. The trauma achak (spirit) may be the most challenging spirit to remove. The trauma achak (spirit) can be manifested from the imprint that was created by the traumatic incident or thrown on the person through maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine). Whether manifested (called upon by overwhelming feelings of shame and guilt as an example) or thrown (transferred by the abuser or perpetrator), it stays and grows stronger by feeding on the energy of the person who experienced the trauma. It may also be on the person who perpetrated the trauma or arrives on the person after. The metaphor of ‘trauma achak (spirit)’ suggests an entity that keeps someone in a constant or unpredictable state of distress or disturbance. The ‘trauma achak (spirit)’ creates moments of pain, anguish, suffering, misery, sorrow, or grief. People who experience trauma may take ownership of the disruptive factor in an attempt to control the outcome or to prevent further harm. The
traumatic event creates feelings of helplessness and loss of control. To process the disturbance, the person who received the trauma may assign shame, guilt, and misperception to the situation. Through the power of the ‘trauma achak (spirit),’ the person who experienced the interference can move past the traumatic event toward safety. When the trauma achak (spirit) is not acknowledged for the work done, then it too will linger causing unresolved issues that may lead to addiction. The effects of a ‘trauma achak (spirit)’ are not only emotional but also the ‘trauma achak (spirit)’ may cause headaches, confusion, acid reflux, inflammation, sexual dysfunction, constipation, nightmares, fatigue, or insomnia. When the ‘trauma achak (spirit)’ remains long enough, neurosis or chronic medical issues may present. Research supports the findings that long-term inflammation may result in autoimmune diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, cardiovascular disease, or neurocognitive disorders.

This achak (spirit) affects the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of self. Through a western perspective, the effects can also be understood as the dysregulation of one’s nervous system. Kehtehi Irene speaks to dysregulation she encountered after a traumatic event that prompted her stutter:

Okay. And when it was stormy, like raining very heavy, we said, when I was small a big drop must have fell on my head, and it [made me cold] and I got scared. And that’s how I got those stutters. That's what she told me. And you know, I was amazed that she said that. I don't remember – I was too small, you know. But the – to think of it, I was able to gain back my speech. I fairly talk fluently with it, you know. And was talking in Cree at home with my mom and dad and my siblings we continued … we continued to talk Cree.
Kehtehi Irene was unaware of what caused her stuttering until someone connected it to a traumatic event.

In this next conversation, Kehtehi Florence reveals how dysregulation may result in a complete mental block only to be uncovered many years later:

I'll tell you a couple stories. There's this lady having a hard time in life, and she raised children, and she drank and turned to alcohol and drugs. It seemed to work, seemed to help her, but yet deep down she wanted to die and she wasn't successful at hiding whatever it was, but not too long ago, in her 60s – I think she said in her 60s – she had a flashback of when she was raped by this RCMP at gunpoint. … what she recalls, during that rape, is that she was scared for her family, she was scared that her family would get killed, and it happened more than once from that particular RCMP member. … and at that time, she was so badly traumatized that it got stored in her body and those stories didn't want to come out ... [Then they] wanted to come out but she just could not put her finger on what that story was until it just came out in a flashback and she got re-traumatized.

The nervous system de-regulates to prevent further trauma to protect the body. This can be done through physiological changes to breathing, movement, or sensation. The nervous system can also de-regulate through memory or feelings. Harmonizing a western understanding of physiological changes resulting from trauma with an Indigenous perspective explained through metaphor can be an approach toward nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction and living pimatisiwin (good life).
Some dysregulation protects the self from further trauma through movement and some protects from further trauma by attempting to meet spiritual needs. Kehtehi Irene recalls watching a very young girl attempt to meet the spiritual need of love and belonging through a very dangerous relationship with an older man:

When I took my addictions [course], I was stationed to do my practicum, right, on 20th street. So, I seen lots - I seen, like little tiny babies like this and they could be used anyway in the wrong way. And this one little girl, just really dressed up, her hair, and I'd always ask her, it always impressed me because the others were dressed poorly, but her, [she] had nice clothes and I'd ask her, how come, … how come you're wearing these beautiful clothes, you know. Oh, that man gave them to me. You see it at an early age, parents are not aware of it, the child gets bought, by giving gifts to them. So, they think that man is nice. I have to wear this because he told me to wear them and look pretty. And I felt so sorry for her; I just hugged her.

In this example, the ‘trauma achak (spirit)’ directs the young girl to seek love and belonging in unsafe situations because the achak (spirit) perpetuates underlining feelings of shame and guilt. The ‘trauma achak (spirit)’ is personified by directing a person’s behaviours to meet the achaguk (spirits) purpose. The trauma achak (spirit) may have been called to help the young girl feel loved or protected during an abuse situation.

After the situation is over, the trauma achak (spirit) lingers because it was not acknowledged through ceremony or cleansed away (cleansing is the act of removing debris). Remaining is the maskihkiy (medicine) spirit that helps the young girl override her natural intuition of feeling unsafe in dangerous settings. She is able now to feel safe
even when not in safe situations. Once a helpful coping mechanism, the trauma *achaguk* (spirit) became a disruptive factor. Considering that the ‘Trauma *achak* (spirit)’ has needs and a purpose allows a person living with addiction to surrender to the idea that they are not fully to blame for the cycle and that this spirit was summoned to help them through the situation.

Comprehending the situation as spiritual distress resulting from multiple *achak* (spirit) including a ‘trauma *achak* (spirit)’ will release the pressure of *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction alone. A new perspective of addiction is that there is underlying trauma supporting the need to use. This perspective melds well with the metaphor of ‘Alcohol *achak* (spirit)’ tethered to a ‘Trauma *achak* (spirit).’ *Kehtehi* Florence summarizes how the body becomes dysregulated by the trauma and tethers to an addiction:

… the body and the mind are so powerful, at that time, when the trauma happens, they can either go crazy or else whatever's happening to them can kill them. So, what they do ... what the body does, it hides itself [the trauma] somewhere within the body, and it protects the mind, and as the person gets older then these things start to come, but they don't know what's coming. They know it's not good. They want to hide from it. So, they stumble into an addiction and they like it there because they don't feel this anymore.

*Kehtehi* Florence expands on this topic to explain that they do not know the trauma is the issue but the ‘trauma *achak* (spirit)’ manifests and the person is able to disassociate from their experience:
... and they don't know what it is that they're trying to hide, but it's a story, so I relate it as a story, and this is what I've been seeing on the reserve communities. These young people are drinking and they black out and to me something is wrong here. How can these young people black out this fast, and then I keep asking questions, because I don't see any of these people, but these stories are coming to me, and there's something missing in this puzzle, and then I'll say well, what are they doing? They must remember something because they're going to this person [and] being beaten up. How can they forget? But once they start being part of that gang and beating up this person they black out, and that black out is due to that trauma. Yeah and they don't black out from the alcohol, they black out from that trauma.

The dysregulation takes place for a reason. The body is attempting to protect the person from the trauma. The vehicle of tethering explains the complex relationship between the two concepts of this metaphor. Tethering does not imply a restriction of movement in this metaphor but a connection between two entities. These entities have specific purposes and need to be honoured so that they can finish their job. The 'trauma achak (spirit)' has a purpose much like the 'alcohol achak (spirit).’ Kehtehi Florence explains the importance of the ‘trauma achak (spirit)' in protecting the body:

Yeah, they black out because of the trauma, eh, and the mind is very powerful. The body is very powerful, because they take that trauma. It goes into the body somewhere. It's hidden somewhere in the body until it's time for that story to come out, and when that story starts coming out that's when my thinking is that they start that addiction. They start to cover up whatever it is that is not feeling
good within them, and that's where I go. Well, what are these emotions that you're feeling? They can feel ugly, but they don't know why because the abyss is in front of them and they just can't see past that darkness. Yeah, so we can... the body protects you too.

Kehteji Florence makes a clear connection between addiction and trauma. The trauma achak (spirit) is powerful and affects several systems. Many achak (spirits) are called upon to care for the disturbances within the other systems by the trauma achak (spirit). Through maskihkiy (medicine) these spirits help address the unacknowledged job of the trauma spirit. Sacred or manifested achaguk (spirits) take form from plant (alcohol, drugs, tobacco) or behaviour (gambling, shopping, gaming) entities. However, the attempt at restoring relationship only leads to further maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine) from prolonged presence. Addiction is the manifestation of spirit distress created by these entities. Achak (spirit) distress and lingering spirits hinder one’s ability to meet spiritual needs. It is important to have this perspective because current aftercare services focus on addressing relapse prevention only by reducing the risk of using and by expecting abstinence. Understanding that the addiction is tethered to trauma and that there are many achaguk (spirits) hindering the soul’s connection to the Universe takes aftercare services in a very clear direction—one that moves it toward finding ways to meet spiritual needs and away from narratives that concentrate on racial pathology or moral failings.

Addiction is also tethered to feelings of shame and guilt (bad medicine). People using addiction to survive and/or to meet spiritual needs (love, belonging, forgiveness, purpose, meaning, hope, and creativity) will demonstrate behaviours that contradict their
character. When reminded of these behaviours, by personal memories or retelling by others, the person will tend to continue using in the belief that they should never be forgiven or belief that through using they can forget their transgressions. Many trauma survivors believe that they were complicit in the trauma and carry the burden of shame and guilt of that for many years. Metaphorically, there may be an achak (spirit) guarding the achak (spirit) connection; however, there is also sometimes a more powerful force keeping the connection shut, themselves.

**Keeping the connection closed.**

*Getting in our own way.*

Exploring how achak (spirit) beings may prevent us from pimatisiwin (good way/good life) helps relieve some of the burden in healing; however, the conversations in this study identified that we can also be an obstacle. Struggling with feelings of shame and guilt, unwilling to take responsibility, or refusing to forgive others or ourselves allows the achak (spirit) connection to remain closed of our own accord. We perpetuate or manifest maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine) onto ourselves. These beliefs may be deemed cognitive distortions. Cognitive distortions is a western term that is addressed through western-based approaches such as cognitive therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, motivational therapy, and solution-focused therapy. As revealed in the rationale section, the efficacy rate for western-based therapies is low. The present study suggests that not forgiving oneself for past transgressions and assumed negative reactions by others over one’s behaviour helps hold the ‘achak (spirit) connection closed.’ Kehtehi Florence provided an example of the obstruction of forgiveness:
Carrie - And then they're not judged. You're there and ready when they come back and you're encouraging them to come back. But not making them feel guilty or punishing them or whatever.

Kehtehi Florence - They punish themselves enough, so why should I. The Creator has forgiven you, [then] why. What's holding you back? Let's have a look at that.

The metaphor of ‘Getting in Our Own Way’ represents an internal obstacle that prevents ourselves from moving. This internal obstacle is maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine). Cognitive-based therapy approaches would view this scenario as a psychological unconsciousness or unwillingness to move past our suffering. The psychological and physiological defence mechanisms established after trauma support our ability to live. Psychological defence mechanisms and cognitive distortions create deep neurological pathways. Reawakening old pathways that lead toward adaption and resilience may be done by meeting spiritual needs. Acknowledging the psychological work done to help move us past trauma may be seen metaphorically as ‘moving out of our own way’ which may be done through forgiveness.

Some people walking pimatisiwin (good way/good life) have fallen back into the addiction pattern because a memory or event had spurred the feelings of shame and guilt, ultimately, preventing them from forgiving themselves. Remaining in a guilt or shame loop allows someone to remain closed to the ‘soul’s purpose.’ The Kehte-ayak firmly believe that everyone has a purpose and the Universe knows this purpose. The connection from the soul to the Universe and Creator is a channel to hear the purpose. My next conversation revealed that some people use addiction as a form of hiding.
Carrie - Do some people use addictions to hide from their purpose or to run away from their purpose?

Kehtehi Preston - I think I used that in my past, yeah, because of all the things that were happening to me. I didn't know how to explain, you know. I sounded like I was friggin' crazy trying to explain it.

Kehtehi Florence - It's overwhelming, eh?

Kehtehi Preston - Yeah, and then –

Kehtehi Rose - Especially residential school, you know, then it was the same with me like Preston. In you know to cover-up, that hurt and pain and whatever we went through, I would drink or do drugs. Like the closest thing to being in residential school to me was being in jail. You know, they fed me, they clothed me, I had three square – they told me when to go to bed, when to brush my teeth, when to have a shower. You know, so used to it – when I got out I went through the same cycle over and over again for years because I didn't want to talk about those issues. … that’s why I would drink eh.

Kehtehi Rose’s closing statement presents the desire for the body to have a routine where you do not need to think for yourself, because thinking leads to uncovering trauma. When the connection is closed, the *soul* calls asking to connect to the Universe. The *soul* knows that they were sent to this Earth School for a reason; however, it is easier to ignore the calling when troubled by trauma or addiction. The trauma *achak* (spirit) uses the other *achaguk* (spirits) to meet spiritual needs thus keeping the *soul’s* connection to
the Universe closed. The person may think that they are functioning well with the *achak* (spirit) connection closed and artificially meeting *spiritual* needs through their addiction; however, the *Kehte-ayak* suggest that the Universe and the soul know that they have a purpose. The *achak* (spirit) calling is the greater spirit or the Universe. The metaphor ‘*achak* (spirit) calling’ suggests that the essence of the universe can manifest sound and summon loudly a need—the ‘soul’s purpose.’ Richardson (2002) calls this innate resiliency.

Blocking the ‘*achak* (spirit) calling’ through the connection is one use for addiction; another is addressing cognitive distortions. *Kehtehi* Florence speaks about the lack of power and the confusion survivors of residential school may have experienced:

So how do you find love when love was never shown to them? And their view on sexuality was badly distorted. So where do you go from there? And there were no boundaries, because any one of those – their superiors could come and molest them or come and beat them. It was like they were held hostage.

Everybody else could do anything to you, but you could not do anything – you couldn't say anything, you couldn't see anything.

In cognitive therapy, the therapist attempts to address low self-esteem issues or lack of self-love. This seems an impossible task because through *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) the person keeps the connection closed because they have learned not to trust and thus lost belief in their safety. A closed connection perpetuates *achak* (spirit) *waneneetumowin* (distress).
Achak (spirit) waneneetumowin affects all people: those with addiction and those supporting them. Kehtehi Florence revealed the cycle of victimization when she speaks about the struggles of parenting with a ‘trauma achak (spirit):’

They loved their children, they wanted to be protective of their children, but really, how can you protect anyone when you don't know how? And … and then they [the children] fall victims too.

The cyclical nature of any form of healing is not as prominent as it is for addiction. Understanding that the achak (spirit) connection is closed, because there was achak (spirit) interference, guardians in front of the connection, and fear of opening the connection, allows for insight into addressing aftercare, relapse prevention, or pimatisiwin (good living).

Nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction.

Relapse is a western medical term used to signify a setback in moving toward dormancy or healing. Western narratives paint relapse as a moral failing (Fleck, 2007; Leeuw, Greenwood, & Cameron, 2009; Vetulani, 2001). Through a western perspective, complete abstinence remains the gold standard for sobriety and any use is considered a relapse. A relational ontology holds the belief that we are all connected and many Indigenous paradigms view one’s experiences as lessons. Self-determination is central to re-engageing one’s power over one’s situation. Understanding how to prevent relapse through a Cree epistemology may strengthen self-determination and volition. It also affords insight into the role of the helper by rejecting the fallacy that relapses are moral failures. Kehtehi Keith provided a teaching regarding the term relapse prevention as
understood within a Cree epistemology through the word *nugaska* (stopping and confronting):

Relapse? *Keetaumaspinehin* is used when the person’s illness comes back again. People have various aspects of prevention and . . . some people do it by talk, conversations. As a matter of fact, some people or *Kehte-ayak* will have a little sermon. … *Nugaska* means to stop or confront something. When you say [ponanakistawan], you have to stop it, from coming at you. So, we use the word *Nugaska*. … *Nugaska* is a verb. But we also – We can also make it into a noun. It is interesting that meeting someone is stated as *nagiskatowin*. *Nugaska*-means to stop something.

*Kehtehi* Keith’s interpretation of *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) is interesting in that the person healing may recognize a different sense of power in the process of preventing relapse. First, they need to confront the *achak* (spirit) guardian through ceremony or relational protocols. Second, the *achak* (spirit) connection needs to be opened to create protective factors through *maskihkiy* (medicine) in stopping ‘it’ from coming back. A disrupted *achak* (spirit) and painful memories from trauma or feelings of shame and guilt aid to keep the connection closed. The data reflection also revealed that a lack of purpose or even the fear of answering your spiritual calling affects the state of the connection. Therefore, *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) is removed to address spirit *waneneetumowin* (distress) and then spiritual needs are met through *maskihkiy* (medicine) to strengthen protective factors to work toward *pimatisiwin* and *nugaska*, (stopping and confronting) by *n’duwihitowin* (healing together).
The data suggests that through Indigenous ways of knowing the process of healing or living *pimatisiwin* (good way/good life) is a journey. Healing from addiction is not a medical procedure that is fixed after treatment, resulting in full remission. Instead, *pimatisiwin* (good way/good life) is understood as a trek where you will have teachings along the way. *Kehtehi* Florence describes this journey of healing:

> Well, sometimes things happen to us and we role model that, that this is what happens when you – okay, this is life, this is that door way in life, we come through the east, where we're born, and we leave here. And on the side is those little offshoots, divergents. It's okay to go here, but they come right back on this road, because you can get lost here. And that's what happens to people that do that. Because these people were traumatized, these people really want to die. So, they're trying everything in their power to kill the pain and to kill themselves. So, if we could reach them that would be good and we need their help to tell us how is it that you want to heal. Okay, you want to heal from this, okay, get on board, this is your journey, you help me. You're going to have to be the director of that. … because they have to give it energy in order for it to work. So, I've gone on a lot of healing journeys with people and they've directed and if they get lost, well, I just nudge them on to the path. And they want to go on that path.

The ‘journey of healing’ is a principal metaphor in the field of addiction. The abstract concept of ‘journey’ is realized through the understanding that overcoming involves a path, road, or multiple steps forward with the end worth reaching. Going forward may involve twists and turns but it is a nonliteral, identifiable, marked way. What is also understood is that the ‘journey’ begins once it is acknowledged that you were on the
wrong path, not on the path, or completely thrown from the path. Metaphorically, these incidents are often hidden within the deep recesses of the mind only to be accessed by the support of others. Healing from addiction is a journey representing the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual processes required to reduce or eliminate the behaviours used to characterize an addiction. Personified as having mobility, healing makes its way through the passage of time toward a helpful end goal. The journey represents a slowed down approach to fixing the situation. It is not simple nor is it easy.

With Kehtehi Florence’s account, we see that the person healing has volition over his or her own aftercare and should create an energy of healing. They should be clear on what their energy of healing or intention is and the Kehtehi will help guide them back to the path when they wander. It is understood that the achak (spirit) connection may close but it is hoped that with each step on the ‘healing journey,’ that connection is either easier to open or does not fully close. Each time the journey of nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction and meeting spiritual needs become easier.

**Walking the White Road (Purpose and Meaning)**

Through Reflexive Reflection, I became aware of the metaphor ‘Walking the White Road.’ I am familiar with the metaphor ‘Walking the Red Road’ to mean – making healthy choices, following one’s purpose, and expressing oneself authentically. ‘Walking the White Road’ was new to me but I came to understand its meaning. The metaphor represents the tenor as a state of being signifying the white race, and the vehicle of walking that road toward a ‘white’ way of being; therefore, ‘walking the white’ road means expressing a western culture. In general, a white road may mean perceiving lived experiences as singular, independent of someone’s help, and not
figuratively. In addiction, guilt, shame, and judgement are subtly encouraged (through the perspective of moral failings) and aftercare includes methods to promote recovery, relapse prevention, and abstinence. Most education programs for Addiction workers follow this western paradigm. This section covered why the Kehte-ayak wanted to help people healing from addiction and how the western approach may not work for everyone. The most significant teaching of Kehte-ayak is that approaches used to help people heal from addiction should ensure people can express their free will; without self-agency, lasting pimatisiwin (good way/good life) will remain elusive.

Achak (spirit) calling.

Kehtehi Rose talked about her struggle with relapse before she found something meaningful to do. In this memory, she shared that after coming clean and starting pimatisiwin (good life), she did not have a purpose; therefore, she inevitably wanted to go back to prison. The spiritual need for meaning was met when a helping professional changed her life:

No, she was driving by and she’d seen me and she tooted the horn. And I ran to her, I said, I want to go back in. She said, “No you can’t go back girl,” she told me, “Get in the car, I’ll go and buy you a coffee.” And so, I got in the car, went into that little restaurant, and said I really want to go back. She said, “You can’t go back Rose, you know I’ll tell you what, I’ll give you a job that’ll keep you busy,” and I said okay. So, she gave me a job [cleaning].

In reflecting on the story, Kehtehi Rose recognized that by finding meaning, this person helped her to love herself. Eventually, she started forgiving herself and others and
uncovered her purpose. Through the process of finding one’s purpose and meeting one’s sense of belonging, Kehtehi Rose could begin ‘opening the achak (spirit) connection’ from the inside. This metaphor suggests a handle that is accessible from inside and one only needs to turn it to begin to fix the situation. An opening also means discovery or obtaining entrance into a different place or object. This metaphor represents accepting and understanding a new paradigm of addiction and treatment. The achak (spirit) connection is the gateway to the exuberance of life and by it opening, the person healing from addiction, is addressing their impaired neurological function. The impaired neurological function is known through the metaphor ‘achak (spirit) guarding the connection.’ This is a metaphor for how the amygdala and hippocampus create cravings to activate the reward system. A sense of purpose and meaning also supports feeling hopeful. The hopeful feeling excites the reward system through soothing memories. Knowing one’s soul’s purpose can strengthen nugaska (stopping and confronting) because they now have a goal on their path to healing.

Conversations with the Kehte-ayak about what brought them to the field of addiction elicited insight into the process of exploring one’s spiritual purpose. The reasons these Kehte-ayak went into the field were different. Kehtehi Florence told me that the achak (spirit) called for a long time, and she asked to wait until her children were grown. She did not specifically know what the calling was until she was ready to start:

And then this girl was running away from her partner and she was in the foyer of the [department store] and he was beating on her, and one of the gals in the lineup says, oh, that's their culture. So, I never said a word. I went home and I
was talking to Creator and I said, why are we the way we are? And … I was reading the newspaper and there was a course on addiction.

A western perspective may perceive this experience to be coincidental. A relational ontology using metaphors explains this experience as ‘achak (spirit) calling.’ ‘Achak (spirit) calling,’ as previously described, suggests that the non-corporal entity emits sound with intentional language. The essence of the universe is calling to our exuberance of life. The calling sends a message that holds information about one’s purpose.

Aligning with one’s spiritual purpose may start with doing meaningful work. Kehtehi Rose recalls the impetus for starting her healing journey and from this, she took the call to help her people:

And they said get ready, you’re going into a ceremony, which was a sweat. And that’s how I started my journey because a lot of times before that I tried to quit and at that time I didn’t know anything about the support groups or anything, they didn’t really have much that time, you know. And I think that’s why I always relapsed; you know what I mean.

Kehtehi Rose stated that the western approaches such as Alcoholics Anonymous and cognitive therapy did not work in preventing relapse. When she started ceremony, she saw overcoming addiction as a healing journey and was able to harmonize what she learned from western academia along with Indigenous ways of healing. She found ceremony meaningful in eventually finding her life’s aim. Her purpose included the metaphor of ‘helping her people.’ At first read, this may not seem a metaphor; however,
when reflected upon as a concept, not a literal description of physical labour, the metaphor becomes apparent. The tenor of ‘her’ does not mean her physical self but her spiritual self, using her experience and her ‘story’ as the vehicle to serve the ‘people,’ another vehicle representing a collective whole.

_Kehtehi_ Irene started toward one program but a respected _Kehtehi_ guided her toward an Indigenous-based program. _Kehtehi_ Irene’s story reminded me of _Kehtehi_ Florence’s words in that _Kehte-ayak_ will direct you to the path that you are supposed to be on when you are willing to listen:

Yes. At first, before I had taken my addictions program, I was sent to Fort Qu'Appelle. I had applied for a CHR [Community Health Representative] course, you know. And I was working for the band already. And they told me go over to Fort Qu'Appelle like, maybe three weeks at a time, go and learn your culture over there. They'll teach you. And you know, I'm very thankful that this late Henry Sutherland was the one that encouraged me to go over there. I was very thankful. And he provided for me to go and be dropped off over there for three weeks, and not come home between the time. He said there's a lot of accommodations over there, and you'll get to learn. … And during the day we used to have training for health, and [Medical Services Branch] it was the one that provided the training, and in the - like after supper we'd have - right after class we'd have traditional [teachings] for an hour, and then we'd go back and we'd have an hour out from supper to, like, 7 o'clock, and we'd go back for a couple of hours.
From *Kehtehi* Irene’s cultural teachings, she began the process of harmonizing Indigenous with western ways. The metaphor of harmonizing ways suggests that two separate cultural expressions are conveyed in a balanced way. The word harmonized denotes melodic or a pleasing combination. Thus, harmonized approaches offer pleasurable ways forward, absent of strife. *Kehtehi* Irene worked closely with a *Kehtehi* who helped her translate her Christian teachings to Cree teachings. She expressed great appreciation for the direction she was heading in her education. With a burgeoning cultural understanding, *Kehtehi* Irene began the process of harmonizing aftercare. Replacing ways of being with aftercare, this metaphor of ‘harmonizing ways’ now understood as a pleasing combination representing melody is applied to Indigenous and western ways in *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction.

After many years of struggling with addiction, *Kehtehi* Preston attended and completed an addiction worker program. He recalled why he continued learning about addiction as he worked in the field:

I didn’t know when I applied for this job, I also included that I was struggling with assimilation and I would like to get back into my culture. And now when I get here, it seems like I have all this information, when I really applied for this job to learn, to get me back into my roots kind of thing. And I don’t know, maybe because I studied for about 25 years now in this way of life I have some knowledge of it. … I really wanted to focus on me. I’m not getting any younger and I know I need to help others too, that may or may not be struggling with their changes, forced changes.
Kehtehi Preston revealed that, although the program he took was called the Native Addiction program, he learned very little about a culturally specific approach. He took it upon himself to continue learning about Indigenous methods and later, share his teachings with others. Kehtehi Preston now attempts to harmonize approaches, metaphorically, to help both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples healing from addiction.

Kehtehi Irene completed NNADAP and Kehtehi Rose completed a Social Work degree. Kehtehi Florence took the Chemical Dependency Worker program and a Social Work degree and Kehtehi Preston took a Native Addiction Worker program. While Kehtehi Irene’s introduction to cultural teachings came through a different program, the other programs also did not specifically teach Indigenous practices in healing from addiction. All the courses had a western supported epistemology. Kehtehi Preston shares his experience in learning the ‘White Way’ for treating addiction:

Yeah I have my diploma in addictions through [college]. And they don’t teach this, traditional beliefs. The old ways and how it’s really supposed to be taught, they don’t teach that in university and I don’t think you ever will. But they'll allow – [Carrie - Like an opening prayer, smudging]. Yeah that's it.

Traditional approaches were not the only ‘Indigenous’ component missing from the western-based programs. Kehtehi Florence acknowledged that residential school experiences were not talked about in the addiction course she attended. Understanding the trauma that is tethered to the addiction is a key factor in helping someone work toward pimatisiwin. Seeing the need to help people healing from addiction using
Indigenous-healing approaches is difficult particularly when programs discount Indigenous ways of knowing or the effects of colonization.

**Smudging is slowly being accepted.**

With NNADAP beginning to incorporate Indigenous ways of healing, my conversations with the *Kehte-ayak* revealed that incorporating Indigenous ways is still not accepted in most western facilities. *Kehtehi* Preston expressed his frustration in being hired as an Indigenous worker but was restricted from using Indigenous methods.

In my other workplace, it's difficult to use it, because it's not fully accepted, yeah. And I'm limited into what I can do in helping by using traditional beliefs. … I was told right to my face. Well, I asked, I felt it strong what they were telling me. So, I asked straight, it appears that I'm not allowed to use traditional beliefs. A little further than - like right now today they only allow sage just to go and smudge, that's it and sweet grass. But that's it. And not everybody coming off the street is going to do that, especially the ones that are still struggling with Christianity.

*Kehtehi* Preston asserts that he is unable to incorporate Indigenous methods other than those that western institutions deem ‘appropriate.’ Smudging is slowly being accepted, but as *Kehtehi* Preston points out, smudging may be a barrier to accepting Indigenous ways when they have been indoctrinated to see those methods as demonic. *Kehtehi* Preston offers the following example:

… it's the same damn thing that happens in residential school. And everybody’s still struggling with it today. They're still cutting down traditional ways and
saying it's devil worshipping. No, it's not. I think the church is devil
worshipping and that's more of the truth 'cause it really, really messed up a lot of
kids.

In Kehtehi Preston’s experience, the church was more occult than the ceremonies he
learned about later in his journey. Accepted as part of a western settler mindset, western
and Indigenous peoples may fear ceremony, believing that non-western ceremony is
satanic. This is discussed further when I recount my conversations with the Kehte-ayak
about working conditions. Indigenous methods are not merely smudging with sweet
grass or sage; they are immersed in traditions, activities, and protocols.

As the level of trust was built between Kehtehi Preston and the western
organization, he was able to incorporate ceremony as a healing method:

Yeah, it was here in P.A. It was accepted. They had great big turnouts in my
ceremonies in prison, in jail. [Carrie - Why do you think that was?] Respect,
'cause I didn’t tolerate any crap, like I never smuggled [tobacco]; this [points to
tobacco pouch] is worth $500 here [in jail]. I never smuggled anything. Balls
used to fly over the fence right into my yard, spiritual ground and I never touched
it. Get this thing out of here. So, the guards would always come and grab those,
and everything would be inside these balls, socks wrapped up, all different types
of drugs. Guys would be asking me inside the building, did you get my package,
did you get my package? Just don’t throw that fucking package in my yard ever
again. I just tell them straight. And then they started respecting that. And then
there's - some [Kehte-ayak] were threatened with gang members. They would go
right to their house and threaten them. This is what you got to take in. There were a lot of [Kehte-ayak] that were quitting. [Because of] fear.

*Kehte* Preston’s example suggests that the western institutions may have unconsciously believed that Indigenous approaches were malicious and over time, through building a relationship of respect and trust with Preston, they began to accept the approaches as effective.

*Kehte* Rose also gained a level of trust at her places of work and was able to begin incorporating innovative Indigenous healing methods:

I tell the guards I’m taking her to the trailer. See I don’t have a hassle with the guards. And so, I take them to the trailer and smudge them down, I smudge all the negativity off them and then I put the good energy into them. And then there’s a lot of crying and I bring out their tears, put them in my bag – Yeah, the Kleenex, and then take them for a ceremony or I’ll burn them at home. I have a can and I throw tobacco in there and I burn them. I said tears are very sacred, the Creator didn’t give us tears not to cry, it cleanses you I tell the women and they said, “Oh okay.” So, I always have a little Kleenex on the table with the medicines and you know whatever I need, and the box of Kleenex and I tell them when you wipe your tears put that used one here and take another one, I smudge the Kleenex. Then I bring them home.

*Kehte-ayak* Rose and Preston shared that they reached a level of respect in Corrections and their approaches are more accepted. However, the struggle is not isolated to western
organizations. *Kehtehi* Florence spoke about her experience as a travelling *Kehtehi* doing contract work with communities:

[Community name] – it’s been demonized. Like, [this] reserve, they're so indoctrinated in the church that they do call it witchcraft and you'll go to hell, and God is not forgiving. And so, I … I have to walk on eggshells when I go to … communities because they want to, yet they're scared. And some are just black and white. No - none of that voodoo, you've got to get it out of here. Because our ceremonies were desecrated. The medicine people had their medicines put in the middle of the road and ridiculed.

*Kehtehi* Florence’s example is one of many that represent how people have become mistrusting of Indigenous ways. Bringing in Indigenous ways is forbidden in some areas and speaking about harmonizing is considered a political act. *Kehtehi* Irene was accused of bringing politics into the discussion when speaking about harmonizing both ways.

And I think she understood, but it was a [*Kehte-ayak*] meeting and somebody said don’t bring politics in here. But you know, I said it’s not politics, it’s feelings, because I see it – suicidal deaths on the younger generation. I said these babies are babies and we need to look after them. We’re the [*Kehte-ayak*] that need to look after them, I said, we can’t forget about them. And the one that told me I can't bring politics here, he had a son that hanged himself, and the other girl – a member of that man that voiced the politics, – she lost her daughter on aboriginal murdered women, I think her daughter was --- [Carrie - *missing or murdered*]. Yeah, so I don’t know where they're coming from. Like they should
have that – instead of saying yes, let’s start working together, you know, a lot of
times they tell them … wake-up.

The rationale demonstrated a need to harmonize both Indigenous and western ways in
aftercare. The metaphor of ‘harmonizing ways,’ illustrates the blending of ways toward
a melodious or pleasing process. Harmony is balanced and benevolent. The Kehte-ayak
confirmed that in order to live in a good way, that people need to re-introduce traditional
approaches because the western way is not working for many Indigenous peoples.

**Western way is not working.**

When the Kehte-ayak were asked what works well from a western perspective, in
healing from addiction, they suggested some credible features but for the most part, it is
not working. Kehtehi Florence told me:

*Kehtehi* Florence - From the western perspective? It's to learn from those
mistakes, eh, and …

Carrie - Is it a tough question?

*Kehtehi* Florence - Yes, that's a tough question, because they pigeonhole
everything. They don't have a wheel; they have little squares.

Carrie - Compartments.

*Kehtehi* Florence - Yeah, they compartmentalise everything. We know that
doesn't work, so it's to heal ourselves first and then to work with
everybody. We need each other, yeah. We don't pigeonhole them. We
go along – the healing will go according to the person. That's why I had a
hard time with that. And when I go see a doctor, my intuition is very
good. And when somebody comes and sees me, I can see things they – and I know what it is. Whereas a doctor – or else I'll pull up a pipe, I will hold their tobacco. And then the universe helps you if you're stuck in trying to figure out what they need and where they're at.

*Kehthi* Florence expressed frustration about an ontology that does not see the connection in things. She uses the metaphor of ‘Indigenous people are being pigeonholed.’ The vehicle as Indigenous people deposited in a small compartment representing the nests for pigeon homes. The noun of pigeonhole is turned into a verb by making it an action through depositing. Indigenous people are discounted or dismissed as a whole entity. Thus, the metaphor represents people with a realism ontology taking an issue facing Indigenous people into singular, separate compartments for treatment without acknowledging the relationship or connection to the whole person. Indigenous people may be pigeonholed as addict, diabetic, suicidal, or homeless without recognizing the colonial influence as part of the cause. In addition, consideration of how the health issue affects all elements of a person (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual) is abandoned to focus on the immediate presenting symptom, with minimal support for a wholistic course of action. In contrast, as Florence states, harmonizing Indigenous and western way, is a wholistic approach that takes into consideration all potential relationships and may work as an effective aftercare approach for everyone.

*Kehthi* Rose spoke about her journey in healing, acknowledging that she tried the required western-based treatment ways with no success. She recounted that no one asked her what goals she had for the future Rose or how to make connection with others.
Unable to discern her spiritual needs, and remaining in ‘spiritual distress,’ Rose continued to go back to using:

And when I'd come out I'd get back to the same cycle over and over again, which didn't help because I would still be lonely. And when I was in jail, they never had anybody to sit down and talk to you, you know, to ask you what are your plans or anything, yeah, when I got out. Nobody ever asked me that. I would just go in, do my time, and get out. It'd be the same cycle over and over again. So, I spent 30 years of my life doing time and it wasn't until the end that things started working out for me and changing my lifestyle. But during those addiction years I would get parole and they would ask – tell me to go to AA or rehab centres. And being told to do things like that, I would take it but I wouldn't go through with it when I go out there. So, it didn't help me at all, you know? And I don't know how many times I went into rehab centres or how many times I went to –… I just used those so I could get out of jail, you know, and so it didn't help me out.

Kehtehi Rose suggests that she saw the treatment options as ways to manipulate the system. In her next reflection, she suggests that manipulating the system by attending treatment to avoid jail was the ‘white man’s way.’ This explanation is critical in understanding the nuances in the difference between a western paradigm and an Indigenous paradigm. We are all related within a relational ontology, meaning that we are accountable to each other and that our purpose for being here drives our actions and behaviours. Through Kehtehi Rose’s example, we understand that the western way can ignore accountability and ignores relationship.
Through a western paradigm, we can separate from the larger system with minimal responsibility for our actions. Meeting spiritual needs supports the expression of a relational ontology, thus protecting oneself from addiction. Kehtehi Rose explains how she could not continue ‘Walking the White Road’:

So that was how I was; I hung around with white people. I walked the white road, and that wasn't my road at all but I'll share that with you later. But I kept walking that road and I kept getting into trouble and I would wonder, geez, if there's a God up there why am I always going to jail. You know, asking all these questions to that one up there. So, when I went to the lodge, I told the [Kehtehi] that, I said I tried everything in the western way, but at that time, I said the white way you know. And I said this is my last stop I told them the healing lodge, if this place doesn’t help me, I’d rather die. That’s what I told them. I still remember the words.

Acknowledging that she could not continue the path she was on, Kehtehi Rose states that she would rather die than continue. The metaphor of walking the White Road in this example is explained as then tenor of adopting attitudes and norms of dominant European community (white as a way of being), figuratively expresses walking on that road. She portrayed what she thought the white way should be. The white way represents manipulating the system, doing things alone, and pretending to be white; the personification of acting.

By entering the healing lodge, she began the process of meeting spiritual needs to help open the spirit connection and to remove the spirits guardians who were no longer
needed. By incorporating Indigenous approaches, *Kehtehi* Rose found the internal sense of peace she had been unconsciously seeking:

And you know what, in the western way whatever I could do in those days, in my time, you know in my days, I had a hard time finding that help. I’d go to church but I still wasn’t satisfied in my heart, I was looking for that peace and I couldn’t find that peace even by going to church with my mom. But when I went to a sweat, I felt good. And then going to church and praying wasn’t the same as going to a sweat. There was a closeness and maybe because I’m Aboriginal, I don’t know. Maybe if I was white, it would be different. But when I went into a church, it felt like it was cold because there’s so many people around there sometimes, sometimes you can go in alone but there was still – there was no closeness in that for me. And because of residential school, it was forced down on me, so I didn’t really have that faith in the church. Yeah. When I was in AA, when I tried to help myself before, I had no support but I was trying AA. Inventory. … and I relapsed. … in the traditional way it seemed a lot easier for me, when the [Kehte-ayak] told me what to do. You know so simple and basic that it was a lot easier than doing that step four in the western way.

She also recounts no connection to the western ways. She tried to follow the aftercare options but for her they did not work:

And I tried to quit and I just couldn’t do it on my own. And I didn’t know where to go to ask for that help. So, I would go to AAs and I would listen to all these people telling their stories how they did things and that, and I would try things
that they tried and still it didn’t – I’m not saying anything bad about it or against it, but it just didn’t work for me.

All the *Kehte-ayak* supported efforts to harmonize Indigenous methods with western approaches. Although they confirmed that Indigenous approaches were most effective, they acknowledged that confidentiality, training, and effective medications were credible western ways that work well. *Kehtehi* Irene reported her appreciation of some western ways:

Anyway, when I think of it, I had learned so many things within myself to benefit me. And I admired my grandfather being a chief and I admired the white people the way they handled their education. I used to admire, like, oh, how nice. You can teach people. And that kind of stayed in my mind that one day I would teach. And I taught for a while.

Although there are credible elements to western aftercare, the overall difference in ontology prevents full efficacy. *Kehtehi* Florence recognizes that addiction is not merely the need for or wanting of a substance as the current western medical model follows. She found that many Indigenous peoples tried to walk the ‘White Road’; however, the trauma experienced prevented them from fully assimilating:

When they came out of residential school, they wanted to work, get married. Then they wanted to live what you call a normal life, because they see the white society living a normal life. … So even [with] the absence of the alcohol there was no - they had no self-esteem themselves necessarily, or no voice and no way to speak up and defend themselves or their family.
*Kehtehi* Florence alludes to two metaphors, the ‘Trauma achak (spirit)’ and ‘Walking the White Road,’ as factors in addiction even when some Indigenous peoples attempted to assimilate to white societal ways. People trying to integrate had no protection or support from the racial discrimination that took place in the society in which they were trying to assimilate. Struggling against the ‘Trauma achak (spirit),’ they also face the forced assimilation that may have removed one’s volition or freewill, a protective factor in keeping the ‘achak (spirit) connection open.’

**Freewill.**

*Kehtehi* Florence provides many teachings on the concept of freewill. Freewill in Indigenous teachings is placed in a larger context of care that allows for mistakes by the person on the healing path and for an accepting, non-judgmental approach by those walking the path with the person healing. *Kehtehi* Florence sees the role of the *Kehtehi* as helper, not healer, and a person’s freewill as necessary to the healing process:

And so, when you look at freewill, if you teach people about respecting others, and then you're allowed to do whatever you want, but you're also understanding that my behaviour must respect you, right? And so, I'm free to do whatever I want, but I need to be respectful in my interactions. And so, when residential school came in and respect was lost. And I said, “if I was in your shoes, I'd probably do the same darned thing.” And I said, “I'm not here to say it's good, bad, or indifferent. I'm here to work with you and this is what - these are the things that we're going to do when you're ready.” And I tell them, it all has to do with freewill. When you're ready. I said, “I'm here any time.” And if I'm not able to help you, I'll send you to someone. … Yeah. This way, nobody will say
you healed me. No, it's your free will, the medicine that wants to work with you, same with Creator.

*Kehtehi* Florence’s role as the helper was described as a channel with the Universe in wanting to work with someone. By incarnating the actions of the Universe, *Kehtehi* Florence’s role becomes the facilitator for a meeting between the *maskihkiy* (medicine) and the person requiring the treatment. She also identifies this work as amongst the Creator, the person seeking help, and herself. An Individual’s freewill allows the *achak* (spirit) connection to open and the connection between the *maskihkiy achak* (medicine spirit) or the Creator to take place through the conduit of the *Kehte-ayak*.

In my conversations with *Kehtehi* Preston, he explained that forcing aftercare approaches that do not fit with someone’s worldview would not be accepted when the person does not exercise freewill. *Kehtehi* Preston explained this teaching through his own experience:

And I think just in introducing and … don’t force anybody, don’t force anybody, just break it to them gently. A lot of them will never, ever attend. …That's the only thing, learn at your own pace, and don’t be forced into accepting anything that's trying to be introduced or taught. Let a person learn at their own pace and in their own way. Not everybody's going to accept it. … it's just like we'll say one hundred years ago when residential school was starting to come up. We don’t want to do the same thing to people trying to learn it. Not like getting your ears pulled or your hair pulled or a kick in the ass or locked outside.
Kehtehi Preston expressed the need to introduce ceremony to people slowly, confident that supporting their free will allow them to make healthy decisions. Supporting agency contradicts the forced assimilation experienced by many in residential school. Suggesting that one be open to the idea of the maskihkiy’s (medicine’s) healing power begins the process of n’duwihitowin (healing each other).

When asked if he prayed in residential school, Kehtehi Preston shared that residential school attempted to force him to go against what he innately felt to be of a spiritual nature. He was coerced to follow their directives about how to meet spiritual needs:

Carrie - So, did you pray in residential school?

Kehtehi Preston - Yes, through the Bible. Yeah, through the Bible only but that’s a different story altogether.

Carrie - But that wasn’t your own prayer, right? That was forced prayer in a formal sort of way, structured. They told you how to pray and what to say.

Kehtehi Preston - Yeah.

Carrie - So, did you find yourself speaking to [the universe] when you were in residential school or having those moments?

Kehtehi Preston - Uh huh, yeah. ... So, there was always a window on the east side. Yeah. And I always looked at that star. I never called it God cause, I don’t know. I was really messed up in prayers, I guess you would say. We'll say most of my life until I found [this old way].
The school was teaching him to pray, but it was not natural; it was not Kehtehi Preston’s way, so he prayed on his own—to his own Creator. As a child, he attempted to meet his spiritual needs through his own methods, while the residential school staff attempted to assimilate him into their ways. Once free from residential school, Kehtehi Preston made it clear that he did not practice Indigenous ways immediately or easily. When he began attending ceremony, his initial experience was problematic and turned him away from ceremony for a while. After much encouragement from Kehte-ayak, he began picking up his culture, under his own freewill:

And there, I remember back in ’91, I was invited to a sweat ceremony, yeah. And I went. And they laughed a lot you know and joked around a lot. It was good, like I enjoyed that. But it was in between rounds. They really cooked me. I don’t know. That really turned me off. That was a big turnoff for me. I didn’t even want to go to any other sweat, nothing. If that’s how it is then that’s not how I want to learn, you know. And I was red all over, red polka dots all over my body, yeah. And they all laughed at me. … Now I’m trying to get to know my culture. When I first went to sweats, I didn’t know how to speak my tongue. I didn’t even understand it. And then I just kept on asking, “What does that mean? What does that mean?” you know. And so, through the years, at least now I can speak it.

The metaphor of picking up his culture asserts that Kehtehi Preston is taking hold of the concept of an Indigenous culture. Culture is understood as a physical item that can be selected and manipulated and possessed. He is physically selecting something that was removed from him through ‘cultural genocide’ (killing off culture) and choosing to
express it so that others can see. Picking up his culture represents a way of being that can be reclaimed. *Kehtehi* Preston referenced ceremony as an element of his culture that he opted for. He explains ceremony:

I didn’t know of it [ceremony] and I'm serious when I say even today I still don’t know because it's being pushed away constantly. And how can you tell somebody, how can you share with anybody that pushes it away? So, it's pretty much everybody has to learn on their own and it's either you participate or you don’t.

I asked if ceremony was being ignored by Canadian society because of the effects of colonization, *Kehtehi* Preston was clear in his response:

Uh huh, yeah. I heard that many times. I was even told straight, I was even, — they raised their voice to me saying that it [ceremony] was wrong and maybe a devil worshipping kind of thing. I don’t find it that way. There's a lot of comfort in it. I wouldn’t be sitting here talking to you today if I didn’t participate in the beliefs that [*Kehte-ayak*] carry.

*Kehtehi* Rose and her mom made the decision to pick up their culture and expressed their spiritual needs together, yet separately, in a harmonized way:

And then going to a sweat made me feel good you know because I wasn’t forced to go to a sweat. And in our teachings, we’re not forced to do anything. It’s up to you if you want to do this. And, but I’m not condemning the church because I went to church with my mom when she was alive and she’d come with me to a
sweat even though she was a Christian. But she would sit outside and pray, outside the sweat. So, we did things together, before she passed away.

Kehte hi Rose’s account provides insight and hope into possible options for people healing from addiction through a harmonized approach. The concept of freewill challenges the practice of using guilt as a tool for healing.

The ‘Intervention’ method used to confront ‘addicts’ to change is a good example of forcing someone to attempt recovery. An ‘Intervention’ is a confrontational approach used to make the person with an unmanageable addiction feel guilty enough to go to treatment. Once finished with symptoms of withdrawal, the person is expected to navigate aftercare services through prescribed measures such as attending group meetings once per week and following western prescribed approaches. Both detox and aftercare services should be provided based on freewill. This does not mean that we allow people who are a danger to themselves or others to make unsafe decisions. Instead, we provide options for them to choose their path in healing through relationship. By introducing a relational ontology, people working toward pimatisiwin (good way/good life) may begin to understand their interconnection with others and make choices that align more with their ‘spiritual calling’ and their own ancestral knowledge. Harmonizing Indigenous and western approaches means to privilege spiritual needs and respect multiple points of relationship.

Need to Harmonize Ways (Hope and Creativity)

Hope is an important element in all healing. Hope and creativity together are the fourth element the spirit needs. Harmonizing both approaches may provide optimism for
Indigenous peoples who find the ‘white road ineffective.’ Kehtehi Rose clearly stated that although she did not find the ‘white road’ successful, she found strength in ceremony:

And when I first got out, I had three parole officers. One would be for about a month and then another one, another one. And the last one he was kind of strict and he said, “Well Rose,” I went in and reported, “Well Rose have you been to any AA meetings,” I said listen, I didn’t care what he said, … I’m not going to AA or any rehab. I said because I’ve tried it once and it didn’t work for me, I’m going to follow the [Kehte-ayak] teachings that they taught me.

As previously stated, the Kehte-ayak in this study volunteered because they wanted to create knowledge for aftercare services that supported both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples healing from addiction. During the process, they asserted that western ways alone are not always effective. Through their own stories, they shared that harmonizing Indigenous and western approaches helped them heal and/or helped others heal. The Reflexive Reflection suggests that understanding ‘achak (spirit) interference’ and ‘achak (spirit) connection closing’ as metaphors, acknowledges that the ‘White Road’ is not working. ‘Harmonizing methods,’ may then, be more effective for aftercare services and thus can provide hope for all people healing from addiction.

Kehtehi Preston echoed Kehtehi Rose’s sentiments when he stated that a western approach did not address his spiritual needs. His role as client was superseded by the role of helper placed on him by the other clients. He was unable to explore any spiritual purpose, meaning, or avenues of forgiveness because he was too busy helping others:
Treatment, I had to go through treatment to understand myself. When I didn’t – I never understood it before. But treatment didn’t help out in the spiritual side. Sure, it helped out with … No not the cravings. … I don’t know what it was. Like I just, even there at treatment, I felt more like a supportive person to all the clients, instead of being a client. I don’t know why, because I was just as fucked up as all of them.

In ceremony, you help others by helping yourself first. Humbly presenting yourself to the Creator strengthens the collective healing that can take place. *Kehtehi* Preston experienced the western notion of ‘expert’ when he went into treatment and he was expected to help others instead of working on his own healing as well. By being forced into the expert role as opposed to the healing role, *Kehtehi* Preston hampered his own progress. *N’duwihitowin* means healing each other. The process is not individual, whereby one person is the expert and people healing seek knowledge from them; the process is reciprocal. *Kehtehi* Preston revealed that he was requiring help much as the others but was expected to be the leader as opposed to a recipient for healing along side the others.

Through ceremony, *Kehtehi* Rose was able to walk towards *pimatisiwin* (good way/good life); however, she acknowledges that it does not work for everyone:

You know it’s so important that you deal with it and how you deal with it. The western way helps some people okay, and the Indigenous way helps some people. Sometimes it doesn’t work for our own people, the Indigenous way, and so they turn to other alternatives. Sixteen years is how long our culture and our teachings
and our traditional ways of life has helped me, and before that, I was always into my addictions.

The metaphor of ‘walking towards pimatisiwin’ declares that the tenor pimatisiwin (good way/good life) is a location that someone can reach through the vehicle of walking. This metaphor represents participating in and deciding upon behaviours that promote good well being. However, the path is not the same for everyone. Kehtehi Rose offers that people healing from addiction should explore different ways to find what works:

Yeah and to be kind. All those values that we have we never used before. … I never knew about them until I started my walk. And it’s so simple and basic but we get confused. Well I did anyway, I got so confused, and the [Kehte-ayak] always told me, “Just take what you need, what you want and leave the rest behind,” they would tell me.

To find what works for reaching pimatisiwin, aftercare services should provide alternatives that respect many ways of knowing. Through colonization and forced assimilation, Indigenous ways of healing were almost eliminated. These ways may offer approaches of healing for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. A process of decolonizing aftercare approaches may provide effective healing alternatives that advance the field of addiction further than it has before. Kehtehi Rose states her reaction when she witnesses non-Indigenous peoples attend ceremony:

You know everything really got corrupted when we went to those schools. But we’re coming back up, we’re starting to rise you know and I love it when non-Aboriginals come to our sweats, or ceremonies, it’s so nice to see.
Indigenous ways are not only for Indigenous peoples. Integrating a relational ontology and observing the four elements of relationship can be conveyed to anyone. Addressing spiritual needs in aftercare services is an essential part for pimatisiwin – good life for Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples healing from addiction. The calling to decolonize aftercare is not a singular invention I have developed. I have learned that there was a greater calling for this research, a calling from the ancestors.

**Ancestral calling.**

Tuhiwai Smith and Kovach note that the community will respect the research when the researcher’s intention is deemed to be beneficial. Before I began this study, I took my intention to the late Kehtehi Howard Cameron. He confirmed that my study was valid and that I could begin. Before my first conversation with Kehtehi Florence, she informed me that the ancestors told her she had to raise the pipe for my study. Kehtehi Florence and I sat in pipe praying to the ancestors for guidance. As Kehtehi Florence walked me through the process, I gained a deeper understanding of the ceremony and requesting guidance. She acknowledged that our ancestors had presented themselves—her ancestors as well as mine. Upon hearing her words, I too could feel more than just the two of us in the room. Indigenous methodologies ask the researcher to share the intention with the Kehte-ayak and confirm that they want to be a part of the study. Before each conversation, I announced my purpose to the Kehte-ayak and reaffirmed what I set out to do. After declaring my aims and background to Kehtehi Irene, she revealed that the Creator must have had a hand in us coming together:

Yeah, that’s – I think to really look at what you're interested in, you know, it’s amazing how the Creator works. We had a [Kehte-ayak] meeting not too long
ago and this is what I brought up. Like it’s nice to have addictions counsellor, 

*Moniyaw* [white person], but …. 

*Keh-te-hi* Irene explained that she brought forward to a community meeting the idea of harmonizing Indigenous methods with the currently established western methods. Shortly after that meeting, she heard about the call for *Kehte-ayak* needed for this study. 

*Keh-te-hi* Irene believed that her request to harmonize approaches was answered through her participation in this study. *Keh-te-hi* Preston alluded to the notion that by returning to ceremony, he was returning to a calling or an approach that he inherently felt would help: 

You know what worked for me was bringing me back to, what do you call ceremonies, getting them back into ceremonies. That was a big part in my past that disappeared, we’ll say, or taken away or never introduced, yeah. So, I never knew of it. 

*Keh-te-hi* Preston’s experience in residential school removed much knowledge or understanding he had about Indigenous healing practices. The more he was exposed to different methods, the more he understood their efficacy. He tried to learn as much as possible about different approaches and expressed how for the most part, they just felt right. *Keh-te-hi* Preston’s remarks were powerful in that the notion of introducing Indigenous ways was not a thought that I had but a ‘resonance within my achak (spirit).’ 

*Keh-te-hi* Florence asserts that western people had their own Indigenous knowledge keepers; however, their wisdom had been suppressed and lacks acknowledgement. She expressed what I was hoping would be one of the outcomes of
the study in that I too would like to see non-Indigenous peoples benefiting from these
time honoured and effective approaches. *Kehtehi* Florence offered the following
outcome:

And maybe it's through the Indigenous perspective that we can help heal the
western perspective. … Because I believe, their knowledge is there. All those
ancient things that they thought … the stuff that they thought they lost, it's not
lost, it's there somewhere. You just have to know where to look. Like the
women in BC, those Indigenous women, they hid their stuff in their baskets. It's
to know how to read that basket, and women were not seen in the same way as
the way the westerners saw them. Their women took a backseat - we never.

In her account, she took my desire for a harmonized approach even deeper by suggesting
a need to explore western-based Indigenous ways of healing. As she said those words, I
felt a calling to seek more information about my own lineage and the Indigenous ways
practiced, before colonization, in Scandinavia. Again, our two resonating energies
harmonized. This resonance can be described through the metaphor of ‘Ancestors
Calling.’ The metaphor of the non-corporeal entity is given a voice and provides a
strong urge or summons toward a larger purpose. The vehicle of calling announces a
grand design or plan – in other words, the universe’s intention.

*Kehtehi* Florence provided the following teaching about the movement toward
self-determination for Indigenous peoples and toward harmonizing:

And a long time ago, 500 years ago the Hopi … had a prophecy that when the
eagle landed on the moon the rock would come back, and then I was thinking,
well how can an eagle fly all the way and come back. But the ship that went there was called the Eagle. And it brought the rock back, and it said that's when we'll start to wake up, get our voices back and we'll start our healing. But it will look like a great big scab, and it will look ugly. But then we'll start to clean that ugliness away. And it's us that will do it.

Kehtehi Florence’s allegory uses an eagle landing on the moon to describe the actual event of the United States lunar module named Eagle that traveled there. The symbolic correlation of the two eagles is the prophecy that Indigenous peoples would re-acquire self-determination. Within that decade, Canadian Indigenous men were permitted to retain their status when they voted or attended post-secondary schooling; all of which supported the process of self-determination and the first steps toward healing. The Eagle represented the lunar module and the story depicted the renewal of self-determination. Her teaching included the allegory that Indigenous peoples would be the ones to peel the scab back and clean the ugliness away. Decolonizing aftercare through harmonized approaches is a process of reconciliation that fulfills this prophecy.

As allies in the process of decolonization and re-engaging self-determination, it is imperative that we develop academic space for Kehte-ayak voices to be present in research. Their connection to the first two levels of insight above the earth provides metaphors and guidance that bring hope and inspire creativity. For example, Kehtehi Florence speaks about the process of moving forward in harmonizing and decolonizing:

It's a sad time, yet a good time, because you're shedding the old and you're going to put on the new. But then you have to walk over that old stuff to get to the new.
Moving forward in enriching aftercare services helping professionals should undertake the attitude of functioning jointly. The metaphor describes functioning jointly through ‘two hands working together.’

**Two hands working together.**

The metaphor ‘Two Hands Working Together’ elicits an image of shared collaboration. Hands being the synecdoche (part of the whole representing the whole) create a metaphor, the tenor of working is an action by a group a people, the vehicle to invoke physical effort to achieve a purpose, and the imagery of a collective effort. This collective effort invokes the feeling of hope. People healing from addiction may feel a sense of hope in knowing that shared collaboration is required to help *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction and that they are not doing it alone. Kehtehi Rose suggested that there is very little connection to each other when using western approaches because the process for healing from addiction is most often independent. When people experience the connected feeling achieved through Indigenous approaches, they feel a sense of hope literally at a cellular level. Hope is not merely a cognitive process. One should feel hope from the inside out. The spirit should feel the hope as well:

Yeah. And see when you work together, everything works all the time. But when it’s separated like this, there’s no connection you know. And you know a lot of times, even non-Aboriginal, especially in [prison] there’s women that come and see me you know and they’re right in there with the smudging and they tell me that, “Oh I feel good, you know let’s smudge.”

Kehtehi Preston also urged for balance in aftercare approaches.
Yeah, it's balanced. And the way I see it to be is that we need to include both western treatment, everything western and Indigenous. You have to keep them balanced. Same with traditional medicines, they need to be balanced. You need to practise both, today anyway. I'm not sure if everybody will agree with me with that. But I've seen that it worked. It works that way. We all need to work as one, yeah.

In harmonizing approaches, Kehtehi Irene articulated the metaphor of two hands working together through a conversation she had with care workers in her community:

And I said it’s nice to have you working in our reserve, I said, but it’s always nice to have our First Nation people to work with our people. I said there’s two hands, they have to join together, and the First Nation and the non – like the white people. I said I’m not trying to discriminate against you, I said I'm trying to make my point. I said how nice it would be to work together, you know, as [Kehte-ayak].

Kehtehi Rose provided an example of what harmonizing approaches may look like through the example of her experience with her mother:

And so, you know it builds that bond. Like I said you can go to church and respect that you know, and you can go to a sweat and respect that. Put them together, you know. If you feel like going to church Sunday go to church and pray, if you want to go to a sweat go to a sweat, you know what I mean. Put them together, put anything together and it makes it good.
Kehtehi Florence pointed to a teaching about the four races on Earth and how each race has a specific approach to connecting with the Creator. She suggested that harmonizing approaches is what the Universe is expecting:

Yeah, because there are four races, each race was given a gift. When we come together this will be a heaven on earth. [Carrie - Because everybody's gifts should join collaboratively?] Yeah, it's like a wheel and those little cogs. That's who we are. When we all come together, we will be that mechanism that makes this place a heaven on earth, and we won't be depleting the resources on the earth anymore. We won't need to be a throwaway society anymore because we'll only take what we need, and we'll work with nature, and we will be able to hear her. The spirit world is but a veil, a very, thin, thin veil, and you know when we sit in that sacred place we will be able to see through that veil.

Kehtehi Irene expressed her appreciation for the aftercare services that are working toward harmonizing approaches:

A long time to learn. You know, you have to kind of always, kind of like your addictions. The addiction part you always have to master the two things. You know how it's going to help the people and how it's going to benefit them in a good way. Both in Moniyaw and traditional. You know. So, I'm very proud of all these treatment centres, they have their culture in their – they have sweats, which is nice. Yeah.

Harmonizing approaches is the next step in decolonizing and increasing efficacy in aftercare. However, a difference in ontology, racial narratives, and worldviews makes it
difficult for aftercare services to be effective for Indigenous peoples. Metaphors generated from the data reflection explain that ‘achak (spirit) interference’ led to ‘achak (spirit) distress’ and possible ‘achak (spirit) connection closing.’ The data also revealed that for some Indigenous peoples, the metaphor of ‘walking the White Road’ is not effective. Losing one’s culture, family connection, identity, and language through ‘generational trauma’ makes the issue of ‘walking toward pimatisiwin’ more complex. Essentially, the need to harmonize was made apparent through the ‘voices of the Kehte-ayak and ‘our ancestors’ calling.’ In the metaphor ‘voices of the Kehte-ayak voice is more than the vocalizations they physically delivered but represents the stories, the teachings, the wisdom they offered. The Kehte-ayak point out that their lessons are given to them by the Universe and Creator. To take this metaphorical understanding deeper, the notion of voice may also be the vocalization of the universe.

Ancestral calling, two hands working together, and harmonizing approaches are examples of the creativity required in decolonization. This form of creativity cannot be done without spiritual connection. Hope and creativity (the fourth spiritual need) are developed and maintained through the achak (spirit) connection. Spiritual maskihkiy (medicine) such as ceremony, cultural catalysts, and plants can be reintroduced to meet spiritual needs and build protective factors. Cultural catalysts are tools, customs, or activities that promote positive cultural experiences to meet spiritual needs by providing a sense of belonging, meaning, purpose, forgiveness, and connection. Plants, ceremony, and other relationship rituals support physiological rebuilding from cognitive distortions. Together, physiological rebuilding and meeting spiritual needs act to address spirit distress in a harmonized way.
In summary, my conversations with the Kehte-ayak and the teachings they shared were humbling. The Kehte-ayak expressed gratitude in being able to participate in this study. Most of them saw it as an opportunity to continue their own healing and felt comfortable with this research project. I believed our interactions exemplified Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) suggestion that research should be decolonizing, healing, transforming, and mobilizing. When one of the Kehte-ayak suggested that they felt that the process of the research study was healing for them, two other Kehte-ayak nodded in agreement. The next section reveals the major findings of the Reflexive Reflection in addressing spiritual needs through harmonizing methods to decolonize aftercare for people working toward pimatisiwin (good way/good life).

From this study, I will examine four of the key concepts that arose from my conversations with the Kehte-ayak – Calling the Achak (spirit) Back, Walking the Red Road, Amending Moniyaw ways, and N’duwihitowin (healing together).
CHAPTER 5: Our Journey (Major Findings and Discussion)

In this study, the Kehte-ayak offered candid depictions of how colonization interfered with Indigenous peoples’ ability to prevent or to lessen ‘achak (spirit) distress’ (addiction manifestation). Colonization inhibited Indigenous peoples from meeting spiritual needs and accessing Indigenous maskihkiy (medicines) to stave off addiction. In addition, deleterious residential school experiences introduced trauma and cognitive distortions initiating generational trauma. Stonechild (2016) notes, “Part of the difficulty for First Nations is the historical experience of colonization and racism that assaulted and demeaned their identity. This damaged their sense of self worth and value of life” (p. 89). He explains that “Spiritual illness emerges in the form of symptoms, including substance abuse, existence of gangs, destruction of relationships, family dysfunction, anti-social behaviour, and suicide” (p. 89). Within Their Journey I learned that western-based approaches may be ineffective for healing from addiction, that there may be an achak (spirit) hindering the achak (spirit) connection, perpetuating addiction, that colonial influences and policies may be preventing Indigenous peoples’ capacity to heal from addiction, and that the personified spirit/s supporting addiction may be tethered to a trauma achak (spirit). Through their healing journey, the Kehte-ayak felt compelled to offer their stories of hope and the need to harmonize approaches to help others heal from ‘achak (spirit) distress’ (addiction). From their teachings I found metaphors to conceptually understand how nugaska (stopping and confronting) ‘achak (spirit) distress’ (addiction) can happen through relationalism. Examining metaphor, I learned that multiple achaguk (spirits) might reside in front of the achak (spirit) connection, thus preventing one’s soul from communicating with the Universe. This blockage increases
one’s risk for relapse because it prevents healing. Through Reflexive Reflection, four major findings support the need to harmonize Indigenous based and western-based approaches to nugaska (stopping and confronting) ‘achak (spirit) distress’ (addiction) through ‘cleansing the achak (spirit) connection.’ This cleansing opens the achak (spirit) connection, consequently promoting pimatisiwin (living a good life). By cleansing (discussed later) away the guardian achak/achaguk (spirit/spirits) and meeting spiritual needs, we call the ‘achak’ (spirit) back so that the connection can remain open and thus promote healing. Harmonizing approaches is thought to be effective for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples healing from addiction as opposed to using the approaches in isolation to nugaska (stopping and confronting) ‘achak (spirit) distress’ (addiction).

In this section, the major findings are delivered as metaphors with reference to the rationale and theoretical framework. From the Reflexive Reflection process, the four major findings for nugaska (stopping and confronting) ‘achak (spirit) distress’ (addiction) were: Calling Achak (spirit) Back, Walking the Red Road, Amending Moniyaw (white man) Ways, and N’duwihitowin (healing together) (see Figure 10). These metaphors are discussed in relation to the Kehte-ayak’s teachings and through the perspectives of trauma informed, culturally responsive, and neuromodulation work in aftercare services. The major findings reflect the transforming and mobilizing processes of Indigenous methodologies, as discussed in the Rationale section (see Figure 2) and answer the study’s question of What can I learn from the Kehte-ayak in harmonizing approaches to nugaska (stopping and confronting) ‘achak (spirit) distress’ (addiction).
Figure 10 Illustration of Key Findings

The first major finding to *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) *achak* (spirit) distress (addiction) is the metaphor ‘Calling the *Achak* (spirit) Back.’ Within the context of this metaphor, people are understood to be living with or healing from addiction because it is a lifelong journey of episodic waning. ‘Calling the *Achak* (spirit) Back’ respects a trauma informed approach by acknowledging that the trauma interrupted the *achak* (spirit) connection to the Universe’s *achak* (spirit). ‘Calling the *Achak* (spirit) Back’ represents the act of accessing the spiritual connection between one’s soul and the
Universe’s essence. The connection is rebuilt by cleansing away the trauma and meeting spiritual needs through *maskihkiy* (medicine) to strengthen protective factors. Ceremony, cultural catalysts, providing a sense of belonging, and avenues for forgiveness are some examples of *maskihkiy* (medicine). Smudging and ritual are *maskihkiy* (medicine) that may rebuild physiological interruptions.

Before addiction, *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) is thrown or invited on to a person, causing *achak* (spirit) interference. Long-term exposure to *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) and/or a lingering guardian *achak* (spirit) as disruptive factors causes the connection to close, leading to spiritual distress and facilitating addiction. *Maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) may be one event (or an accumulation of events) that have gone unaddressed or an accumulation of events. The guardian *achak* (spirit) remaining from the *maskihkiy* (medicine) spirit that was called upon or manifested to help address the *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) in turn becomes *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine). Spiritual distress is expressed through many symptoms, one being addiction. The addiction is addressed by cleansing away the guardian *achak/achaguk* (spirit/spirits), cleansing the soul, meeting spiritual needs, and strengthening protective factors, thus thwarting relapse. *Maskihkiy* (medicine) as a protective factor strengthens healing by meeting spiritual needs to address disruptive factors caused by *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine). There is a cyclical nature in using *maskihkiy* (medicine) as a protective factor. Plant, spiritual, and physiological *maskihkiy* (medicine) such as cultural activities, ceremony, and *N’duwihitowin* (healing together) reduce spirit disruptions and thwart future disturbances as the spiritual needs are met and continue to be met. *Nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction is supported by increasing *maskihkiy*
(medicine) acting as protective factors and honouring the personified achak/s (spirit/s) covering the achak (spirit) connection.

Metaphorically, ‘calling the achak (spirit) back’ represents the process required to heal from addiction and trauma. This conceptual metaphor explains the activities the person healing from addiction enacts to assist with physically opening a gateway for communication between one’s exuberance of life and the Universe. It represents immersing oneself in continued healthy processes. The opening is an invitation for the Universe to connect with the soul to uncover one’s purpose and teachings. Two actions were identified to assist in opening the achak (spirit) connection and keeping it open—cleansing the achak (spirit) connection and meeting spiritual needs. Kehtehi Irene recalls a conversation she had with her uncle who provided an analogy of the process of cleansing:

I had problems with one person, because one day she's walking sober, the next day she's down. …. He said, you take a bottle of beer, a beer bottle, he said. Take it. Don't clean it out, he said. And make sure there's a lot of scum, all kinds of scum in that bottle, he told me. And you know that impressed me. Why a dirty bottle? And then he said, take a pitcher full of clear water, he said, and go to her and you set that beer bottle, the dirty bottle, and your water in front of you. Make her sit in front of you, facing you. And you talk to her. When you're talking to her, she'll listen, he told me. … And you put your beer bottle, the dirty bottle, he said, and your water, and you lift that pitcher, and you tell her, look at this water, this clean water. I'm going to pour it in this dirty bottle. And you pour in the bottle. The water will go up this much [used her fingers to show a
small amount]. He said, stop, and tell her, do you look - do you find anything different. And she'll first - her first answer will be no. And then pour again a little bit, he said, and then ask her again, you see the difference? And she looked, you know, she really looked at that bottle, and she seen that scum lifting up from the bottom, and he said, the more you pour the clean water, he said, that scum will come up. ... And you ask her, what do you see? And she'll tell you, my life. That's what he told me. Keep on pouring it and pouring it, he said. All that scum will come up, he said, and it will just overflow, and you'll have a clean bottle. ... [It is] the cleaning, of your whole spirit, your whole life.

Kehteθi Irene’s uncle metaphorically compares the contents of a beer bottle to the messiness of one’s soul and closed achak (spirit) connection. Purifying where one’s soul resides, the gateway to the Universe, and the potentially multiple guardian achak (spirit) are central to nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction. Cleansing the achak (spirit) connection also means acknowledging the presence of the personified achaguk (spirits) blocking the connection from linking. In this metaphor, the spirit is personified as being excised. Viewed as an embodied entity, the guardian achak’s (spirit’s) presence and purpose are acknowledged and then invited to leave through ritual. By cleansing, the achak (spirit) and achak (spirit) connection are rid of the guilt, shame, and cognitive distortion brought on by multiple other achak (spirit) beings. Duran (2006) proposes that acknowledging the achak (spirit) and giving it what it needs is more relational and less pathological. He explains, “The Western interventions rely on eradicating pathology, while the model I am presenting relies on relating to energies with consciousness in a manner that will bring harmony to the person’s life” (p. 110). Relating energies with
consciousness follows the process of respecting the natural law of relationships through reciprocity, relevance, respect, and responsibility. Thus, a key step in opening the achak (spirit) connection and helping nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction is first, recognizing that there is a guardian achak (spirit) in front of the achak (spirit) connection and second, honouring the relationship. A western conceptual understanding would be that this process is eliminating or detoxifying unwanted elements from the body and strengthening neural-pathways.

*Kehtehi* Rose explained that when using substances for the first time, the ‘first high’ you receive from a drug is the maximum effect you would receive from that drug. Understanding addiction through relationalism helps the person healing from addiction believe that the guardian achak (spirit) called upon the first time, did their job, and will not perform as well next time without respecting relationship protocols. Explained earlier by *Kehtehi* Preston, maskihkiy (medicines) used in ceremony are honoured for their work and have no reason to remain until called upon again. Respecting the relationship prevents addiction because the maskihkiy (medicine) was respected for its contribution. When the achak maskihkiy (spirit medicine) is called upon and not respected, the person afflicted should repair the relationship in the best way possible. The guardian achak (spirit) will linger until the relationship has been acknowledged and honoured. This study argues that to strengthen the ability to acknowledge and thus honour the achak (spirit), spiritual needs must start to be met. Spiritual needs met through maskihkiy (medicine) such as ceremony, cleansing, or cultural catalysts strengthen protective factors and help to open the achak (spirit) connection and keep it open.
Meeting spiritual needs.

Achak (spirit) interference and achaguk (spirits) guarding the connection are not metaphors for immoral behaviour choices but metaphysical experiences that affect our capacity for pimatisiwin (living a good life). Richardson (2002) explains that we have a moral code that is connected to the soul. When we do not follow this moral code, our resilience is hampered. Resilience prevents or hampers achak (spirit) interference. Following natural law strengthens our relationship with spiritual beings and develops the soul’s ability to communicate with the Universe. Revealing the moral code is done by connecting with the soul. Kehtehi Rose recalls her experience of aligning the greater achak (spirit) with her achak (spirit) (soul):

But when I was ready to straighten out my life and that and wanted help, you know, and knowing that the western way didn’t help me before, I decided I would try the traditional way of healing. And when I did that that’s what helped me out a lot, because I understood you know what the [Kehtehi] were saying and what ceremonies I needed to take and that spirituality was the most important thing you know in my healing of addictions. … And one night I stood by the tree, I had my hand like this and I was praying and I said Creator I give you my life, please help me, whatever it is I have to do in this life try and help me. You know what I did, what happened? Something went through me and that thought came to me and said ‘spiritual awakening.’ Yeah, it really happened to me. And when that thought came to me and said spiritual awakening, I said oh that’s what it means in AA, spiritual awakening. An energy of some sort came right through my whole body. … And all of that weight that I had carried was gone and now I
thank you Creator, grandmothers, grandfathers. And that’s – and that feeling I can’t describe it, it’s such a beautiful feeling. I felt so good and after I had that, everything came into place. And my life – I don’t crave or have relapse since I had that awakening and I gave my life to that one up there.

The achak (spirit) awakening experienced by Kehtehi Rose was profound. Once aligned with her achak (spirit) connection, she felt confident in nugaska (stopping and confronting) her addiction. Zukav (1989) echoes the notion that when we do not meet our spiritual needs, we may suffer with addiction; to prevent this, he encourages aligning with the soul’s purpose. Mate’s (2003, 2008) years of work support looking at addiction not as a disease, but as caused by suffering and spiritual emptiness. Kehtehi Rose aligned herself with her achak’s (spirit’s) needs and now helps others meet their spiritual needs by harmonizing Indigenous and western approaches to heal from addiction.

Spiritual needs for this study are categorized as love and belonging, forgiveness, purpose and meaning, and hope and creativity. An ability to address spiritual needs of love and belonging and forgiveness through maskihkiy (medicine) are protective factors in keeping the connection open. Most authors in the field of addiction use these terms to describe ‘self,’ ‘emotional,’ or ‘mental’ needs. None of the authors I found specifically called them ‘spiritual needs’ or identifies forgiveness as a type of need. One reason for this oversight may be understood through Thomas Hardy’s (2004) observation that the term ‘psychology’ originally meant ‘the study of the soul.’ Over the 18th and 19th centuries, psyche came to mean ‘self,’ ‘mind,’ or ‘behaviour,’ moving away from a religious or spiritual concept. For example, counsellors use ‘scientific knowledge’ to change ‘behaviour’ (Thomas Hardy). Therefore, counsellors seek to help the client meet
‘behavioural’ needs. Duran (2006) himself proposes that when the term spirit is not well received, then psyche should be used. In this study, the term spirit or soul is reinstated to reflect a relational perspective and to respect the Kehte-ayak’s teachings. To experience the impact of viewing the achak (spirit) as the neurological processes, I encourage you to replace the term ‘spirit’ with neurological processes. Does this western interpretation substantiate the findings for you or does ‘achak (spirit)’ resonate more? Harmonizing approaches honours both ways of knowing, thus strengthening collective healing for all.

Maskihkiy (medicine) to strengthen protective factors refers to loving oneself and having a sense of belonging with others. Maskihkiy (medicine) supports the ability to cleanse lingering guardian achaguk (spirits) from the achak (spirit) connection. The following four sections highlight the spiritual needs met through maskihkiy (medicine) as directed by the Kehte-ayak’s teachings. The categories do not represent any order; however, the Kehte-ayak suggested that forgiveness comes after loving oneself.

**Love and Belonging.**

The spiritual need for love and belonging encompasses a deep feeling of attachment and affection from and for others. Kehtehi Keith points out that

Then you have sagihitowin, love, tipeneetagosihin belonging, which is a measured amount of value on something that you have on something. So, you have a measured value within a Nation of people with the idea of belonging. For example, we say “egota ka ochi tipeneetagosiyan” as belonging to one’s Nation. We tend to say from where do you belong, you know, and that type of thing.
A sense of love and belonging is not a superficial attachment but an acknowledgement of devotion to and from family, community, ancestors, and universe. Feelings of aloneness are mitigated by feeling loved and belonging to another. Looking after a plant or animal for one year is a typical goal presented to people healing from addiction. The activity supports building a relationship with another and developing an unconditional connection or bond. The bigger lesson is to love oneself because caring for another takes responsibility and the failing of an unconditional relationship unveils feelings of shame and guilt. Additionally, tending to something else’s needs creates opportunity for the person healing to resonate with another.

The Kehte-ayak spoke about the importance of projecting love onto the person who is healing from addiction. Moreover, a sense of community is created through a non-judgemental, accepting presence. Kehtehi Irene shares her story of demonstrating humility and love:

When you tell them that you care and love them, that you want to share with what knowledge you have, you know they seem to open … they know that they can depend on you. … It's very important to make them feel wanted, that they're not down here and you're up here. Yeah. Even there to … I always tell them that so many times myself, you peg me as perfect. I'm not perfect. You know. I'm just like the next person. I said, I fall on my face so often, I said. But little do you people know, I said, I struggle to bring myself back up. I have to build my self-esteem, I said, and that's what you lack when you're under addictions, you know, lack that self-esteem. You put yourself this way, I said. Nobody done that. I said it's the addictions. And they all agree that it's true. It's true what
you're saying that - ya I do feel rotten. I feel unwanted. I said, don't feel like
that. Maybe here, I said, on Earth, people don't listen to you, but I said, there is
one, a higher power, I said. He listens to you, no matter at what stage you are, he
never let's you fall or not forgive you. He's always there to pick you up, I said.
Anyway, I said. If you stumble and you look up to the higher power, I said, he
will pick you up. He will guide you. He will walk with you, you know. Yeah.

Addiction may stem from attempting to fill the need for love and belonging through
substances or behaviours that activate the reward system. Trauma or deleterious
incidents and behaviours may make a person feel unlovable or disconnected from their
collective. This study finds that meeting the spiritual need of love and belonging by
blending Indigenous and western ways may strengthen protective factors, thus nugaska
(stopping and confronting) addiction. Integrating a relational belief and Indigenous
epistemologies with western-based systems creates a paradigm that honours all ways of
being and knowing. The relational base takes the pathology out of the healing process
and lessens the level of guilt and shame held by the person healing. Meeting the need for
love and belonging creates a powerful connection, this connection that helps to
acknowledge the achak (spirit) guarding the achak (spirit) connection and to honour its
purpose. Believing that you will not be rejected for baring all digressions creates a
container for honest reflection. The honest reflection supports the humble acceptance of
the manifested achak (spirit) in front of the connection. Understanding that an achak
(spirit) is hindering the connection to the Universe and that achak (spirit) had a reason
for being their may provide relief when struggling to heal. By honouring the relationship
through ritual, the person healing can explore forgiveness. Forgiveness is more easily accepted when true intentions are revealed and cognitive distortions lifted.

**Forgiveness.**

Forgiveness loosely means to let go or to stop something – to stop blaming, to stop feeling, or to stop accusing. The Cree term *poone* means to quit, as Kehtehi Keith explains:

Now, to forgive somebody or forgiveness, we just say *poonenimew* or *pooneneeta*, quit thinking about it so much. Yeah. And so we used that *poone* - at the beginning of *pooneneetum*, and you could say, *poonimineege*, quit drinking. *Poonipeetau* quit smoking.

Theology, philosophy, education, psychology, and nursing all study the concept of forgiveness. The prevalent perspective in the field of addiction explains forgiveness through a Christian lens that signifies ‘letting go.’ This study views forgiveness as acknowledgement and letting go of transgressions, for self and others. Acknowledgement includes stopping and facing the transgression. Once faced, the person can understand the *maci-maskihkiy* (bad medicine) at play and let it go. For people healing from addiction, there is much to let go. Feelings of shame and guilt, memories or trauma, recollections of deleterious experiences, and cognitive dissonance that create false beliefs. Addiction expert Gabor Mate suggests that addicts place themselves in mental and emotional cages from years of guilt and shame stemming from conditional love experiences. Unconditional love and acceptance create an environment for releasing shame and receiving forgiveness. Self, others, ancestors, the universe, the
creator, and the unknown are areas for forgiveness. **Kehtehi** Florence’s story exemplifies the process of forgiveness of self and others:

And then I teach forgiveness, too. Because … if you don't forgive yourself and look at the actual person and not at the acts, and how pitiful that person is, you're not going to heal because you have that attachment. And it's that letting go and that unconditional love that you have for yourself. And for that person that's very pitiful that did those things. What happened to that person to get to where they are in life, eh?

**Kehtehi** Rose shares that she let go of the anger that she felt toward her mother when she forgave herself and her mother:

I hated her at the beginning, and then at the end I forgave her because I started learning about the teachings, our Aboriginal teachings. When she came and lived over here in Prince Albert, she only lived with us for 12 days and then she passed away, eh? So, I had no regrets because I had forgiven myself and then I could forgive her for all of what happened.

**Kehtehi** Preston shares a similar story about forgiveness of self and that guilty feelings take a long time to address, but that everything is forgivable:

Yeah. I still have a guilty conscious. [Laughs] I’m sure everybody does but it took me awhile, we'll say, to forgive myself and it really, really helped me with forgiving myself. … In my belief, it may not be for everybody the old ways of life, there's always room for forgiveness, even for murder.
*Kehtehi* Florence echoes the notion that guilty feelings may be hard to overcome and that people make it harder by holding on to misplaced guilt:

So she's taking the guilt on even though somebody else did the act, but she felt like she should've done something different.

Once you can forgive yourself, you can begin to forgive others. Forgiveness begins expanding to include family, community, ancestors, the universe, and creator. I asked *Kehtehi* Rose if a sweat, sun dance, or other ceremony, would help tap into being able to forgive yourself or being able to love yourself. She confirmed that was her experience:

And that’s what I would do. And I had a hard time forgiving, you know, because I couldn’t forgive myself right at the beginning, you know. But going to ceremonies and doing what I had to do, it became easier.

Forgiveness is more than stopping or letting go; it is acceptance. Acceptance is a process of making amends with the repetitive feelings we have associated with an event.

Through forgiveness or acceptance, we can help cleanse the *achak* (spirit) connection by acknowledging the relationship with the guardian *achak* (spirit) that is lingering at the connection. Forgiveness is not condoning what happened in the past but accepting the disrupted emotional attachment that the *achak* (spirit) brings and honouring the *achak’s* (spirit’s) needs through ritual. Once the *achak* (spirit) connection has been cleansed, there is an opening for one’s soul to communicate with the universe to seek one’s spiritual purpose.
**Purpose and meaning.**

Meeting spiritual needs helps cleanse the *achak* (spirit) connection and act as a protective factor to keep the connection open, thus assisting *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction. Keeping the connection open metaphorically represents the behaviours or actions required to maintain physical access to relationships beyond the corporeal self. A sense of purpose and meaning is listed as an inherent spiritual need that should be met to keep the connection open or strengthen the connection. Stonechild (2016) offers, “The purpose of our existence is to learn” (p.110). Damon, Menon, Cotton Bronk (2003) define purpose as “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self” (p. 121). Brendtro & Larson (2006) offer that empathy and service are connected to purpose. Purpose is intention whereas meaning is how we understand a situation, concept, or action. Richardson (2002) states that “Finding meaning and purpose in disruptions help value experiences” (p. 319). He further suggests that we can find meaning in the trauma to assist us in overcoming what happened. As previously stated, finding meaning in our trauma and uncovering the soul’s purpose enhance the process of resiliency. Kehtehi Keith asserts that:

> Purposeful thought and action is captured by *iteneetumowin*. The idea of knowledge is *kiskeneetumowin* but knowledge is not enough because you have to understand which is *nisitohtumowin*. *Nisitohta* means to understand. The Cree term is inclusive of meaning and understanding. The key behind that *nisitohta* is the middle stem *itohta*, which means to act or do something. *Nisitohtumowin* or
understanding is not simple contemplation, it is an action-oriented type of understanding.

I can infer from Kehtehi Keith’s teachings that purpose should accompany understanding and meaning. His explanation supports a consideration of purpose that is connected to the soul’s goal or the universe’s aim for the spirit. As the spirit connection is strengthened, the soul can once again connect to the universe and receive teachings and direction. Resilience grows when one’s sense of purpose and meanings are aligned with the universe’s purpose for us. Kehtehi Florence shares her story of aligning with the universe’s purpose for her:

With my experience, it's that beautiful energy, that beautiful spirit that comes within me. And it makes me feel light. It makes me feel loved, and all those good things, all those positive things. And you see things through a different lens at that time and your world changes. … When I started walking the medicine way, my eyes changed and I saw the medicines in 3D, so my eyes changed from that time on. And it's, at least from my own personal way of healing – that's the way I felt. It felt like something was lifted from my body and it was a euphoric feeling and I felt light. My whole body felt light. That heaviness was lifted and that healing happened through ceremonies.

Kehtehi Florence’s recollection explains the reciprocal nature of healing whereby she tapped into her sense of purpose, which helped strengthen her healing journey. Kehtehi Florence expands on the concept of purpose to explain how members of a community received their name and therefore their achak (spirit) direction:
And that's how they got their names. It came through dreams. The time of … the
time when the child is born could be nighttime, could be daytime, what was the
weather like? And … and all those things. … Yeah, because they go to a
different clan. And those clans are strong and they work together. They know
they have to work together to survive.

*Kehtehi* Florence is speaking about naming ceremonies. Ceremony generated traditional
names for new members and gave them a sense of purpose and belonging. Their titled
purpose aligned with a community’s need and the specific gifts that person would bring.
Knowing their purpose gave them a sense of belonging. *Kehtehi* Florence explained that
their gifts would extend to a new community when they married, fortifying the
community that they joined. Members would be welcomed into the community for their
unique gifts and assets.

People healing from addiction may lack a sense of purpose and are then asked to
conduct meaningful work to help increase their sense of connection to community.
Alcoholics Anonymous programs and addiction workers encourage people to be of
service. *Kehtehi* Preston shares how he asks people on the healing journey to chop
wood, hunt, and pick berries for the *Kehte-ayak*, as acts of service to assist them in
meeting the spiritual need for purpose and meaning. He explains that we cannot specify
someone’s sense of purpose; it takes meaningful work to discover it:

Yeah, I don't know if – I really think that … we all have it within us. Every one
of us has it within, it's just are we going to look for it? Are we going to find it?
Are we going to do something about it? I totally believe that everybody's got it
within them, yeah. … I tried west first. I went out to [*Kehte-ayak*] out there.
And then there were certain things that were said in a sweat, and I didn’t know how to take it. I didn’t know what they meant. And they said there’s – I carry something that a majority of all traditional people may or may not carry – yeah. And I’ve been just searching for it ever since.

Preston is a respected Kehtehi in many communities, yet he acknowledges that he is still seeking his purpose. He reiterates that his work is meaningful and that he engages in acts of service still, even though he remains on the journey trying to tap into his soul’s purpose. Kehtehi Florence suggests that accessing one’s purpose is not done quickly and that many teachings may be presented first:

But when a person is looking for their path and they go and ask for help, they will find those answers and they will know their path. Because all along your growing up there will be glimpses of your path in front of you, but a lot of people don’t see it, eh? But if you have a lot of unresolved issues, that will stop you from seeing your path. When I was young, I saw my path. Because I was able to do things that, a person of a young age shouldn't be able to know or do. So, you can take those messages and develop your path, and all along, I knew I was going to be a doctor and I thought it was the western medicine. But it's the traditional medicine because there are traditional healers on both sides of my family – on my dad's side and on my mother's side.

Richardson (2002) also offers that it is through these experiences that we find meaning and that tapping into our innate resilience, we will continue to bring clarity to our objective. Richardson’s (2002) notion that innate resilience is connected to the soul’s aim supports the Kehte-ayak’s teachings in that the universe, ancestors, animals, dreams,
and spirits help spread the signals of purpose. Kehtehi Rose submits that only through non-corporeal entities can we access the soul’s purpose:

So, you know, it's those grandmothers and grandfathers that tell us what our purpose in life is, those spirits. I didn't know what my purpose in life was a long time ago because I didn't know my culture then. And once I started walking my road, I started realizing, well, my purpose is to help people and do this kind of work I guess, you know. Therefore, only Creator, the grandmothers, grandfathers can show you what your purpose in life is. One thing a human being can tell you – they can tell you but maybe that's not your road. That's my own opinion, though. We all have different opinions. … Well, we all have a purpose in life and it’s up to us to find that purpose, right. And like my purpose, I believe is to go out there and teach and help you know people, direct them in the right direction if they want it, you know. You can’t force people to do what they don’t want to do. But if they come and ask, then we’re there to help. … I was very aggressive. And when I went to university I thought – when I started university, and I started my journey, I thought if I had a big mouth when I was drinking or drugging, why can't I have a big mouth now when I'm sober.

Kehtehi Florence speaks to the role of the Kehte-ayak in helping someone find their soul’s direction:

And when people ask and they're really confused you can call on help to help them find out what their path is. But what you need to do is to awaken their memories as they were growing up, to awaken those times, and to help them see. But my job is not to say, "This is what you're supposed to be doing," but it's to
awaken those moments in the past, and they'll see that, eh? But it's their choice on whether they want to....

From *Kehtehi* Florence’s description, we learn that *Kehte-ayak* are facilitators between the person seeking help and the universe. *Kehte-ayak* help to awaken the memories, experiences, dreams, and ancestral callings to deliver direction for where they should be going in the present. Awakening one’s sense of purpose is *maskihkiy* (medicine). *Kehtehi* Rose points out that if she can be assertive when she was drinking, then she also can be assertive when she is serving her soul’s purpose. Purpose supports hope and builds creativity.

**Hope and creativity.**

Confidence, anticipation, optimism, courage, and faith in a positive outcome is what we call hope. Traumatic events interfere with the belief that experiences will be different from what has taken place. Hope and creativity are combined as a spiritual need because they unite belief and inspiration. *Kehtehi* Keith teaches that

Hope . . . When we’re relying on others, we call that *uspenimowin* when we’re relying on each other. When there is a wish and expectation to carry out something *pugosenimowin* is used. …. Yeah. We call belief *tapugeneetumowin*. It comes from the word *tapwehin* meaning truth.

*Tapugeneetumowin* as belief is truth thinking.

I infer from *Kehtehi* Keith’s teachings that hope stems from the belief that the truth is transpiring. We therefore rely on the universe for hope. We believe what is happening is relational and trust that there is meaning to what is taking place. Creativity is the
soul’s ability to tap into the universe’s vibration and to express it to others. People healing from addiction and their caregivers often struggle with maintaining hope. The Kehte-ayak suggest that sharing their stories of when they lost confidence or when they developed optimism assists in developing hope in others. Kehtehi Florence shares the following example:

I share my story where I really lost hope. When my sister died, it took me ten years to recuperate. Yeah, so I shared that story and I share what I went through and how angry I was. You know, going through the grieving stages and not being able to let go and being angry at Creator too, eh? Telling Creator to come down and fight like a man.

Kehtehi Florence shared how during her healing journey her anger and vulnerability interrupted her faith. Through sharing, a connection is created, and people healing from addiction can develop hope. During the sharing circle, the Kehte-ayak engaged in a conversation about the importance of honest sharing:

Kehtehi Rose - I think basically it's just sharing stories of oneself, you know, and what they did. Like the methods that they used and their approaches and how did – I always get asked, "How did you do this?" And then I start telling my story and then you take it from there.

Kehtehi Preston - How I learned, it was with people who were quite open. … It's hard at times, yeah, and sometimes it might even take tears.

Kehtehi Rose - That's part of healing though.

Kehtehi Preston - Yeah, just be honest about everything.
Kehte Florence - Yeah, and I'm not there to make changes or to change anyone. I'm here just to make a difference. If they choose ... then it changes it for them, and that's what I tell them. “Oh, you healed me.” [They would say] I said, “No, you healed yourself.”

The Kehte-ayak also revealed that equally important to generating hope through shared stories is the power of ceremony. Kehtehi Irene shares what helps her maintain hope:

But that’s where my faith started, you know; it became stronger and stronger and as I walked, I learned to fast – fasting – and my faith became something that I could never let go. It is always with me and I found my culture.

Kehtehi Rose uses sweats to strengthen her faith:

They took that cigarette and they said, "Get ready, you're going to a ceremony."

So, they took me into a sweat and I said, "Well how do you pray?" They said, "Well what are you doing right now? You're asking me for help. You don't ask me for help, you ask that one up there." I said, "I don't believe in that one." And they said, “Well you need to have that faith.” … So, I went into a sweat and I let out everything. When I came out of that sweat I felt so good, like light, and I cried in there. And I said, "Can we have another sweat again?" He said “yeah, we can have one again tomorrow." So, they said to me, "They have tobacco and [coffee] downstairs. You go and get some and we'll put up another one."

And Kehtehi Preston offers what instills hope in him:

Spirit calling ceremonies would be first in my head and also through my heart. Participate, I can't force you to believe in it, but maybe one day you'll be a strong
believer like the way I turned out to be a strong believer. It's different and they're conducted differently. … That was a big one for me I guess because I didn’t believe in anything. I didn’t even know if I could believe. Yeah, I guess it was just that belief ….

More important than the approaches the Kehte-ayak use to develop and maintain hope, is the belief in the effects of hope. Kehtehi Rose teaches the following:

It’s like if you don’t believe in the Creator or God or however you want to call it, it’s not going to help you, you know you’re not going to go to church, you’re not going to do traditional or anything, you’re going to be stuck in the middle, right? Well that’s the same way with medicines, you have to have that belief, you know that it’s going to help you, it’s going to heal you, you know. And I have a strong belief in that, in the spirituality and the medicines hey, because I know it’s helped me.

Kehtehi Rose’s lesson helps deepen the understanding about cleansing the achak (spirit) connection. This study reasons that tending to spiritual needs is applying maskihkiy, otherwise known as good medicine, strengthening protective factors. A strong belief in the relationships created with the achak (spirit) covering the achak (spirit) connection and the ceremonies and medicines used to help clear the connection and keep it open is necessary for nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction.

Kehtehi Florence confirmed my observation that in healing from addiction we are trying to ‘call the spirit back’ and cleanse off the negative energy, which allows the people healing from addiction to protect themselves and work toward pimatisiwin.
‘Cleansing the energy’ is both metaphoric and literal; research suggests that sage can purify air. Smudging is used to remove concretely the negative or damaged energy; however, smudging will not cure addiction. Figuratively, cleansing does foster images of removing factors that are in the way of healing. People healing from addiction may feel a sense of hope in understanding that the negative feelings attached to the social narrative attributing their addiction to moral failings may be removed through smudging. Additionally, the ritual nature of smudging settles the amygdalae and helps decouple the response from the frontal cortex. Decoupling assists in increasing directed attention and may strengthen the ability to address cravings.

Hope is a key ingredient in *maskihkiy* (medicine), and creativity enlivens hope. Creativity is deploying imagination and creation to express emotions, thoughts, and/or discoveries to others. Many people use substances to help tap into creativity. Artists speak about using substances to help them develop their creativity. However, creativity as a spiritual need, along with hope, is the concept of imagining things differently. Creativity increases when there are shared healing experiences. *Kehtehi* Irene imparts a story of the reciprocal nature of learning in relationship:

Yes, you know when I look back at my clients, especially my clients with addictions. I never asked them anything, you know, and they’d come walking once they knew they’d done something good for themselves; they’d come walking with their hand in a bag and then shake their hand. “I bought something for you, Irene.” “Oh, really?” And they’d give me a little gift. I have so many things those gifts, I idolize those gifts, you know, I still have them. To me they meant something, even if it’s a rock – you know, the rock told me that they’re
solid, and that nothing is going to harm them. An eagle feather is a feather that’s
going to protect me and them. All those little things, you know. … I always
thought, you know, I give them something in return, like I'd give them a rock. I
always told them that a rock helps you — it eases your mind. And they were
always very happy to receive something from me. And telling me things. And
I'm listening to them, and a lot of times I think of — you know, we're sharing,
we're teaching each other. I'm not only teaching them or hearing them; they're
hearing me too.

Reciprocal learning and shared creativity bolster one’s ability to imagine something can
be different. Hope too is fostered by connecting and learning from others.

Strengthening one’s soul’s purpose and loving oneself allow room for forgiveness. All
these actions are maskihkiy (medicines) that help open the achak (spirit) connection and
nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction. Meeting spiritual needs and cleansing
achak (spirit) to open the achak (spirit) connection and keep it open can be achieved by
the second step in nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction, Walking the Red Road.

**Walking the Red Road (Cultural Responsiveness)**

The second major finding in this study was the metaphor ‘Walking the Red
Road.’ Aftercare services can incorporate the metaphor of ‘walking the red road’ to
ensure cultural responsiveness. This is a metaphor for experiencing the aggregate of
Indigenous belief. The metaphor is both spatial and directional in that one is learning as
they go and the further they go the more they learn. Walking the Red road therefore is a
way of being that follows a healing journey or living well through an Indigenous
paradigm. An Indigenous paradigm is relational, salubrious, wholistic, and follows local
epistemologies. These elements are restricted in western-aftercare programs. This study argues for harmonizing Indigenous and western approaches to increase efficacy of aftercare services. Harmonizing both approaches involves privileging the voices of *Kehte-ayak* not to create a hierarchy but to bring a balance in perspectives. *Kehtehi* Florence asserts that it is Indigenous peoples who must lead the change:

Oh yeah, you can ask. I'd tell you if I knew, but they said we've got to ... that prophecy song says wake up, shake that sleep off your body and take your rightful place in society and stand tall and be counted. So, we need to do that and we're doing that right now, and it's those different prophecies that reinforces what we're doing. Yeah, we're going to be a very strong people, and we will heal from the residential school, from that stint in the sanatorium. When kids were adopted out worldwide, eh, like they were nothing… Yes, and it can happen again. So, we need to start moving now, eh? Yeah, we need to start making these changes now, and not taking a backseat and not putting our heads down anymore and being so compliant, eh? We need to be heard. Our voices need to be out there.

*Kehtehi* Keith provides an historical context for the call for Indigenous peoples to take the lead:

Yes, they went back to that in the 60s. The modern level of Indigenous nationalism evoked a new spirituality in addition to a new ethno-psychology, socio-cultural psychology that included discussions of colonization and racism, in social, economic, and political legal terms. While colonization was directly discussed in these terms, it was interesting that it was not done so with regards to religion. Yet the concept of religion in Cree traditionally was not only different
from Christianity; it was putdown and rejected. … Pipe ceremonies, burning sweetgrass, the drum, powwows, and other ceremonies were reintroduced and brought back into the open. So, even though many were still strong Christians the new Indigenous First Nations would bring back honour and respect to their traditions.

Walking the ‘white road’ (metaphor for conveying white or western ways of being) is a problem for many. The Kehte-ayak bravely shared that it is important to have Indigenous peoples leading the healing journey:

Kehtehi Rose - … [Indigenous peoples] don't want to talk to non-Native people. They'd rather listen to our people. You know, like if we went in to talk they would listen to us. But if somebody came in that's not Native and try to share what we share, they wouldn't listen. They tell me that.

Kehtehi Florence - I did. I wanted my own kind.

Kehtehi Rose - Even me when I used to be in jail.

Kehtehi Florence - Because they knew what I went through, or the kind of home that I had and they could relate to my stories and I could relate to theirs. And they always had humour, so I always have humour when I'm working with a person. No matter how traumatic it is, humour is always brought into it because humour is healing.

I describe their conversation as courageous because they were very hesitant in sharing that Indigenous peoples felt more comfortable speaking to other non-Moniyaw (white) people. I believed that they did not want to offend Moniyaw (white) people who accept a
relational ontology. The contributions of *Monyyaw* (white) people are respected, even when at one time they were detrimental (through colonialism). They understand that this study will be shared with a larger community and are aware that it is necessary to harmonize approaches and in doing that, Indigenous peoples should take the lead.

*Kehete* Irene shares an example of why Indigenous peoples are paramount in this story of mentoring her husband’s healing journey:

So, he started drinking at an early age and … but at the end, he followed me, yeah, he followed me. He used to tell them, “you know, I grew up without alcohol and I said, my mom used to tell me, what are you doing in a place like this where people are drinking? You haven't been brought up like that. I love my parents and I want to be like them; I want to stay away from drinking.” Me too, I’d suffered a few rotten years, I said, but I had to learn the hard way. But now I’m here to help you.

*Kehete* Irene shares that she and her husband both looked up to their parents and other relatives who did not follow *Monyaw* (white) way of life but they both found themselves drinking. Upon reflection, her husband chose to adhere to *Kehete* Irene’s sobriety in order to follow their spirit’s purpose and help other Indigenous peoples in healing from addiction. They began ‘walking the red road.’

One action in walking the red path is engaging in cultural catalysts. A relational ontology supports using cultural catalysts to meet spiritual needs. The cultural catalysts suggested in this study include incorporating *Kehте-ayak* and Knowledge keepers, using medicines, accessing ancestors, interpreting dreams, noticing animals, and participating in ceremony. These elements are not prescriptive but are some of what the *Kehте-ayak*
suggest as helpful. Blackstock (2011) combined Willie Ermine’s ethical space concept with relational ontology and ‘physics’ theory of everything’ to create the Breath of Life (BOL) theory. This theory is becoming accepted because it recognizes that multiple dimensions, community context, and joining western and Indigenous knowledge are required to alleviate issues of Indigenous child safety and well-being. The author urges that to effectively address issues children are facing now, people need to look to non-western perspectives and embrace the uncomfortable by balancing the atypical. Through Blackstock’s and Yellow Bird’s respective work, the field of social work is looking to incorporate both ways of knowing by honouring Indigenous ways of knowing as valid. However, utilizing Kehte-ayak and Knowledge Keepers should be done with care. Many people pose as experts on Indigenous paradigms but Indigenous communities do not acknowledge them as experts.

The Kehte-ayak in this study identified the importance of finding a Kehte-ayak with whom the person healing feels comfortable. Personal styles, teachings, and relationship protocols are significant elements to consider. It is important to have a clear intention and be open to different ways of healing when working with Kehte-ayak or Knowledge Keepers. Kehtehi Rose shares how important Kehte-ayak were to her success:

I was a real big addict. You know I was into drugs and alcohol and when I decided to change my life, this is where I went, to the [Kehte-ayak] seeking that help and letting them know that I tried different ways of healing and – which didn’t work for me. And that was my last stop was the [Kehte-ayak] and that you know, and that’s what helped me through my addictions. And I’m still on my
journey on that part hey, because you always have that addiction you know, whether you relapse or any other way.

In this study, the *Kehte-ayak* teachings on the importance of ceremony is paramount. Abiding natural law involves ceremony and ritual. They suggest that nothing is done well without ceremony. *Kehteghi* Rose describes her first impression of seeing *Kehte-ayak* gather for ceremony:

> Yeah, I was so happy to be there. It felt so good, and I said this is what I want. … it was the energy of the place. And we walked in and I seen the [Kehte-ayak] sitting there. They were laughing, they were smiling, talking – that peaceful energy. And I said that's what I want.

Hewson and Rowold (2012) pose that ceremony is statistically supported as having an affirmative effect on spiritual health – that is the spiritual quality of life, which includes forgiveness and transcendence. Through my conversations with the *Kehte-ayak*, I learned that ceremony is sacred, healing, respectful of the elements of relationship, and needed to cleanse the spirit connection. *Kehtehi* Florence describes the process of cleansing away the trauma spirit through ceremony:

> Yeah and that's what I found out, and then I said well, bring them to me. We'll have a ceremony. I'll clean them off and then I'll do another ceremony, it's that cedar bath. It washes a lot of the trauma from the body and sometimes some of these stories they don't need to know … It'll be washed out from the body.

*Kehtehi* Rose expands on using ceremony for healing from addiction:
Okay. In our culture okay, usually we go to ceremonies, like sweats or we make commitments during Sun Dance which is a spiritual part or fasting. And we go out fasting to have vision quests and to ask for that help you know to let go of those addictions or whatever it is, you’re asking for, ask for that help. 

Kehteji Florence shares how important ceremony was when she was diagnosed with cancer a second time: 

Not impossible. It's only as difficult as you make it. You know, I went through my grieving process and I said okay Florence, you did that, now you're got to move on and what is it that we need to do to move on? Okay, surround yourself with good people. Have a positive support system. Make sure all the traditional healers that I need are around me and to go back into ceremony and to go back to that lodge … to get my healing there, plus the healing that I'm going to get from the other traditional healers, yeah. … So, I had the women there, I had the men there. They were good support systems. They would sit with me, talk to me, and tell me about their journeys in life, and you know the struggles that they went through, that this too shall pass. That was my mantra. This too shall pass, yeah, as I was passing out from pain.

As important as ceremony is, a definition of ceremony was hard to attain. Kehteji Preston explains his struggle: 

Ceremony is - well, I didn’t know anything of it and sometimes I still wonder if I do. [Laughs]. And yet I learned that nothing can be done well without ceremony.
Kehtehi Preston statement is thought evoking. I too turned to ceremony throughout this study. I engaged in ceremony to ask if my study was worth doing. A pipe ceremony was conducted before I began the study and my proposal and cloth were taken into a sweat. When I struggled with direction, I asked the ancestors for guidance and I held feasts to thank them for their presence. I attended moon ceremonies, pipe ceremonies, and sweats to strengthen my intention and purpose. I smudged away misguided aims and achaguk (spirits) from my paper, my cloth, and myself often.

In addition to ceremony, plant medicines may be used to help cleanse, heal, and nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction. Kehtehi Florence explains that:

At the beginning of time, each plant said that they would take us ... look after a certain ailment, let's say, and there's a root there that said that they would help in that craving. And we use that. And same with people, if they have anxieties we have that medicine there too, that they can chew on, or else that they can drink to get rid of that stress in the body, yeah.

Kehtehi Florence’s teachings show that ceremony is used to honour the plants’ remedies so that the medicine will be potent. Kehtehi Florence works closely with the medicine spirits to implement the best treatment as described here:

No, we talk to the plant. When I pick the medicine I always have tobacco, and I hold that plant and I have the tobacco in one hand and the plant in one hand and I let that plant know who I am, my clan and where I come from, and I call them my relatives, the standing people, because they're going to give up their life and they're happy to give up their life for what I'm going to use them for .... And all
those ceremonies I went through were different, for different types of healing, eh? So that's what I do too to help the people come in and to let go of those troublesome times they went through, yeah. When – sometimes people that I get, they're in their last stages of life, so my main focus is to keep them sober and to clean out their liver. So, I will give them something to stop the addiction and I will give them a prescription to drink that will clean out their liver and the different parts of their body.

Walking the Red Road includes accessing spiritual and animal guides through ceremony, prayer, and dreams. Kehtehi Keith describes a relational belief and Cree epistemological understanding of dreams:

Kehtehi Keith: Rather than prayer centered the Cree have two basic versions of a concept relating to dreams and visions - the dream vision quest and the regular dream. The different aspects of the dream were an important part of Indigenous peoples’ beliefs. More lately, you see a lot more on neuro-scientific research on the relationship between dreams, learning, and memory. But as far as the dream concept is concerned, puwatumowin, the regular dream, can also be connected to the spirit but the more powerful puwamowin is the dream vision quest. … Both of them can be purposeful depending on what you are doing and how you have interpreted that dream. But more people actually put into place the dream because everybody dreams. … Well, not everybody dreams the same way. And there’s people who dream more than others. So, the idea of
dreams versus the idea of prayer, were the two major conceptual structures.

Carrie: Because that falls back on to – I think that falls back onto ontology; what you believe.

*Kehthei* Keith: Right.

Carrie: So if you believe that we’re all connected, then you’re going to see things as connected. The Creator’s connected. And if you’re following sort of the Catholic exclusive way, it’s very singular. This is your dream; this is your God, yeah.

*Kehthei* Keith: The idea of spirit tends to be more religious in design than a broader “secular” view. So, most of the people that go back to their ceremonies will experience various traditional and hybrid prayer/dream concepts in these practices, – changes since the 1950s. And that’s why you see a variety of interpretations. Not everybody is the same. I mean there were differences, culturally, between the Anishinabek and the Nehinuw (Cree) and others.

From the *Keh-te-ayak*, I learned that dreams are powerful mediums for receiving messages from the spirit world. *Kehthei* Preston offers the following example of work he did on a reoccurring bear dream:

Yeah. [laughs] So, I did, I did fight it. I remember what he said to me in my dream. And when he was this distance [arms showing space] and he was jumping on me now, I said now I'm going to fight it. I knew I was going to lose
but I attacked it. It turned into a great big teddy bear, bounced right off me, and went tumbling down the hill. So, all it was doing was trying to scare me into this way of life. That's what I was told and I believed, I believe all the [Kehte-ayak].

[Laughs] They’re going to lie to me but I'm going to believe it. [Laughs]

When he was younger, Kehtehi Preston had a recurring dream of a bear attacking him. He approached a Kehtehi to uncover the message within the dream. The Kehtehi advised him to face the bear and be prepared. Preston shared that he believed he would die in his dream and was therefore afraid of the confrontation. Trusting that the Kehtehi had good intentions, Preston confronted the bear. By facing the bear, which rescinded its attack and became nonthreatening, he understood that the bear was there to redirect his journey. The bear represented fear of change but, once faced head on, the bear was replaced with a feeling of comfort and humour. Kehtehi Preston expressed a sense of ease once the bear transformed into a non-threatening toy.

As previously reported, the Kehte-ayak stated that some people use substances to avoid the ‘achak (spirit) calling.’ When the person avoiding is set to accept their mission, the ancestors are ready to communicate. Kehtehi Florence shares her lessons about ancestor connections:

Yeah. I was taught that when you voice it, the grandfathers and grandmothers will hear you and then they will move things around that you'll get the information that you need. … Whereas with this way that I walk, and I raise that pipe, well that pipe talks to me. I'll ask that pipe questions and that pipe will talk to me and it comes in the form of a grandfather. Although grandmothers will come out too, because it’s a grandmother pipe that I carry. But whoever needs to
to talk to me at that moment – those are the ones that come through. And those are the ones that want me to learn that way, and those are the ones - we not only get our teachings from this world, from other teachers, but we get it from that spirit world too. We get it through our dreams. We get it through our pipe. We get it through our songs. Everything is sacred. … And animals. And the water. Like, you can go sit beside that water that water will talk to you. That water will sing to you the same with the Earth. She's spoken to me, and she let me know she's alive.

Ready to live her spiritual purpose, Kehtehi Florence began listening to the ancestral calling – in addition to dreams, ceremony, and prayer that relay messages.

Reflecting upon the Kehte-ayak teachings, I was reminded of my own experience with the animal spirits that guided my work. Walking to clear my head a few weeks after I had began writing Our Journey, I heard the woodpecker drumming her beat (see figure 8). Andrews (1999) suggests that in Indigenous teaching, the woodpecker is a sign of power, rhythm, and discrimination. As previously reported, the woodpecker came to me when I was developing the guiding questions for this study. The woodpecker encouraged me to go deeper with my probing. By expanding the questions, I was able to honour the direction the ancestors wanted this project to go and uncovered the symbolism in ‘achak (spirit) guarding the connection,’ ‘cleansing those achaguk (spirits),’ and ‘N’duwihitowin’ (healing together) to support ‘nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction.’ This time, the woodpecker came to ask if I was reflexively reflecting meaningfully enough. Their Journey tells the reflection of the data and significance whereas; Our Journey represents my opinion and its practicality. However,
Indigenous methodologies encourages that *Our Journey* represents the expedition of the researcher and participants (as co-researchers) together. This is not ‘my’ journey, ‘my’ opinion, and ‘my’ perception of practicality; this is ‘our’ journey. Andrew (1999) proposes that, to European knowledge keepers, the woodpecker’s drumming represents change, and for Native Americans, it is the Earth’s heartbeat. He teaches that when you examine the situation thoroughly, things become clear, “When woodpecker comes into your life, it indicates that the foundation is there. It is now safe to follow your own rhythms” (p. 207). My new pulse is the rhythm that is co-created together from the *Kehte-ayak*’ teachings and my journey. This awareness encouraged me to trust that what I was writing was my understanding of ‘our’ journey together and was valuable, I removed my hesitancy and wrote with assuredness.

*Kehtehi* Rose reminded me that as you work on your healing journey, you will become more confident and that confidence will increase your success:

> And no matter what methods or approaches they use, as long as they go to that whatever it is they're going to do. And they have to have that self-esteem. If their self-esteem is way down there, they're never going to feel like they belong. That's how I felt when I had the low self-esteem. I couldn't talk to nobody, you know, I couldn't mingle with anybody. I didn't know how to start conversations, nothing. But once I started walking my road and learning from the *Kehte-ayak*, my esteem started coming out. Now I just talk to anybody.

The final teaching on ‘walking the red road’ is that you should set your intention toward wanting to heal. *Kehtehi* Florence explains,
Same with that ceremony, those grandfathers, and grandmothers came in to help you heal, you got to do your part, and otherwise nothing happens. And just like healing, you're got to do your part you got to have that faith. Because if you keep talking about it and feel sorry for yourself, nothing is going to happen. You can talk about it and I want to heal from that, we're going good and then when you go home you call it back, you talk about it all the time. It's like inviting, opening the connection, and inviting them back and you're the banquet. Yeah, so it's the way we talk to and the way we present ourselves. You got to do your part, I'll do my part, but you got to do your part too.

When you are set to have a meaningful life, the ancestors will respond. To show that you are set, you should have a clear intention. When first incorporating cultural catalysts, I was unaware that intention was important. *Keh-te-ayak* would ask me why I am attending the sweat or pipe ceremony. My response was glib and general, “I am here to support the people I work with.” The activity would benefit me but my experiences were never as profound as those others in attendance. Through the teachings from this study and my journey in preparing for and creating this study, I realized how important intention is. The Universe cannot provide guidance when you do not know where you want to go. However, for many people who grew up in trauma or are living with addiction, a clear vision of the future is at times incomprehensible. It is hard to envision life in a different way when a lingering spirit is guarding the *achak* (spirit) connection. Creativity and hope are blocked when lingering *achaguk* (spirits) remain.

This study argues that to help people healing from addiction, western-based aftercare services should be decolonized. Decolonizing western-based aftercare services
in this study means harmonizing with Indigenous approaches. A third step in harmonizing approaches to help people healing *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction is to incorporate Indigenous metaphors.

**Amending Moniyaw Ways (Neuromodulation)**

The third major finding for this study is that western-based aftercare approaches can be best understood through Indigenous metaphorical language. The metaphor for this finding is ‘amending Moniyaw ways.’ This conceptual metaphor represents changing the form of or making amends to aftercare services. Making amends means to correct a wrongdoing. This study finds that using Indigenous metaphors are a way to decolonize western-based aftercare services to *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction. Western-based science language and addiction language are replete with figurative idioms. An explication of western-based science shows that the discipline tends to articulate concepts and theories through metaphor to help others understand. For example, time stands still. This metaphor represents the concept of time as able to move or stop to reflect one’s experience with the present. Addiction language likewise utilizes metaphors to describe all aspects of the experience. One example previously discussed is the healing journey. Because, using metaphors in western-based aftercare services is not a new endeavor, the reason to incorporate Indigenous metaphors should be apparent. Using metaphors is a form of neurodecolonization. Neurodecolonization is neuromodulation. Neuromodulation helps *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction.

A relational ontology supports Indigenous epistemologies as salubrious. Duran (2006) argues that terms should not be pathological but relational. He suggests that “By doing this, we won’t have to pathologize the individuals who are responsible for the
splitting or the dysfunctional systems that are in existence in this community” (p. 115).

His argument supports the notion that healing is required for everyone, not just the one showing symptoms. This is a difficult perspective for many Moniyaw (white people). Western paradigms tend to be punitive and individual. Removing the person as the object of blame from the process supports both healing for all (collective healing) and a strength-based, trauma-informed approach. Instead of blame, the focus is relationship. Relationship with each other, animals, nature, soul, achak (spirit), and Universe.

Metaphors also create new images for people who have experienced only disruptive environments.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) suggest that metaphors connect sensory motor memories with neural information structures. This means that when the tenor of the metaphor is explained through the vehicle of the metaphor, our body can understand the abstract information presented. Stored movement and sense memories are awakened. The metaphor ‘falling in love’ elicits the memory of a speeding heart, an uncertain foothold, and possible unsureness. Having the memory of this sensation aids our understanding of love. Understanding hope and creativity, purpose, and forgiveness is more easily achieved through cultural-based tropes. Additionally, a sense of connection is articulated through imagery, allowing the person healing to both know and feel that they are not alone. Lastly, metaphors may help reduce feelings of shame and guilt, two barriers to healing. The point of using metaphors in aftercare services is to concretize addiction by transforming the concept from diagnosis to ‘distressed achak (spirit).’

A belief system steeped in relationship is understood as a connection between the animate and inanimate. As previously discussed, ‘psyche’ replaced the term ‘spirit’ to
suit a religious western-based science perspectives. Reviving the term *achak* (spirit) and developing metaphors to explain that the neurobiological effects of addiction may help people healing attend to guilty feelings and cognitive distortions. Colonization has infused western biomedical terminology for diseases into Indigenous understandings of health. Terms such as diabetes, depression, and addiction were not used before colonization. I was told that it is not because they were not present but because western-based terms are reductionistic in their description. *Kehte-ayak* explain that Indigenous language may be reductionist at times, even though concepts are relational. Using western terms removes the relationship. Indigenous metaphors help to imagine the relationship. Waldram (2000) presents an argument against appropriating biomedical language to replace traditional words. Waldram suggests the phrase ‘living with’ is used instead of treating, healing, or curing. Returning relationship to understanding addiction is a way to decolonize aftercare services. Duran (2006) explains that using cultural understandings, people “gain a sense of belonging and feel less powerless over the “Whiteman’s illness” (p. 73). As opposed to an adversarial view of healing, their relationship with addiction can be constructive and provide meaning to experiences.

Creating relationship through metaphorical language then is good *maskihkiy* (medicine). Reducing deleterious thinking allows for the amygdalae, thalamus, and executive functioning to focus on *poone* (stop) cravings and support the person healing from addiction to work through ‘use’ triggers. *Kehtehi* Irene offers a beautiful image metaphor about the healing journey from addiction:

*Kehtehi* Irene - “Open your mind. You know. Open your heart. Because that's where your spiritual comes from. And walk with the straight line. You'll
see a lot of branches. Yet those branches come together. There's only one road that you can go through your healing and that's called the journey of healing. I heard that a lot of times, people saying that. …

Like, you're walking, good. You're walking [pimatisiwin], like your life; you're walking your life in a good journey. Because you see that road. You had the … you made your branches fall off to the side of the walks. Little roads. Like a dead tree. I always use a dead tree. … When I see a dead tree, I see all these branches and they're dead. Some of them are green. Then you see at the bottom - way at the top, you see that there's a little clump of green.

Carrie - Yeah, and then if you go off a wrong branch it breaks, because they're broken or they're dead. So, what might that be called, if somebody goes off a branch? Like, takes a wrong way?

Kehtehi Irene - That's not death; it's only your life, your walk of life. When you're - when the branch falls, and you're - you fall, it's like you're maybe your addictions come back to you, you know. Or maybe something went wrong in life, and you're struggling, so that's how come these branches fall off. … That's how still they become. And they want to know more. And I always tell them, close your eyes, and see that dead tree. I said there's that dead tree. I said the branches fall off and that's how your life is.

Carrie - That's a beautiful metaphor because it makes so much sense. You keep going towards that green.
Kehte hi Irene - Yeah. And it's pointing towards [points skyward].

Carrie - Yeah. Towards the universe, right? Towards Creator.

Kehte hi Irene - Yeah.

A visual understanding of the healing course is obtained by comparing it to the picture of a tree (see Figure 11). The healing journey metaphor is the development of behaviours that manage responses to addiction stimulus. The tenor of healing may seem straightforward but in addiction, it is more nuanced. Healing may be a state of being or a way of being; there is no clear, objective marker for healed in addiction. Therefore, the journey of addiction is expressed as a tree symbolizing behaviour that is moving both toward and away from health (branches reaching upward and branches on the ground, respectively).

Figure 11 Tree Metaphor for the Healing Journey
Another image metaphor *Kehtehi* Irene offers is the Eagle Feather (see Figure 12):

… I find that when you have a … an eagle feather, you know how nice their eagle feathers are and you look at your life, there's one little stem. It's big, and it goes small to the top. And you - you move your eagle feather and you pass it opposite way, you notice - you know the same thing on the right, but usually I like doing it on the left, I pass it on and you see it when your life has problems, they're not together those, like, the feathers, like tuft like this. You know, some are little, some are big, and for a long time the feathers they'll - is the same, like it's the same all over. But you keep on walking. You keep on walking like you're walking on that feather. And those at the end you notice that they're getting smaller, they’re little stumbling blocks, you know.

Birds are important animal *achaguk* (spirits) in Indigenous epistemologies. They offer their feathers as messages, incentives, medicines, and for survival. The feather’s design is another image metaphor for the healing journey from addiction. The shaft of the feather holds the barbs in place. The shaft is a relevantly straight line representing healing or the process of moving toward health. The barbs are smooth outgrowths budding shorter the closer they are to the tip of the shaft. The longer barbs near the base represent the longer or more difficult part of the journey. Barbs that become crooked or ruptured portray a significant departure from the journey. As the journey reaches the end, the barbs become shorter, depicting a quicker lesson learned or ability to correct the behaviour. At the beginning of the journey, the feather is used to show that it will get easier and near the end of the journey, it represents the obstacles overcome.
Western-based theories unknowingly describe the paths to curb the symptoms of ‘achak (spirit) distress’ as neuro-modulation, mindfulness, and Somatic Experiencing®. This study suggests that these models can be understood through metaphor and expressed through such Indigenous practices as relationship protocols and ceremony. Harmonizing the two perspectives offers powerful, effective ways to support the healing journey and meet spiritual needs to nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction.

Neural modulation, reorganization, plastication, and regulation refer to actions that support rewiring or moulding neurons in the brain toward optimum efficacy. Canadian Psychiatrist, Doidge (2016) uses the term ‘healing’ to describe the brain’s plasticity, “which involves brain cells being able to constantly communicate electrically with one another, and to form and re-form new connections, moment by moment…” (p. xv). Kober et al. (2010) found that areas in the brain that concern emotion (amygdala, ventral striatum, ventral tegmental area, anterior cingulate cortex, and prefrontal cortex) affect the ability to respond to cravings. These areas are targets of neural modulation, plastication, and regulation. Methods to develop neural changes include mindfulness, attention restoration theory, and Somatic Experiencing®. Supporting these approaches
are ritual (or habits) and intention. Expressing these tools through Indigenous metaphor such as meeting the needs of the *achak* (spirit) helps people healing from addiction make meaning of the required neurological work and helps decolonize treatment approaches. This conversation with *Kehtehi* Irene uses the metaphor of negative *achak* (spirit) to depict the work of settling the amygdalae:

Carrie - And when their mind's occupied then the negative spirit can't get in, right?

*Kehtehi* Irene - Yes.

Carrie - And you're cleaning it out as well.

*Kehtehi* Irene - Yeah.

The metaphor of a negative *achak* (spirit) encourages the person healing from addiction to visualize an inanimate being with deleterious intention as blocking progress. The *achak* (spirit) is removed through cleansing – a sacred act performed by the *Kehte-ayak*—to help advance healing. Western helpers may perceive this as relaxing the amygdalae and thalamus to increase executive function to appraise the situation and reduce the stress response. By increasing executive function, the brain can reduce impulses to ‘use.’ Lawlis and Martinez (2015) offer that neuroplasticity helps remove barriers so that people healing from addiction can attend aftercare programs. They suggest that spiritual rituals may help find meaning and purpose and that altered states of consciousness affect transformation, an important step in forgiveness among other steps. The nucleus accumbens converts dopamine into joyful feelings. Cravings are a result of the emotional memory stored in the thalamus by the amygdala and can be quelled
through rhythmic or sonic stimulation, olfactory cues, prayer, and breathing (Lawlis & Martinez). Indigenous cultural activities use these and other examples of process to support neuroplasticity. Expressing this process through metaphor helps people healing from addiction make connections and to create their own meanings to *pimatisiwin* (living a good life).

Kaplan and Berman (2010) suggested that meditation, sleep, and increased use of involuntary attention help to decouple the frontal cortex to increase cognitive resources that direct attention. Their theory of attention restoration argues for drawing your awareness to images that are naturally stimulating. Indigenous ceremonies and practices are centered on natural stimulation, such as closing eyes, going into nature, singing, drumming, dancing, and praying. *Kehtehi* Rose delivers the metaphor of the Womb of Mother Earth as a way to decouple from the frontal cortex:

> But I found that peace in the sweat, you know what I wanted to do and even though it was a dark little place, you know I felt safe in there and because the [Kehte-ayak] told us it’s the womb of Mother Earth, I felt like a little child in there and felt safe even though it was dark, warm or hot, whatever you know and I felt good in there.

The vehicle womb explains the organ of a woman’s body that holds a fetus during gestation. As a metaphor, the womb represents the complete connection between mother, child, and the universe. The womb is warm, safe, and comforting. When associated with Mother Nature, the metaphor elicits the understanding that the sweat is now the complete connection between the person in the sweat and the earth. Both as a
concrete and as an abstract noun, mother earth is the protector of all energies on earth
and a powerful physical shield.

*KehTehi* Florence shares the metaphor of brokenness to explain the trauma that
causes overtaxed, directed attention:

But you know, we're all human beings, yeah. And be always good to yourself,
always. Always treat yourself. Because in all that hustle and bustle there's one
person, that you always leave out and that's yourself. Even if it's just to sit there
for one moment and have a cup of tea or just to sit by a window and watch people
go by, right? That's your time. Because a lot of people don't know how to do
that. Sometimes in all that brokenness, those things are missing.

Metaphorically, the connection between the soul and the Universe is broken. Trauma
effects cause the avenue for *achak* (spirit) communication to be ineffective. The vehicle
is structured to be in pieces or disconnected strands. Connecting pieces or strands allows
for communication to begin to pass. Interference from the trauma is reduced in order to
receive guidance from the Great Spirit. Looking out the window and watching people is
a way to decouple the frontal cortex and increase directed attention. Decoupling allows
for putting the broken pieces together. Lastly, *KehTehi* Irene encourages people healing
from addiction to engage in activities that use their hands:

Yes. And not only that, they teach them craft. It's important because they make
them from their hands. Because when you're walking unhealthy, all you had is,
you know, things that doesn't jive with what you feel or what your faith is. You
know, it was soiled. … So when I look at having sorts in a treatment centre, and
them being taught to do a little craft, culture craft, you know, you're using your hands instead of you holding a bottle or doing their drugs. You're doing your hands and your mind is occupied.

Encouraging someone to occupy their minds by working with their hands is a metaphor depicting distraction from one area to assuage the cravings. Rituals are also used to help modulate the brain or ease cravings. Rituals or practices are sequences of events that may form habits or responses in the brain. Some addicts will continue to inject a needle to illicit the comforting feeling they got from using. Several people begin to relax immediately by pulling a cigarette out of the package. In this next metaphor, Kehtehi Irene shares her ritual to stay connected with the creator:

Even the - a lot of times, you know, the kids know I have long hair, and they say, Kokum Irene, how do you comb your hair. You know. Oh, I comb them. Comb them this way I said. One, two, three, four, I said. Then I turn it. One, two, three - four? I says always do it on the left side, I said, because your heart is here. I said, that's why. I said, you're offering your hair to a Manitow to make you good for the day, I said. That's what I did.

Kehtehi Irene’s metaphor of offering her hair to Manitow (Great Spirit) represents the practice of setting her intention of connecting to the Creator. Combing her hair is a sacred offering to remember the connection. The connection helps her to stay on her healing journey. Her hair is given as part of her flesh and through the vehicle of offering is considered a contribution to respect the relationship with the inanimate. The amygdala and thalamus create a trace memory pathway whereby the act of combing sends a signal to the reward center that the next event will be pleasurable. Lighting a candle before
meditation or inserting heroin into a needle will both enact a trace memory. Creating ritual is important in the process to *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction.

Kass (2015) says that by performing mindfulness, the amygdalae may settle and reduce the crisis response in order to improve cognitive function. *Kehtehi* Florence shares this metaphor for mindfulness:

Going within. Western may call it meditation we call it going within, it's sitting in that sacred place and being one with the universe. One with that healing energy, getting to know who you are. Because I was told, all the answers that you will ever need to all the questions that you ask, all the answers are here. You don’t have to go far, because they're here.

*Kehtehi* Florence also uses sitting with that sacred space or being one with the universe as metaphors to describe mindfulness. These metaphors depict the state of being conscious to body sensations that allow for thoughts that are practical and respected. Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau (2015) use the term interoception to describe connection to the body’s senses. *Kehtehi* Preston uses the metaphor of listening to your heart:

You only look through your heart, not your head. You're going to get it mixed up. You're going to stress yourself out and your belief will go in different directions, if you use your mind. But if you use your heart and listen through your heart, I wouldn’t be doing what I'm doing today if I didn’t follow my heart. … Through the first few years, I started about 25 years ago but for the first few years, I was more studying it we'll say. Then it kind of steered my mind to move
right down to my heart and only focus through there ‘cause you can’t go wrong if you only use your heart. But with your head, you can go wrong and make lots of mistakes.

Your heart is personified in this metaphor with the ability to speak. By ignoring the mind, the heart’s voice can be heard. The heart speaks to what you really want.

Mindfulness for North American Indigenous peoples may be understood as ‘listening to one’s heart.’ A western-science perspective may describe this as interoception or visceral intelligence.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) shows moderate efficacy as a therapeutic modality (APA, 2013; Ferri, M., Amato, L., Davoli, M., 2006; Hyde, Hankins, Deale, & Marteau, 2008; Klimas et al., 2012; Knapp, Soares, Farrell, & Silva de Lima, 2008; Manion, Short & Ferguson, 2013; Pearson & Lipton, 1999; Scott, Keener, & Manaugh, 1977; Witbrodt, J., Ye, Y., Bond, J., Chi, F., Weisner, C., & Mertens, J., 2014). The goal of CBT is to change cognitive distortions by overriding the negative thinking or challenging the premise. A reoccurring issue with CBT is that clients tend to ruminate the negative aspects of the story or trauma experience, engraining the unhelpful pathway. Trauma reactions are disrupted autonomic responses that need to be realized in order to stop the survival loop (Levine, founder of Somatic Experiencing®, 2010, 2015). The physiological response may be coupled with a cognitive distortion; however, the incomplete response must be ‘moved through’ to release the autonomic nervous system from continuously protecting itself. Levine describes the processes as embodying spirituality. The processes to embody are “invigorating resilience and restoring natural equilibrium” that “promoted self-healing and catalyzed transformations, which could be
described as spiritual” (Levine, 2008, p. 86). He offers (2008) that “it appears that the very brain structures that are central to the resolution of trauma are also pivotal in various ‘mystical’ and ‘spiritual’ states” (p. 92). The incomplete “survival response imbedded within trauma can also catalyze authentic spiritual transformation” (Levine, 2008, p. 92). He points out that the transformation is not outside of the body but occurs within to improve the feelings of love and connection between others and ourselves. As the interrupted responses are released, the person healing from addiction can shed feelings of guilt and shame and believe that nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction is manageable. Levine (2010) asserts that this “awakening of our life force” is a gift “whether we are survivors of trauma or simply casualties of Western culture” (p. 356). Levine’s work tends to focus on eastern spiritual practices; as previously stated, Yellow Bird instead encourages the use of local Indigenous approaches.

The Kehtehi use the metaphor of cleansing away the energy or inviting the energy to leave in order to once again access the soul. The difference between CBT and embodying spirituality is that the focus is not on the memories but on the body’s needs. Levine or the Kehte-ayak do not focus on the story; instead, they focus on what the body wants to do or how it wants to express the energy. Kehtehi Rose uses the metaphor of energy flow in this example of releasing tears:

And we don’t have no barrier in-between us so that energy flows. And the other thing I was taught too was when someone’s crying, you don’t – like I can’t touch them. That’s why a lot of times I’ll sit and let them cry it out, okay. Because when you touch them, it stops them from what they were saying you know. And so, I just let them cry or whatever until they’re ready to speak again ….
Part of the process used with Somatic Experiencing® is proception whereby you observe and engage in the physiological response of the other person to assist them in adjusting their perception of the trauma. *Kehtehi Rose’s* describes supporting the person to release what is held in. The metaphors of energy flow and cry it out both describe the release of trauma from the body. *Kehtehi Rose* does not encourage the person to talk or recall memories; she allows them to release, without judgement or touch, the response that they had been holding back. By releasing the energy, the person can review their memory with courage and curiosity. The protective response is no longer engaging, as it has been completed; the trauma *achak* (spirit) begins to untether and release.

*Kehtehi* Florence uses the metaphor of ‘stuff leaving your body’ to depict the incomplete response Levine writes about:

*Kehtehi* Florence - Because healing can be very taxing to the person that's healing and to the one ... the caregiver. And sometimes the person needs to keep coming back to the sweat lodge once a week, and sometimes all they need to say is creator, I'm not feeling well. This is the way I feel right now and I don't like that feeling and I want to get rid of it, so they'll be in that sweat lodge and to tell that ... let that person know, when people in here get healing it becomes very hot for them, because that stuff is leaving their body, yeah. So, one story is taken care of, another story is standing in line right behind it, wanting to be told. So just because you got rid of that one stuff, there's a hundred more coming up, and to let them know that you're going to heal until the day you die, yeah, and that's a good thing.
Carrie - And some stories will be harder than others.

Kehtehi Florence - Yes.

Carrie - So, some will come up and just leave and some will be hard.

Kehtehi Florence - Yeah and you carry all those stories in different parts of your body, and our body flows a certain way and if there's something there, a story there, that is giving you such a hard time, that flow will be broken, and that's where you'll get sick.

The metaphor of ‘stuff leaving your body’ creates a visual image of tangible elements detaching. The ‘stuff’ in this metaphor is the trauma, energy, or lingering achak (spirit) causing distress. Through a western perspective, Levine (2015) describes this as releasing trapped autonomic responses. Williams, Teasdale, Segal, and Kabat-Zinn, (2007) explain that there is a dysfunctional or absent pathway that lessens or prevents serotonin uptake and production in people living with depression. They suggest that medication is not enough to overcome depression; the brain needs be retrained to experience joy. Re-experiencing joy is explained as, helping a depression achak (spirit) move from the spirit connection. Understanding western theories through Indigenous metaphors prove more effective and are a way to amend aftercare services. Levine’s and the Kehte-ayak’s works stress the importance of needing others to support the healing process. The fourth step in harmonizing approaches is to incorporate n’duwihilowin (healing together).
**N’duwihitowin (Healing Together/Harmonizing)**

The last major finding is that healing from addiction cannot be done without *n’duwihitowin* (healing together). Healing together is accomplished only by harmonizing Indigenous and western ways. As noted, Indigenous metaphorical language requires appreciating a relational ontology. Valuing relationship means incorporating relationship protocols and developing aftercare services that harmonize Indigenous and western-based approaches. *N’duwihitowin* (healing together) to *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction and promote *pimatisiwin* (living a good life) is realized through four ways - healing the *achak* (spirit), harmonizing approaches, using local customs, and finding your own way. *N’duwihitowin* is a metaphor that maps out its meaning through the four ways. Together, the collective and healing are understood as the process of becoming whole with the help of others. Through shared healing, the person seeking help and the people providing help receive the benefit of healing. This process represents the four elements of a relational ontology in that it is reciprocal, relevant, respectful, and responsible.

**Healing the Achak (spirit) Through N’duwihitowin (Healing Together).**

To comprehend *N’duwihitowin* (healing together) is to understand a relational paradigm. *Kehte* Keith explains how the Cree language system is developed around a relational understanding:

Yeah, there’s a lot of blending in Cree, even on education. … In Cree, we have a concept of *kiskinaumasowin*, which means to teach oneself or self-directed
learning. There is also kiskinaumagehin or teacher directed learning or someone who knows more and they’re teaching you. But the biggest, largest one is interactive learning, reciprocal learning, integrated learning – all of those types of, different interactive dimensions are called kiskinaumatowin. So, Cree has many systems that are built not only with our verb structures, but also on the noun structures. I looked at some literature on Indigenous thought and they were talking about the Anglo view being objectivist while the Indigenous was more of a relational view.

In this teaching, Kehtehi Keith recognises that verbs and nouns in Cree language incorporate an interactive perspective. An Indigenous treatment approach appreciates that others are required in the healing process. Removing the guardian achak (spirit) cannot be done alone; therefore, healing together is essential. Prayers come into the ceremony to support participants’ souls and to help the person healing reopen the achak (spirit) connection or move achaguk (spirits) away from the connection. Kehtehi Keith clarifies that the root principle of the practice is collective:

In order to challenge the stress, people come together and press closer together with people to provide a supportive structure for the person or people. It’s called seetoskatowin. It happens when there is a death or tragic happening to a person, families, and people. While it affects individual psychology, it is mainly an interactive small group psychology and or a larger scale social and cultural psychology. … They will call upon somebody else’s spirit to defeat the spirit, the bad spirit.
He spells out that it is ‘everyone’s’ *achaguk* (spirits) that come and help. Through the ceremonial process, the people offering help are also helped. He suggests that this may be confusing given colonial teachings about individuality and being:

> It is intriguing in a sense that the spirit is an external spirit that comes to help you, so there is an external objectification of a spirit coming from the outside to inside the person. So, the problem I suppose is not only based on the colonial Christian rendition of it, but also it is also an external-internal; a problem embedded in Cree belief as well. Because there is an internal-external aspect of things, there is a combination of both internal-external that is moulded together to form yourself as a being. Albeit you're still an individual, but you have great connections out there.

Neff and MacMaster’s (2005) research argues that peer influence, role modeling, and social reinforcement are required for spiritual transformation. The social process is fundamental to behaviour change theories and therefore the authors pose that effective behaviour change or spiritual transformation should include a social context. However, the social context is only one aspect of healing together. *N’duwihitowin* (healing together) includes a metaphysical experience as well.

Healing together creates a soul connection among those attending the ceremony, the Universe, and the Creator. The soul-to-soul connection in ceremony then emits an inanimate life force. The life force is created to heal; *Kehtehi* Keith explains,

> *Mamuwi-* is the initial stem we use to denote togetherness such as *mamuwi-utoskehin* let’s all work together. It’s a little different from “let’s work with each
other.” … No. It’s more a . . . All actions etc. and everything like that in terms of Cree philosophy and all processes . . . are generated by life force beings. Could be the sun, the stars, people, all life force beings . . . in the universe. They’re the ones who generate the thoughts, the actions, the – everything. Everything that happens. So, it’s an entity that generates it. All life force beings including those Weesagechak generate this as well. … Crees have a major categorical system that is difficult in figuring out, so the linguists have simplified it by referring to it as the living and nonliving, the animate structure. Part of the problem was stemmed from anthropological theory in the late 1800s that talked about animacy in terms of religiosity. They tended to look at Indigenous religions as primitive religions based on animacy. Rather than simply the animate living and the non-living inanimate – I tend to look upon it as the life force system. These life force entities create culture, and natural physical processes. For example, Pinesiw, the thunderbird (pinesees is a bird) which causes lightning. The process of lightning itself is an emanation from the life force, so it’s inanimate. A lot of people might think that it’s a life force itself, but because it is a process that is thrown by a life being, the thunderbird . . . it is inanimate. Action, thinking, thought, seeing, all of those then become emanations of life forces.

Kehtehi Keith’s explanation reveals that thoughts and actions produce a non-living force. To prevent generating a disruptive force, we are instructed to have positive thoughts and actions. Through his description, a better understanding of relational belief is explained within the notion of animate and inanimate. Indigenous culture does not worship
animals, as the colonial interpretation would suggest. Instead, Indigenous peoples honour existing and generated life forces. Animals are considered life forces as is Mother Nature and the universe; weather too is an inanimate force. Inanimate forces come to support or harm. The strength generated through relationship is realized as an inanimate force used to fortify healing. The inanimate force is then used to remove the achak (spirit) residing in front of the achak (spirit) connection. It is important to understand that one cannot remove the disrupted achak (spirit) alone. It takes the strength created through N’duwihitowin (healing together) to assist in the removal. To nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction, after care services would benefit from constructing N’duwihitowin (healing together) to heal the achak (spirit).

Kehthei Florence explains that each person requires a unique approach and that working together is key. Here, she recalls how she incorporates animate objects to help healing through relationship:

And then I tell them I'll take you wherever you are. So I don't say you have to do it this way, step one, two, three, and four. No, I take that person wherever they are. It could be they just want to talk this time. Next time they just want to cry. They don't want to say anything. I'll clean them off. I'll use medicine to clean them off and they'll feel a whole lot lighter. Because some traumas will never come out. But they will leave your body, and that memory will be gone too. That's how powerful the medicines are that we use on them, it will take it away. … I help them unravel … I don't give them answers, I start to unravel, and I get them to have input in the approach that I'm using, so that they find those answers. I don't give them the answers, but if they're so stuck that everything is
... their memory is wiped out – well, I'll go to the spirits and I'll ask them what went wrong, and then I'll work from that. I'll work from what the spirits tell me.

Kehteih Florence’s guide to aftercare services proves stronger than western approaches in that she invites achaguk (spirits) from the different levels in to assist in understanding what the disrupted soul needs. Through relationship, healing takes place. Kehteih Florence explains why removing the trauma achak (spirit) is difficult:

And we do different ceremonies at different stages to get rid of certain traumas. Yeah, they black out because of the trauma, eh, and the mind is very powerful. The body is very powerful, because they take that trauma. It goes into the body somewhere. It's hidden somewhere in the body until it's time for that story to come out, and when that story starts coming out that's when my thinking is that they start that addiction. They start to cover up whatever it is that is not feeling good within them, and that's where I go. Well, what are these emotions that you're feeling? They can feel ugly, but they don't know why because the abyss is in front of them and they just can't see past that darkness. Yeah, so we can ... the body protects you too.

Abuse figuratively described as maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine) is thrown onto a person. Racism, sexism, sexual assault, physical assault, negative experiences are forms of abuse. The person who experienced the abuse manifests more maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine) through negative thoughts, shame, and guilt. This study argues that a trauma achak (spirit) is called in to help the body cope. The trauma achak (spirit) offers medicine to create neurological and physical changes to support allostasis. Missed relational protocols to acknowledge the role of the trauma achak (spirit) causes the
trauma achak’s (spirit’s) medicine to become ineffective and deleterious. Substance or behavioural stimuli mitigate the trauma spirit’s administrations. Focusing on external stimuli to mitigate trauma achak (spirit) disruption causes spiritual needs to go unmet and spiritual distress to increase. Prolonged use of the external stimuli results in severe spiritual distress manifested as addiction. *Kehtehi* Florence explains that the body protects the person who experienced the trauma by hiding the story and cultivating addiction. Metaphorically, this is described as housing a trauma achak (spirit) that is coupled with an alcohol achak (spirit) (to take one example). *Kehtehi* Florence describes the trauma achak (spirit) as an abyss or obscured darkness. These two powerful achaguk (spirits) require more strength than the person healing can muster. Healing together requires a second way: harmonizing Indigenous and western approaches.  

**Harmonizing approaches through *N’duwihitowin***.

Western-based researchers have spent many years exploring effective approaches to aftercare; however, efficacy is minimal. This study argues that the next level of *N’duwihitowin* (healing together) is through harmonizing Indigenous and western aftercare approaches. *Kehtehi* Preston explains

> Yeah. I don’t know why. I don’t know if it will ever, ever stop. But what needs to happen is we all need to come together, I don’t care what tribe you are. Yeah, let's all come together 'cause we're only small, small people.

*Kehtehi* Rose explains that many people seeking aftercare services are Indigenous and that the services need to incorporate both ways of knowing:
Because the western way … how was I going to say … you can put western and Indigenous way together. You know that would work because a lot of our people you know … the western way deals a lot with our people hey, and if that was put together both ways, you know that would work well. … Because I worked at [detox center] for a while, they called me in there as a [Kehtehi]. And a lot of them told me, the ones that were clients there, they would – I would go and do circles and they would tell me, “I wish they would – we could smudge and that you know like we’re doing now you know for meetings and that.” Yeah, they’ve brought that up to me. Like before doing a meeting and also the non-Aboriginal would learn… you know.

Kehtehi Rose sees value in harmonizing approaches so that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can benefit from effective recovery methods. Through a relational ontology, we can see value in harmonizing both approaches because all ways of knowing are respected. Additionally, the achak (spirit) world represents all people and as Kehtehi Florence explains, is waiting for us all to come together:

… we have too many of our people in jail. We have too many of our people in care, and right now … now is the time to make those changes, eh, and health is such a good place to start, and it's starting, where the provinces and the federal government and the Indigenous people, they're collaborating with one another to make this come true, and I was part of that roundtable in [city name] and everybody was pooling their heads and I could feel the energy of the grandmothers and the grandfathers that were working with us at that time, eh, yeah.
Kehtehi Florence continues to explain that Indigenous peoples must call upon themselves to pick up the traditional ways and take their place along side western approaches:

Okay, we need ... first of all, we need to get back what was lost. No, what was lying dormant, as it waited for us. We didn't lose it, it's laying dormant, and as we get strong and start going towards picking up our ceremony and singing those songs and going into those sacred lodges, those ones that were keeping those ceremonies and the culture for us, all those things will come out, they'll teach us. They're our carriers, people that carry those things right now, from one generation to the next until we as a people are ready to take those things back, rightfully, in a healthy state. Then everything will ... then we will become strong and we will take our rightful place and we will all work together, yeah, but right now, we need to get strong. ... We need to go back. Not to go back to riding horses or anything like that, go back and pick those beautiful gifts that we weren't allowed to have, eh? Yeah and to turn that clock back and to pick those gifts up and those lodges up and the medicines up, so that this will be a heaven on earth, this earth will be heaven on earth. We don't need to be looking at another planet. We can turn back the damage that was done here. It's just that we do not rape and pillage the earth anymore. We work with her, not against her, because she sustains our lives. In the scheme of things, we're the low man in the totem pole. Everything can survive without us.

Kehtehi Rose shares an example of what harmonizing might look like:

Well you have teachings, share those teachings, and also use the western. Do traditional and western and get that balance, you know. Have that balance of
both, both worlds and it’ll work, work perfectly. Yeah. You know because there’s a lot of native people that are in there and they like to smudge you know, and they should have – like a little ceremonial room, they could have a room like that inside and where they could go in and smudge and then go to where they do AA.

Smudging is supported by science: for example, Nautiyal, Chauhan, and Nene (2007) suggest that smudging with herbs may purify bacteria from the air for up to 24 hours. Their research is touted as evidence that sage may be used as an air purifier. Indigenous people smudge with sage before ceremony or prayer. This ritual has two benefits. The first is to set one’s intention in speaking to the Creator and the second is to remove deleterious energy (bacteria) from the person smudging. This is another example of how Indigenous people use these practices, the benefits of which western-based science is only beginning to understand. The metaphor of cleansing the achaguk (spirits) away represents the respect and protocols used to acknowledge the relationship between self and the guardian achak (spirit). Smudging helps cleanse the achaguk (spirits) away from the achak (spirit) connection so that one’s soul can communicate with the universe. A western perspective may understand this as balancing the amygdala’s response and removing unwanted bacteria and further impurities. The deep connection to others is realized through relationalism, whereas, with realism or relativism, humans remain in the center; all information and truth revolves around the person. Aftercare services that acknowledge that all ways of knowing are of value, aftercare services can focus on harmonizing Indigenous and western explanations for addiction.
Lastly, Kehtehi Florence explains how western approaches can complement Indigenous approaches in healing:

Like, when I was in chemo, they all, they killed my nerve endings so in my prescription I put in the medicines that would rejuvenate my nerve endings. …

So, whatever the chemo kills, I bring it back to life with the medicines. So, with our medicines, we don’t give anybody medicines to kill any parts of their body. We give them medicines to heal the different parts of their body.

Harmonizing Indigenous and western approaches blends the perspective of a wholistic approach with the perspective of treatment, respectively. The third way to N’duwihitowin (healing together) is through local epistemologies.

**Local.**

I am not arguing for a pandemic approach. The findings that I found meaningful may be adaptable at a local level but are not prescriptive. Kehtehi Rose cautions for the need to use regional traditions:

I don't know, one of those reserves. And who never went to one before and he went in and they give him a little thing to put in his mouth and eat it. Here he was hallucinating. He got so scared he ran right out of the sweat lodge and he came and told me and my mom, and my mom told him, "No, that's not our ceremony. It came from the States. So, what happened to you, now you know."

That's what she told him. And that was – he said he got so scared he ran out of the sweat lodge and he never went back to a peyote ceremony. Yeah, he took – he got out of there, really quick, you know, so ... but my mom wasn't the only one
that told me about the peyote ceremony. There was other [Kehte-ayak] that told me, Cree [Kehte-ayak]. They said, "That's not our ceremony and it doesn't belong to us."

To be most effective, traditional customs are obtained at a local level. *Maskihkiy* (medicines), animal spirits, and language have regional meanings. Yellow Bird argued that people healing do not need to turn to eastern medicine to live *pimatisiwin* (good life); local Indigenous customs hold the knowledge. In the following conversation, Kehtehi Preston shares his thoughts on why it is important to stay local:

Carrie - is meditation accepted where you work?

*Kehtehi* Preston - Okay. Probably not 'cause how many addicts are going to be meditating. They can't even calm down. [Laughs]… They had their own teachings there, it's different. You can go and adopt teachings and pass them around wherever throughout the country but you get the best teaching right at home, yeah. That's what I found out. I was running around searching from one [Kehte-ayak] to another in three provinces here.

He recalls searching for teachings across three provinces only to return to his home province and local teachings. Indigenous epistemology is regional and therefore *N’duwihitowin* (healing together) need to use local customs and medicines. Duran (2006) explains that when we heal the soul wound, we also are healing the wounds of our ancestors. He suggests that each community has its own history and that identifying that history allows community specific interventions to take place. Through local
epistemology, harmonizing approaches, and manifesting healing objects, *N’dawihitowin* can be realized but it requires the fourth and final way, the person healing from addiction’s own way.

**Your own way.**

The *Kehte-ayak* urged that the person healing from addiction could incorporate whichever methods work for them. There is no correct way on the healing path and nothing should be forced. To *nugaska* (stopping and confronting) addiction, the person healing should walk his or her own path. This path is a shared journey but is led by the person healing. It may incorporate both ways of being and healing together. Local cultural catalysts and western approaches are offered. As previously reported, it is a long journey but it is through the metaphor of your own way. *Kehtehi* Preston shares why it took him so long to work toward *pimatisiwin* (good living):

But the thing is why maybe it took me so darn long and I'm still. I don’t know anything. It wasn’t introduced to me. It needs to be introduced. A lot of people ain’t going to agree with it, they're going to cut it up. But maybe in time - sometimes it's like karma, things do happen and they come back on us, what we do, what we say and I've seen a lot of - I have a lot of proof of it personally. I think what a person needs to do is be introduced to it in a comfortable way. Don’t force it on anybody like the way it was forced on me, both Christianity, RCs [Roman Catholics], or the sweat ceremonies, and all that. 'Cause I cooked my first time [in a sweat]. I stayed the heck away from it after that for a few years; I think it was about three years. I didn’t even want to go back 'cause I burned and they laughed. I'm not experienced enough. [Laughs] Yeah, I'm just
an advisor I tell them, yeah, a spiritual advisor. I think, or I believe, that a person just needs to participate. You don’t have to go in there with any belief, just experience it. If you feel that comfort, go again. And if you don’t feel that comfort, go elsewhere. Maybe church is for you, use church. Maybe you want to do it alone and you want to pray all by yourself, do that.

The teaching of doing it, ‘Your own way,’ reveals ‘own’ as unique or personal and ‘way’ is the direction, journey, or mode. Therefore, how addiction is faced is through a unique journey whereby the person healing has volition or control. This teaching represents the person healing from addiction as deciding the approaches and tools that they choose to heal. The unique journey is based on curiosity, discovery, and mistakes. When the person healing from addiction accepts that they have volition of their recovery, then they also accept the hope that they will recover. The hope therefore promotes creativity and curiosity. Kehtehi Preston advises that being curious is important:

Just carry on doing what's happening today. It's, what do you call it, it's starting to be accepted, yeah. You just have to accept it, nobody's way's better. Nobody can - nobody's prayers will reach the creator, Lord, Jesus, God, whoever, any quicker than the next person. It's all good. We're still at that struggle. … Introduce it, that's all you got to do, introduce it. And you don’t have to accept it but give it a try, you know, accept it and go to a ceremony and learn from it cause these teachings are forever. It's like a 45-gallon drum, by the time we die; we only get to know about a drop full of it. It's learnings I guess we'll say, lifelong learnings. … Yeah, it's all up to us. You might not like the way I conduct
ceremonies, I may not like the way you conduct ceremonies. But it's not like a ‘like’ thing, it's like it just doesn’t work for me. But the way I do it works for me.

Being curious about what has taken place and what may take place leads to creativity. Approaches can be harmonized to reflect the unique journey of the person healing.

Kehtehi Rose shares that harmonizing traditional approaches with Christianity, as an example, is possible:

And he would call me you know when he was doing that stuff and he would tell me – he prayed in Christianity and in traditional healing, he did both. And he would tell me, “Put your hand on” on whoever it was, “On their head and pray, help me pray.” So that’s what I would do and he would you know help, get me to help in things like that. And he did both and there’s nothing wrong with that, you can be a Christian, you can also follow this.

Through assimilation practices forced onto Indigenous peoples through the residential school system, Christianity has in many areas changed Indigenous peoples’ understandings of spirituality. Some communities believe now that Indigenous ways are demonic or primitive. Kehtehi Rose’s example supports harmonizing both ways of knowing to begin the process of collaboration and healing in a relational way.

In summary, this study found that to assist Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to nugaska (stopping and confronting) addiction four approaches should be taken. First, is to call the greater achak (spirit) back. Second, people healing may begin walking the Red Road. Third, amending moniyaw (white) ways are done through
incorporating Indigenous metaphors. Lastly, healing cannot be done without

*N’duwihitowin* (healing together).

**CHAPTER 6: Your Journey (Implications & Dissemination)**

*Your Journey* represents the North or White segment of my study’s circular illustration (see Figure 1 research process journey). Understood as the winter months, this is a time for story-telling and reflection. The findings from this study urge aftercare services to harmonize Indigenous and western-based approaches. This is done by understanding a relational ontology and local epistemology, incorporating Indigenous metaphors, and developing methods that engage many people to assist in the healing. Informed by cultural safety, decolonizing neuro-regulation, trauma informed, and cultural responsiveness concepts that honour Indigenous paradigms, the theory created from this study can influence addiction service practice (cultural safe decolonizing neuro-regulation), research (trauma informed), and policy (culturally responsive). These understandings represent the start of a new circle with the sun rising with Practice and setting with Dissemination (see Figure 13). Truly putting the person healing first can only be done when their ontology and epistemology are respected through metaphor and cultural idioms. I have come to know the profound power of the Universe. Through this process I experienced gifts and directions that would have gone amiss without Reflexive Reflection. Many hurdles presented themselves but with those hurdles I received supports through new relationships. Paying attention to my surroundings afforded me insight into my connection to nature and the seasons. In editing this section, the sun rose outside my front window. The sun rising depicts the spring or a new beginning. Chapter
six depicting the sun setting on the study along with the literal sun rising as perform edits represented the circular nature of co-creating knowledge. One may see this as coincidental whereas, I recognized this to be a sign of a living knowledge. This section presents my story to you in decolonizing aftercare approaches for people healing from addiction. The quadrants within this section metaphorically represent *Your Journey* in creating co-constructed knowledge from our story. Together we move into a new cycle of co-creating knowledge.

Figure 13 Illustration Depicting the Elements of Your Journey

**Harmonizing Culturally Safe Practice by Decolonizing Neuro-regulation**

Addiction workers, social workers, and nurses deliver aftercare services for people healing from addiction. Practice is a term defined as discipline specific competencies demonstrated by the worker that meet a standard of care set out by the
practice body. Current standards of practice follow a western-based perspective. Cultural awareness, cultural humility, and cultural safety, when practiced, indicate a high level of cultural competence desired by the discipline. The evolution of cultural safety indicates that using a western-based perspective to create an environment where a client can feel safe to express their culture is not effective. To be aware of another’s culture, to express humility about one’s own culture, and to explore one’s own biases about other cultures have not changed the exclusive environment that Indigenous peoples experience in aftercare services. Uncovering biases and walking with humility helps to decolonize western-based approaches. Decolonization honours truth, multiple ways of knowing, and privileging the voices of the colonized. Also needed is decolonizing the mind. Decolonizing the mind requires neuro-regulation through North American Indigenous practices.

This section urges decolonizing neuro-regulation through harmonizing Indigenous and western-based approaches. The Kehte-ayak gave clear direction on how to begin harmonizing approaches:

*Kehtehi* Florence - And ask them to be open-minded to that. And if they don't have the workers, they need to bring workers in that are...

*Kehtehi* Preston - Respectful to it.

*Kehtehi* Florence - Yeah, that work that way, the traditional way.

*Kehtehi* Preston - Introduce it to everyone, that's what I say, because everybody's practice is also introduced to us.
Kehtehi Florence - What's wrong with going to different agencies that don't work this way? Maybe they would like to hear that, too. Cover, blanket everybody.

Through Reflexive Reflection I uncovered that harmonizing Indigenous and western practices is the new exercise that aftercare services must incorporate. To help in ‘Your Journey’ to understand this, I start with the yellow quadrant (see Figure 13). Yellow represents spring or the beginning. Spring suggest the start for the following seasons from which to build. The earth is awakening to fresh ideas and developments.

Harmonizing is the melodic action between two entities. Two-eyed seeing (Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015) reminds us that when you look under the dirt, the trees are “holding hands” (p. 17). This metaphor explains that we are all connected.

Harmonizing aftercare services is about exploring how we qualify or explain the same experience through our own paradigms. In addition, Canada has a colonial history that adds a layer of trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples that has expressed itself as western organizations pathologizing, shaming, and blaming Indigenous people for their lived experiences. This study explains that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can benefit from an inclusive approach where both ways of knowing are honoured. This study also argues for the need to decolonize western understandings of neuro-regulation.

Decolonizing aftercare services by harmonizing approaches through incorporating metaphors and Indigenous cultural catalysts will support nugaska (stopping) addiction and pimatiswiwin (good life). However, more work should be done by co-creating knowledge that honours the voices of Indigenous peoples and paths to healing from addiction.
Trauma Informed Research

Health Canada (2011) identifies the following research priorities: use Indigenous methodologies, founded upon cultural knowledge, use cultural mainstream ideas, develop Indigenous knowledge, develop Indigenous models of practice, and provide two-way knowledge exchange with communities. This inquiry respected Health Canada’s priorities and the recommendations from Indigenous methodologists and scholars to produce trauma-informed research. A detailed description of the process I followed for co-constructing the knowledge is offered for ‘you’ the reader to explore relationalism and Indigenous epistemologies when working with Indigenous people.

The colour blue in the circular illustration (see Figure 13) depicts the day or the sky where we search for understanding and experience situations. Exploration is a form of research. I gleaned the connection between blue section of the quadrant as the day and research as exploration during that time. Research can be informed by this study in the following ways: clear process when using Indigenous methodologies, call for aftercare research expanding on trauma informed theories, follow this theory on harmonizing Indigenous and western based approaches, and use Reflexive Reflection as an Indigenous methodological form of analysis. Needed is research on figurative language in aftercare that includes Indigenous concepts, research to develop aftercare services around meeting spiritual needs to heal from addiction, and research in effectiveness of harmonized approaches.

The findings have implications for research about trauma care for all people healing from addiction. Through Reflexive Reflection I was able to create a theory on addiction as opposed to merely understanding the Kehte-ayak’s teachings. I offer a co-
constructed theory of addiction through the metaphor of achaguk (spirits) guarding the connection. Alcohol achak (spirit) or suicide achak (spirit) were somewhat spoken about in the literature. This study brings to light the notion of a trauma achak (spirit). Health Canada (2011; 2015) speaks to addressing trauma and Duran (2006) talks about healing the soul wound; therefore, I specifically identify the need to heal the soul by removing the trauma achak (spirit). Exploring ways to honour the trauma achak (spirit) and other achaguk (spirits) will affect aftercare services in a beneficial way. Working with more Indigenous knowledge keepers and Kehte-ayak to delve deeper into how to work with the achaguk (spirits) guarding the achak (spirit) connection is imperative.

Missing from Health Canada’s and Duran’s work is the focus on achak (spirit) and the need to address neuro-regulation. From the theory identified in this study, research can co-construct new knowledge on harmonizing both ways of knowing in healing the achak (spirit) wound. A big piece of trauma work is forgiveness. Lawlis and Martinez (2015) encourage achak (spirit) exploration. Removing the trauma achak (spirit) means exploring forgiveness, the process of acknowledging and letting go. Decolonizing neuro-regulation through metaphor and placing more emphasis on Indigenous figurative language is also supported through the findings.

The term forgiveness is a Christian concept and is problematic. The term personification too is a colonial term and undermines Indigenous ways of knowing. More Indigenous concepts and language is needed to deconstruct aftercare systems. A final area for research is exploring Indigenous metaphorical language. This study was contemplated upon using Reflexive Reflection whereby I chose metaphors from the teachings that were important to me. This approach was taken because I could not find a
clear analytical approach that respected Indigenous methodologies by using relational language. Trauma-informed work means incorporating diverse figurative language. Further research that decolonizes western terms in aftercare is urged.

**Policy – Cultural Responsiveness**

Aftercare policy should demonstrate respect for Indigenous ways of being and knowing. FSIN (2013) explains that cultural safety can only happen when Indigenous and non-Indigenous structures engage. Decolonizing is not about self-improvement but about envisioning futures “for which we currently have no language” (Smith, 2013, ¶17). This study produced new knowledge that would have been missed if not for the Kehte-ayak’s teachings and my Reflexive Reflection. To continue this work, policy makers must harmonize ways of doing. The cultural responsiveness framework is an Indigenous led initiative to guide aftercare providers toward decolonizing policy.

I explain policy creation through cultural responsiveness, figuratively as the third quadrant (see Figure 13). The setting sun is shown as a red symbol where the information found can affect change. The results of this study will inform policy makers in ways that will also guide cultural responsiveness. Truth, reconciliation, and self-determination can be affected by creating collaborative initiatives between Indigenous peoples and policy makers. Policies should identify harmonizing approaches as a path to strengthening cultural responsiveness. The Kehte-ayak shared their stories to promote healing in Indigenous peoples who may have had similar experiences. They acknowledged that they are hurting along with the people with whom they are working; this shared pain creates a connection. They suggest that no one is alone, that they are with the person healing, and that somehow, they will do this together. This perspective
articulates that the people providing the aftercare are they themselves on a healing journey. Aftercare services should deliver a discussion of the impact of colonization and forced assimilation. Non-Indigenous helpers can give an honest exploration of how their settler background allowed them a place of privilege in history. Sharing their stories together and understanding the historical impact create a harmonized approach to healing. This harmonized approach may meet spiritual needs and strengthen protective factors and nugaska (stopping) addiction. This is one example of how using a harmonized approach to create co-constructed knowledge impacts change.

**Dissemination (Responsibility)**

Through Indigenous methodologies, this study answered the question of what Kehte-ayak had to say about the relevance of converging Indigenous ceremonial practices and western-based treatment approaches to meet inherent spiritual needs in healing from addiction. An argument for harmonizing Indigenous and western-aftercare approaches reinforces that there is a rhythm that we need to get back to by n’duwihitowin (healing together). People seeking pimatisiwin can heal from addiction by re-establishing the rhythm or harmony that existed before.

This is the final section of *Your Journey*. The white segment on the medicine wheel represents storytelling or disseminating. We have created a relationship, you and I, and now you are welcome to co-create more relationships. The study’s information will be disseminated through multiple routes. As I list where I will disseminate this information as my responsibility to the members of this study, you are invited to reflect upon what you found important from this study and create relationships with others to continue the creation of knowledge. This study will be distributed to the University of
Regina as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctorate degree. Data collected will be used for presentations, publication, and future research in ethical and respectful ways. In honouring Indigenous methodologies, I ensured that the *Kehte-ayak* had ownership of their data and they directed me to share this information with Indigenous communities and addiction services. They suggested this information be shared with as many people as possible. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) urges researchers to demonstrate reciprocity by reporting and sharing knowledge with the community in a way they will understand. This study did not focus on one specific Indigenous community; therefore, the definition of community for this study is organizations, sectors, and circles of Indigenous peoples healing from addiction and others helping those on their healing journey. This study sought to privilege the voices (of the *Kehte-ayak* who are doing this work) in an academic space. I mean to honour what is already occurring and translate the information into a western perspective. This perspective invites ‘you’ the reader to develop this knowledge further and enhance aftercare services for all people healing from addiction. I am offering an academic voice to what is known in the community to expand the knowledge and develop it more deeply. Through this knowledge transfer process, communities can argue for a harmonized approach that balances both ways of knowing in aftercare services.

Researchers participating in Indigenous methodologies understand that they have a responsibility to the people that they work with and for generations to come. When researchers understand that the process is relational, this responsibility becomes a privilege as opposed to the western perspective of a burden. Indigenous methodologists believe that their ancestors, teachers, animals, *achaguk* (spirits), and cultural catalysts
helped guide their study in the direction needed. To honour this process, I am closing this portion of the study. The ‘closing’ is not the study’s finale but an acknowledgement that this portion is over and that it is an honouring of the knowledge shared. This was done by presenting the finished work in a formal ceremony through my institution.

I cannot articulate well enough how I have changed because of this study. Western perspective had addiction seen as a moral failing and now possibly a disease due to dysfunction in the reward system. Through Reflexive Reflection, a theoretical model was created to support aftercare programs in decolonizing relapse prevention. 

*Kehte-ayak* teachings produced metaphors that explained how to meet spiritual needs. The *Kehte-ayak* in this study believe that addiction is manifested through *achak* (spirit) distress. *Achak* (spirit) distress is brought on by unmet spiritual needs impeded by colonization, disruptive residential school experiences, and generational trauma. Harmonizing ways through metaphor and healing together may support *nugaska* addiction to strengthen *pimatisiwin*. Using Indigenous metaphors such as ‘closing off *achak* [spirit] connection’ resulting from forced assimilation and generational trauma and ‘calling the *achak* back’ through practices of meeting spiritual needs, workers can assist all people healing from addiction to work toward *miyo-pimatisiwin* or a good way/good life. The metaphors expressed in this study represent the activities and rituals needed to influence neuro-modulation that reduces cravings and stems relapse rates. Cultural exercises and ceremonies that Indigenous peoples practice provide opportunities of connection to respected spiritual direction, moving trauma *achak* (spirit), alcohol *achak*, and grief *achak* away from the spirit connection. Understanding this approach is situated deeper than a theoretical awareness within me. I have witnessed the life altering reaction
taking place when applying Indigenous metaphors to aftercare services. My intention is that others will see value in this process and open their own spiritual connection to co-create knowledge with the Universe.

This study contributes to the evidence that recovery from addiction and ultimately colonization is grounded in cultural healing practices (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk et al., 2016; Yellow Bird, 2012, 2013, 2015; Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb, 2017) and these practices are usually regionally specific and are commonly led by respected community members who facilitate such experiences (Rowan et al., 2014). Culturally based healing practices have demonstrated improved functioning in all the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual domains of wellness for Indigenous Peoples on the road to recovery from Canada’s colonial policies and practices (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk et al., 2016). This study did not create something new but honoured what is already being done by bringing onisitootumowin Kehte-ayak (the understanding of the old ones) of healing from addiction into western academia and inviting the reader to expand on this knowledge. This study was not possible without the profound wisdom and guidance of the Kehte-ayak willing to participate in this study. Many more chapters could have been written from our discussions. Kehte-ayak and knowledge holders are paramount in effecting policy, research, and aftercare services. Through their voices and teachings about healing from addiction, services can be efficacious. Future research will focus on decolonizing western-aftercare terminology and expounding on Trauma spirit through onisitootumowin kehte-ayak (the understanding of the old ones).

To summarize, the findings offer that by directing practice, continuing research, and guiding policy through decolonizing neuro-regulation, trauma informed, and cultural
responsiveness perspectives, it is possible to enhance efficacy in aftercare services for people healing from addiction and seeking *pimatisiwin* (the good life). The *Kehte-ayak* strongly suggest that to make lasting change we should harmonize approaches by understanding and valuing a relational ontology and local epistemology. Resulting from colonization, many Indigenous people healing from addiction experienced *achak* (spirit) distress. By *n’duwihitowin* (healing together) we can call the *achak* (spirit) back and meet spiritual needs to work toward *pimatisiwin* (the good life).
References


governments preserve colonial narratives of addictions and poor mental health to
intervene into the lives of Indigenous children and families in Canada.
*International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 8. doi: 10.1007/s11469-
009-9225-1

*Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 146.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2014.09.176

Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and Indigenous methodologies* (pp.1–20).

Tuhiwai Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and Indigenous methodologies*


FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations). (2013). *Cultural responsiveness framework*. Saskatoon, SK: Author


doi:10.1177/0959354310370906


Jaqui Barn [Elder Betty McKenna] (2012, April 5). *Elder Betty (Culture as intervention)* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YneJ1EiHpA


Kehtehi Howard Lavallee (First Nations University of Canada, Academic Council Meeting, 2014)


Indigenous populations: findings from a scoping study. *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy, 9*(34).


*MCN: American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing, 41*(2), 76-83; E5-6 doi: 10.1097/NMC.0000000000000211


Clinical Psychological Science, 1(12), 192-212. doi:
10.1177/2167702612466547


Cree Terms

*Kehtehi* (Old One) Keith Goulet translated the Cree terms, unless otherwise noted. The study denotes the Cree term in italics with an English translation in brackets.

*Achak* – Cree term for the spirit. *Achak* is regularly used to translate the Christian concept of spirit but even in this case the Crees also use *Munito, Pagak, Cheepuy*, etc. There is also *Weesagechak*, the so called trickster and *Weetigo-achak*, the cannibal spirit being. Spirit is also captured by *mineneetumowin*, positive thinking, and *cheegeneetumowin*, which is the excitement and exuberance of life. As translated by *Kehtehi* Keith Goulet.

*Kehte-ayak* – Cree term for the Old Ones and capitalized as a proper noun. They are recognized by a community as a knowledge keeper who uses Indigenous knowledge, as translated by First Nations University of Canada’s *Kehte-ayak* circle.

*Kehtehi* – singular form of Old Ones and capitalized as a proper noun.

*Kehtehi nistootumwina* – the voices of or understandings of the *Kehte-ayak* (the Old Ones), as translated by *Kehtehi* Keith Goulet.

*Maskihkiy* – medicine. This study uses the term *maskihkiy* as Indigenous medicine used as a protective factor described by Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb’s (2017) interpretation of Snowshoe, & Starblanket’s (2016) cultural responsiveness healing model. *Maskihkiy* comes in many forms and is personified to guide, heal, influence, or redirect a disruption. Holding an *achak*
(spirit), Maskihkiy is respected through relationship protocols for the work done. Ceremony, cultural catalysts, plants, and thoughts are examples of maskihkiy. Using Maskihkiy to strengthen protective factors and meet spiritual needs is a cyclical experience whereby the protective factors and met spiritual needs in turn create maskihkiy through the soul’s connection with the Universe.

Maci-maskihkiy – bad medicine. This study uses the term maci-maskihkiy (bad medicine) as a disruptive factor adapted from Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb’s (2017) explanation of Snowshoe, & Starblanket’s (2016) cultural responsiveness healing model. Maci-maskihkiy can be thrown on someone, manifested by someone, or developed from maskihkiy achak (spirit) that lingers.

Muskeegee – medicine, as translated by Kehtehi Keith Goulet.

Muchi-muskeegee – bad medicine, as translated by Kehtehi Keith Goulet.

Muchi-muskeegeegeguhoott - thrown bad medicine; muskeegee - medicine; muchi – bad; geguhoott – something thrown or transferred, as translated by Kehtehi Keith Goulet.

N’duwihtowin - means the healing of each other together. It is the interactive form of N’duwiheeheewn which is the act and practice of healing. As translated by Kehtehi Keith Goulet.

Nugaska – stopping and confronting something. Prevent something from advancing or stop it from coming at you. It is a verb but can also be a noun. As translated by Kehtehi Keith Goulet.
Pimatisiwin - in a good way/good life as defined by Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McNabb (2017).

Wagootowin - Cree term for kinship and can be internal or external to the collective nation, as translated by Kehte hi Keith Goulet.

Waneneetumowin – the state of distress, turmoil, or loss. It is also the word for fainting.

Mooskateneetumowin is literally the crying out thinking (high distress). The term puts together mental turmoil, emotion, and the physical act of crying, as translated by Kehte hi Keith Goulet.
Glossary

Addict - Platt (2014) identifies that this term is no longer used in the field of addiction. The author suggests that the field of addiction should focus on a person-centered approach whereby the disease does not define the person but that they are living with and moving beyond the disease. Therefore, in this study, the term addict is used only in the context of the work by Luijten, Machielsen, Veltman, Hester, de Hann, & Franken, 2014).

Aftercare - Aftercare is post-intervention support offered to people healing from addiction who have completed intensive treatment services (Health Canada, 2011). Care is described as support offered by self-help groups, cultural practitioners, community-based workers, and professional counsellors (Health Canada, 2015).

Ceremony - The term ceremony used in this study means any process that creates or strengthens the relationship formed with Creator.

Cognitive dissonance – Holding two conflicting beliefs or experiences or feeling confused about the conflicting beliefs, is cognitive dissonance.

Cultural catalyst activities – Actions or activities sparked from Canadian Indigenous values that may include dreams, intuition, special experiences, ceremony, inner voice, or prayer.

First Nations – The term was created through a grass roots effort to replace the term Indian. It is a respectful term that more accurately depicts the Indigenous
population once identified as Indian peoples and is used when discussing statistics.

Forgiveness – Depicts the act of acknowledging one’s transgressions or another’s transgressions and releasing the notion of shame and guilt that is attached. To forgive self or others is a form of *maskihkiy* (medicine) used as a protective factor to promote *pimatisiwin* (living the good life).

Harmonizing – A term that describes a way of not only uniting Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways but also amending the effects of colonization. The *Kehte-ayak* (Old Ones) use this term to define the way of being before colonization – in harmony. Many authors designate the ways of uniting Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways (see below); however, the term harmonizing is preferred because it describes a rhythm or energy of being that acknowledges and honours a relational ontology. It is closely related to the following terms:

- Uniting – Western term meaning bringing two sides together.
- 2-eyed seeing – coined by Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett (2015) “Two-Eyed Seeing refers to learning to see from one eye with the strength of (or best in) Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and learning to see from the other eye with the strengths of (or best in) Western knowledges and ways of knowing . . . and most importantly, using both of these eyes together for the benefit of all” (p. 16-17). This view is used when harmonizing approaches.
- Walking in both worlds – another term meaning understanding both ways of knowing but does not acknowledge the microscopic, atomic beat that takes place with harmonizing.

- 2-way knowledge exchange - as above.

- Ethical Space – coined by Willie Ermine (2007). This is the space of engagement that is created to support the harmonization of human particles. Without this space, harmonization is not possible.

Indigenous – Meant to be an inclusive term recognizing original or First Peoples of North America. In Canada, Indigenous includes Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who are recognized as distinct groups. Because different terms have been used historically, references in cited documents are maintained as presented by the original authors as are terms used by the Kehtehi in the conversations. Although the current research initiative involves participants who are Indigenous, to prevent a ‘pan-Indian’ perspective, it must be noted that there is much-cultural heterogeneity within communities belonging to a particular Nation as there is between Nations. Indigenous is capitalized to reflect a proper noun. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) identifies that Indigenous is a problematic term; however, it suggests a shared experience of colonization and the struggle for self-determination. This study refers to Canadian Indigenous peoples.

Kinship – Relatives and relations as a group is one’s kinship. The Cree term for kinship is *Wagootowin* and can be internal or external to the collective Nation, as translated by Kehtehi Keith Goulet.

Neural – Term that pertains to the nerves and nervous system.
Neurological – This term pertains to the structures, functions, and disorders of the nervous system.

Neuromodulation – Therapies that support physiological changes to neurons through chemical, electronic stimulation, or neuro-regulation are forms of neuromodulation.

Neuro-regulation – It is a form of neuromodulation to improve executive functioning by settling nervous system imbalance, restoring neuro-pathway functioning, and retraining balanced amygdalae responses through non-chemical or electronic stimulation therapies.

Non-Indigenous – Western term to depict anyone other than the original or first peoples of North America.

Recovery – Western term to describe healing after addiction.

Reflexive Reflection – A research step used in place of data analysis that depicts a respectful process of contemplating the knowledge created through Indigenous Methodologies. The term reflection is used in place of analysis to honour a non-hierarchical relational ontology. Loosely combining Narrative, Reflexive, and Metaphor analyses, produced a guideline for researchers to identify how the conversations impacted them within relationship. Term coined by Carrie LaVallie.

Relapse prevention – Western term meaning to inhibit reoccurrence of addiction
Resilience – The ability to recover from adversity resulting in an enriched state. The term resilience is the current terminology. Resiliency is no longer used but is the same word as resilience.

Spirit – Is the non-physical part of a person that is presumed to live beyond death. It is a multidimensional term that is difficult to define because it is connected to all aspects of life whether it is religious or non-religious. Psyche has replaced the term spirit in most western vernacular relating to emotional and mental phenomena. This study brings back the term spirit in addiction work and neuromodulation. See Cree term achak.

Spiritual – Concerning the spirit, psyche, or essence of life. Often defined culturally. One may experience spiritual distress when they go against cultural or internal beliefs, or experience damage to their spirit such as trauma or abuse.

Spirituality – A noun concerning the spirit, psyche, or essence of life. In this study, it is used as an umbrella term to depict the four-basic spirit needs that meet (1) love and belonging, (2) purpose and meaning of life, (3), forgiveness and (4) hope and creativity. It is not seen as a form of religion.

Soul – To reduce confusion, the term soul is used at times to depict the spirit, psyche, or essence of life pertaining to oneself.

Western – Concept used to describe a collective way of beliefs and values imposed upon Indigenous peoples by European immigrants, who enforced a Christian viewpoint. Also described as Eurocentric, Christian, and positivistic perspectives of the European settlers.
APPENDIX A Ethics Approval

University of Regina
Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

Investigator(s): Carrie Leaville
Department: Education
Funder: Untunded
Supervisor: Dr. JoLee Sasakamoose

Title: Indigenous and Western Based Healing Approaches that Meet Spiritual Needs to Strengthen Relapse Prevention as Identified by Elders

APPROVED ON: March 14, 2016 RENEWAL DATE: March 14, 2017

APPROVAL OF:
Application For Behavioural Research Ethics Review
Recruitment Information
Recruitment Foster
Sample Interview Questions
Participant Consent Form

FULL BOARD MEETING DELEGATED REVIEW_x_

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The Principal Investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions:
http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms1/ethics-forms.html

Dr. Lorina Hoeber, Chair
University of Regina Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:
Research Office
University of Regina
Research and Innovation Centre 109
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Telephone (306) 585-4775
Fax: (306) 585-4893
research.ethics@uregina.ca
APPENDIX B  Consent Form

University of Regina

Participant Consent Form

Indigenous and Western Based Healing Approaches that Meet Spiritual Needs to Strengthen Relapse Prevention as Identified by Elders

You are invited to participate in a study seeking to interview First Nations Elders engaged in Indigenous and western approaches to assist others in healing from addictions. I am inviting you to have a number of conversations with me to share your thoughts about Indigenous approaches, definitions, and views about harmonizing with western approaches to meet a person’s spiritual needs in healing from addictions. The findings from this study will support efforts in helping people working in the field of addictions to respect all cultures.

The conversations will be audio-taped so that I (the researcher) have an accurate record of your words and ideas. You may request that any recording device be turned off during any of the interviews. This study will take place at a time and in a location convenient to you. A minimum of four gatherings will take place, for a period of 90—90 minutes as you see fit. Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role, at any time.

I have taken great measure to ensure I am using a process that is respectful to you the participant in this study and to ensure the research does not misuse your knowledge. Conversations will continuously take place over the course of the study, ensuring that you feel safe and included in all aspects of information gathering. There may be a small risk of mental or physical fatigue; you are encouraged to take breaks, reschedule, or stop the conversation at any time. The audiotapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet at First Nations University in Prince Albert and a password protected server for electronic files. Only the transcriber and I will have access to this material. They will be kept for six years after the completion of the project and then destroyed. Results from the interviews (including quotes) will be used in future academic presentations, books, and articles. We would like to use your name if we quote you to pay respect to your knowledge or you may request that your input remain confidential so your name will not be used.

This study is funded by the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit (SIDEU) located in the Faculty of Education for the University of Regina. Funds cover an honorarium for your time and travel (if applicable) by participating in the study.

Your participation is voluntary and you may answer only those questions of which you are comfortable. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. Should you wish to withdraw, please notify me immediately, Dr. JoLee Saskamooste, or Dr. Ken Montgomery. If you withdraw after the data collection has begun, you will not be required to participate in further interviews; however, your data will continue to be used. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply up to one month after
our last gathering. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the UofR Research Ethics Board on March 14, 2016. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office (306 585 4775) or research.ethics@uregina.ca. Out of town, participants may call collect.

**Researcher(s):** Camie LaVallie, Graduate Student, Educational Psychology, University of Regina, 306.765.3333 ex: 7505, clavallie@muniv.ca (Location 1301 Central Avenue, Prince Albert)

**Supervisor:** Dr. JoLee Sasakamoose, Faculty of Education, University of Regina, 306-382-4540, JoLee.Sasakamoose@uregina.ca

**Co-Supervisor:** Ken Montgomery, Education, University of Regina, 306-585-5031, Ken.Montgomery@uregina.ca.
Indigenous and Western Based Healing Approaches that Meet Spiritual Needs to Strengthen Relapse Prevention as Identified by Elders

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 am aware of the risks and I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

I give consent for my name to be used when quoting my words.____________________

I do not want my name used when quoting my words.____________________

Name of Participant __________________ Signature __________________ Date __________

Researcher’s Signature ______________ Date __________

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

ORAL CONSENT
Oral Consent: If the consent has been obtained orally, this should be recorded. For example, the Consent Form dated, and signed by the researcher(s) indicating that “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.

☐ I give consent for my name to be used when quoting my words.____________________

☐ I do not want my name used when quoting my words.____________________

Name of Participant __________________ Researcher’s Signature ______________ Date __________

FOR VISUAL DATA In cases where visual data is being sought option 4 should be used to supplement one of the aforementioned consent options.

Visually Recorded Images/Video. Participant or parent/guardian to provide initials:

- Photos may be taken of me [my child] for: Analysis _______ Dissemination _______

- Videos may be taken of me [my child] for: Analysis _______ Dissemination _______

Page 3 of 3
APPENDIX C Demographics Questionnaire

Study Demographics

Name to use

Age

Location

Ethnicity

Education

Employment History related to addictions work

Employment status

Years Sober

Number of Relapses
APPENDIX D Interview Questions

Sample Conversation Questions:

Participant Data:

Name
Address
Contact information

You can take breaks at any point during the conversation, reschedule the conversation, or stop the conversation if they are feeling physically or mentally fatigued.

How they would like to be identified for the study and within the dissemination of the dissertation. (age, community, name to use)

Review research purpose and researcher’s intent. Invite participant to identify their intent in participating.

Wave one

Tell me about your experience in the field of addictions.

Tell me about what you know about the concept of addiction pre-contact.

Are there other terms for addiction, relapse, healing methods, and approaches?

What are your thoughts about the role colonization played in the current state of addiction amongst Indigenous people?

In exploring harmonizing Indigenous and western approaches what questions do you think we should explore during wave two of the study?

You can take breaks at any point during the conversation, reschedule the conversation, or stop the conversation if they are feeling physically or mentally fatigued.

Wave two (sample questions)

With your experience in the field of addictions (or alternate term), how do you see Indigenous approaches assisting healing?

How do you see western approaches assisting in healing?

How do you see the two approaches harmonizing and is that necessary?
What would a harmonized approach look like in treatment centers or organizations that work with people healing from addictions?

How might these approaches address the spiritual needs of people healing from addictions?

How might people healing from addictions access these approaches in urban settings?

How and to whom should this information be sent out?
## APPENDIX E Reflexive Reflection Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflexive Reflection Steps</th>
<th>Conversation</th>
<th>Researcher notes</th>
<th>Contemplating the data</th>
<th>Reflexive Reflection</th>
<th>Contemplating the reflection</th>
<th>Discussing the reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Relationship with the data.</td>
<td>Indigenous method to collect the data.</td>
<td>Understandings received during the conversation were jotted down immediately after.</td>
<td>Alter the conversations, I thought about the data and observed relational connections that entered my awareness.</td>
<td>I sat down with the conversations and read them looking for teachings.</td>
<td>Once identifying the metaphors, I contemplated on how they affected me more deeply than just the cognitive way of knowing.</td>
<td>Disseminate to others to build the knowledge. Come back to the reflection on the data to take it deeper. Create new knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Datum One Example</td>
<td>I met with the Kehtehi Preston for our first conversation.</td>
<td>As Kehtehi Preston spoke I observed my thoughts, body reactions, and the energy in the room.</td>
<td>From the teachings that spoke to me, I gleaned metaphors.</td>
<td>I asked myself - What did these teachings mean to my life as a person, as a researcher, as a counsellor, as a mother, as a friend, and as a colleague.</td>
<td>I shared my observations with others to validate/correct my understandings of the concepts. And then started the cycle of contemplation over again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kehtehi Preston: Yeah, I knew there was a higher power somewhere but I didn’t know what it was, you know. I remember going into treatment in ’96, I was probably the only one that answered it. They asked who’s your higher power and everybody wrote down God, Lord, Jesus, Creator, things like that. And I just said the spirit within me. …. I don’t know what [made] it happen in my head through the beginning</td>
<td>I got goose bumps. I was amazed that he had a strong connection to something bigger than himself at such an early age. The awareness of this connection stayed with him even through difficult times.</td>
<td>When I read the conversations, the notion of that voice in your head or the universe making its needs known was revealed through the Kehte-ayak words. The metaphor ‘Achak (spirit) calling’ was gleaned.</td>
<td>I too have experienced this teaching/metaphor. When I am struggling with a decision, I find that in moments of silence an answer will come to me. One that I may not have expected but much later found to be the one that took me on a path that I have been unconsciously walking for a while. I now use this teaching with students, family members, clients, and colleagues.</td>
<td>When shared with others, this metaphor provides an immediate unspoken understanding of a sense of belonging, meaning, and hope. In conversations with my supervisor, we gleaned the metaphor ‘Calling the achak (spirit) back’ to round out the major findings to balance the loss of the connection and the request of our own freewill to reengage. This information is not new.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the years. Yeah, I knew there was something out there. One time I went on my knees, yeah. I was just a kid. And I started praying because, what the heck was happening, something bad was happening. So, I went and I did that, and that thing stopped. And I said ‘Wow’ you know. That’s what I said, ‘Wow.’

knowledge but found knowledge that the Indigenous people had hidden, lost, or stripped away.