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**FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES
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**FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES**

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Ph.D. (Education)

GRADE / DEGREE

Faculty of Education

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

**Domestic Violence in Aboriginal Communities:
A Context for Resilience**

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Domestic Violence in Aboriginal Communities:

A Context for Resilience

Anita Olsen Harper

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the PhD degree in Education

Faculty of Education

University of Ottawa

Ottawa, Canada, 2010

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395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
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Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-79722-8
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-79722-8

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Abstract

My research is a study of the perspectives of *resilience* by survivors of domestic violence (DV) in three Aboriginal communities. The Executive Directors (EDs) of the women's shelters on these reserves were interviewed, as well as three DV survivors who were identified by the EDs. The meanings articulated by interviewees is intended to provide educators and those in anti-violence efforts with an increased understanding of *resilience* as defined by Aboriginal DV survivors. The interpretations that were voiced are different from those that are understood according to prevailing Western tradition. Among Aboriginal populations, internally-derived perspectives of resilience, I contend, are foundational in developing curricula aimed at reducing DV and its traumatic manifestations.

DV is often deceptively and simplistically construed as the conduct and dynamics of two people within a home. However, my investigative study that includes a comprehensive literature review, exposes the fallacy of this assumption as it pertains to Aboriginal communities: DV has historic origins that are strongly grounded in colonialism. DV is, as well, socially constructed in power hierarchies that sustain patriarchal supremacy, and a devastating social and psychological plague in all reserve communities. My research recognizes that community-based interventions in Aboriginal communities can only be effectively operationalized with the knowledge of the intricacies of colonialism as they pertain specifically to DV. Drawing on traditional beliefs and community principles such as meaningful participation, integration of cultural and spiritual practices, recognition of historical injustices by colonizing forces, consensus-derived decision-making involving women and youth all help inform educational offerings about the actionable content and delivery of resilience teachings.

Keywords: Aboriginal, colonialism, domestic violence, resilience, well-being

Acknowledgements

Kiitchi meegwetch and sincerest appreciation to the community participants and Executive Directors of on-reserve women's shelters who gave their time and energy to participate in my study. Community participants related their personal stories of resilience to me, and discussed their reasons and motivations for moving into violence-free lives. Special thanks also to the Executive Directors of the women's shelters who helped me facilitate the logistics of the interviews, and also articulated stories of the resilience of their clients. Without the input of these women, my study simply would not have taken place.

Thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Sharon Cook, and all my Advisory Committee members. It was a long four years that were mixed with both high and low points – a few times, moving onwards was very difficult. Thank you, Meegwetch, to my husband Elijah, and all my family and friends who told me that, yes, I would really do this.

Dedication

My work is dedicated to all women and men who live in domestic violence. May they hear the words of Creation and of the ancestors who voice a desire for good lives for all, and may their resilience move them into healthy lifestyles.

My work is also dedicated to those who strive to eradicate domestic violence. I think of Inuit singer Lucie Idlout with special thanks; she raised awareness of domestic violence by singing at the meeting in Iqaluit of the G7 finance ministers from the world's leading economies in February 2010. These are the words of her song, "Angel Street":

Broken down on Angel Street, he pushed you down, made you unseen

Irene – High heels on a gravel road

Irene – High heels on a gravel road

He never loved you, that's all he knows, could never please him, so the story goes

Irene – High heels on a gravel road

Irene – High heels on a gravel road

My lovely Irene

Why didn't you walk away, you should have just walked away

You ain't crazy, how could you have known, he'd kill a lifetime

And break all your bones

Irene – High heels on a gravel road

Irene – High heels on a gravel road

High heels on a gravel road – My lovely Irene

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Listing of Acronyms & Abbreviations

CMHC	Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation
CP	community participant
DV	domestic violence
ED	Executive Director of a women's shelter
INAC	Indian & Northern Affairs Canada
IPV	intimate partner violence
MRP	matrimonial real property
REB	Research Ethics Board

1. Domestic Violence (DV) in Aboriginal Communities

1.1 Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) may appear as no more than aggressive behaviours between men and women in their own homes, but it is a serious issue of profound and lasting consequence. It destroys entire families by undermining the health and well-being of all individuals involved; in Aboriginal communities, it significantly contributes to the erosion of ancient cultures. My thesis adds to the discourses on DV in Aboriginal populations, and the role of resilience in surviving DV. A comprehensive scan of literature on DV in Aboriginal contexts includes a review of the material on the historiographic treatment of Aboriginal people by colonizing forces in early and post-contact times and the relationship of these activities on the intensification of DV on reserves and other Native communities.

Not everyone in abusive homes in Aboriginal communities and reserves remains in DV, however. Many women and men, having lived in DV, come to realize that it has no place in their expectations for a strong home life. The participants of my research, all women, identified resilience as central in their move from the daily adversity of DV into recreated and manageable lives. They described their resilience as mostly hidden and dormant as long as they lived in violence, but on realizing an overwhelming incapability of addressing DV issues on their own, sought help and, in time, made positive and lasting life changes. The concept of resilience among DV survivors in Aboriginal communities and the facets of resilience that moved them into much healthier lifestyles was the focus of my research. Participants' interpretations of resilience and the aspects they perceived as salient in addressing DV were a major component of my study.

I also explored the idea of whether or not the participants' views of resilience in DV contexts were in any way different from those of dominant society. While it was beyond the

parameters of my study to address any differences, I discuss resilience as conceived in the dominant culture's literature. The following were my specific research questions:

1. How do survivors of DV in Aboriginal communities view resilience in terms of their own survival?
2. In addressing DV in Aboriginal communities, which features of resilience are salient?
3. In the context of DV, does the concept of resilience in Aboriginal epistemologies differ from Western views?

My thesis exposes the deep historic roots of DV in Aboriginal populations and their grounding in Canada's colonial developments. To begin, I examine the violence of colonialism since directing Aboriginal peoples was a significant part of operationalizing European imperialist ideology in the "New World". The importance of this process cannot be ignored because colonialism is "violence in thought and action; it inflicts mental and physical torture on the colonized" (Ankomah, 2003, p. 332). In the following section, I discuss the effects of the implementation of colonial policies and regulations on Aboriginal peoples. In particular, I examine these effects in relation to the historic family and gender relationships which structured complementarity between men and women, and the fact that various customs countered the possibility of DV in these older societies. I then explore legislations and other instruments used to obliterate the family networks and parallelism of gender functioning in traditional societies and the subsequent marginalization of Aboriginal women in the emerging EuroCanadian society. Afterwards, I discuss the role of dominant social constructions in sustaining DV in contemporary times.

From there, I proceed to examine, partially through the literature review, the contemporary manifestations of colonialism in Aboriginal communities and the serious

psychosocial threat they place on the present and following generations. Of those outcomes, I concentrate on DV, and my writing throughout emphasizes the distinct and definite role of colonization in the high rates of DV in Aboriginal communities. While the emphasis on colonialism as causal of DV may appear repetitive, the importance of an in-depth exploration of this interlinkage cannot be understated. Some may not realize, even on a superficial level, how destructively colonialism has impacted the Aboriginal peoples in this country; there are those, such as Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who publicly deny the history of colonization in Canada. It is this thread of denial and often deliberate misunderstanding of the intricacies of colonialism that I attempt to address in my study of resilience in a DV context. It is a salient theme, particularly since studies have found that, worldwide, DV rates are higher for those who are colonized than for those who implemented colonization (Atkinson, 2002; Brownridge, 2003, 2009; Lugones, 2007; Luckashenko, 1997; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000, Spiwak & Brownridge, 2005; Wahab & Olson, 2004).

I then give a synopsis of the forty-two on-reserve women's shelters, mostly from my own work experiences, since other information is exceedingly sparse. The salient themes that arise are the overwhelming need for shelter for abused Aboriginal women and the general marginalization of shelters as agencies within band administrations. These, I believe, are the result of internalized oppression, the colonized mimicking the colonizers in a quest to access outside benefits and also from abandoning interests in what Fanon (1961/2004) referred to as humanism and solidarity. I conclude the chapter by discussing the meaning of health, well-being and resilience according to Aboriginal thought and that DV is increasingly being addressed as a threat to wholistic growth for individuals and entire Indigenous populations.

Throughout my writing, I use the words “Aboriginal”, “Indigenous” and “Native” in referring to the original inhabitants of the land and their descendants in all parts of what is now known as Canada. This country’s *Constitution Act, 1982*, S35(2), identifies three groups of Aboriginal peoples with Aboriginal rights: Indian, Inuit and Métis. I avoid using the term “Indian” unless I am referring to contexts of legislation or law, even though it may be appropriate and preferred in all contexts in different parts of the country. I prefer “First Nation(s)” who are a people that may or may not be registered under the federal *Indian Act*. Registered First Nations persons are legally “Indians”; the non-registered are not. I use “Aboriginal”, “Indigenous” and “Native” in a Canada-wide sense for the Métis, Inuit, and First Nations regardless of where they live and regardless of their federal recognition.

Related to this explanation is my use of the word “epistemology”. Sometimes I use it in the singular but in the context of “Indigenous (or Aboriginal) epistemology”, this does not mean that I acknowledge only one Indigenous (or Aboriginal) epistemology. It simply means that I am using it as an umbrella or encompassing term. The same applies to my use of the word “knowledge”. I recognize that, just as there are thousands of Aboriginal epistemologies, so there are thousands of Indigenous (or Aboriginal) knowledges – even though I may use the singular, not plural. The same reasoning parallels my application of the words “Western epistemology” and “Western knowledge”.

1.2 The violence of colonialism

European social and political territorialism was germane in early colonization efforts (Kaup, 2005) and thrived in initial and post-Confederation nation-building activities (Ladner & Dick, 2008). Aboriginal people have been excluded from the efforts involved in setting up and maintaining institutional infrastructure and establishments (Lawrence & Dua, 2006). The role of racism in contemporary interactions, exclusions and constitutional stigmatization of Aboriginal people is undeniable (Bannerji, 1997), and women appear to be especially targeted (Simpson, 2008; Razack, 2002). Tremblay (2003), Director of the Research Centre on Women and Politics at the University of Ottawa, for example, attributes the paltry number of Indigenous members in the House of Commons since Confederation to racism:

The existence of racism in non-Aboriginal society must also be taken into account. This process of shunting Aboriginal people aside is even more marked among Aboriginal women, who must grapple not only with the racism of non-Aboriginal society, but also with the sexism of male-dominated institutions. (¶2)

Many scholars observe that the use of violence is deeply embedded in the ideology of colonialism (Bhabha, 1986; Blomley, 2003; Crush, 1996; Fanon, 1967, 1982; Furniss, 2000; Harris, 1997; Kebede, 2001, 2003; Memmi, 1965; Razack, 2000; Smith, 2005a; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1994). American national identity, according to Foote (1997), is centered on violence “given the necessarily violent nature of colonial settlement” (Blomley, 2003, p. 126). In Canada during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, “European diseases were permitted to ravage Aboriginal communities largely unchecked, and with a certain degree of indifference, because these were not processes for which Europeans felt particularly responsible” (Woolford, 2009, p. 90). After population decimation when serious threat of retaliation by Native groups became

highly unlikely, “[t]he destructive effect of colonialism intensified as Europeans began to seek possession of Aboriginal territories for settlement and resource exploitation” (p. 83). Clearly, violence was perpetrated in Western civilization against the First Peoples according to European dictates for their own settlement, notions of progression and development needs.

State sovereignty, as a concept, “necessarily supports structural inequality between men and women and is complicit in systematic male oppression and violence against women” (Fellmeth, 2000, p. 670). Further, Gunn Allen (1998) states that, “. . . the oppression and abuse of women is indistinguishable from fundamental Western concepts of social order” (p. 66). Survivors of colonial violence suffer from many adversities and symptoms, such as identity loss, feelings of worthlessness, self-destructive behaviour, self-blame, trauma and depression. For example, the association between colonialism and suicide, a social crisis outcome, is uncontested by many scholars (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Erickson, 2005; McGill, 2008; Willow, 2009). Violence internalized within populations also takes the form of DV and violence against women.

On more familial levels, one may speculate about the reasons for internalized violence within domestic relationships in Native groups since the basic foundation for establishing home lives is commonly viewed as an enduring and reciprocated affection and respect. Traditionally, marriage-type partnerships resulted from the joining of families so the needs of entire clans or tribes were met, but this does not tend to be the custom today. To offer an explanation of this seeming paradox, I examine colonization’s effect on Aboriginal people as a serial collective since it is from therein that the individuals who become perpetrators, and also the victims of DV, emerge. According to Kebede (2001), the effects of colonization are so severe because “[c]olonial discourse and rule have so dehumanized and degraded colonized people that they have to go through the whole process of relearning to be human” (p. 540). Kebede further

articulates the devastation that results from the outside imposition of labels of savageness and other related pejorative concepts becoming entrenched into Native individuals' psyches and life attitudes about themselves and their heritage (also, France, McCormick & del Carmen Rodríguez, 2004). Such outside judgments and determinations have been thrust onto the colonized by strong assimilative forces that have included population decimation, banishment onto reserves, spiritual and language deprivation, cultural destruction, devious and deliberate "divide and rule" tactics dispersed among the First Peoples, economic loss and dispossession, and implementation of European-based law and order. Historic governors, espousing and operationalizing colonization principles, established infrastructures that perpetuated violence, power and control over their victims (Coombes, 2006; Dickason, 2002; Spivak, 1990), even to this day where Aboriginal peoples occupy substandard spaces within their own traditional territories (Bastien, Kremer, Kuokkanen & Vickers, 2003; Hindle, Anderson, Giberson & Kayseas, 2005; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000).

The Canadian government is only one, but a powerful perpetrator of violence against the Aboriginal peoples; one of its most egregious and significant tools was the residential school system (the last of which closed as recently as the 1990s) which specifically taught young students how to pit themselves against each other. Using a Christian regimen combined with military-like discipline, it taught students that their ancestral traditions were insignificant and vastly inferior to those of EuroCanadian tradition. They were victims of violence, who in the name of education, suffered both the long- and short-term consequences of a school system that attacked their family formation and subjected them to on-going physical and sexual abuse (Dua, 1999; Hodgson, 1991). Zellerer (2003) states that, "[t]he brutality committed against generations

of Aboriginal children is only beginning to emerge” (p. 176). One research study on DV in the United States found that “in boarding schools, children were reprimanded for behaving as Navajo and for speaking Navajo. They were often beaten, thereby learning the Anglo value that violence was an acceptable method of reprimand and social control” (Feinman, 1992, p. 141). After being exposed to a type of Western knowing, students found themselves misplaced, particularly within the broader white society – for what they had learned was a poisoned knowing that had also been gnawing at their sense of belonging within their own families and communities.

While the unraveling of historic subjugation may seem distant and inaccessible, such is not the case. History is not an artifact – it follows everywhere, even into homes. Long-term outside oppressions, unrecognized for what they are and therefore without solution, can only internalize themselves within individuals (Bastien, Kremer, Kuokkanen & Vickers, 2003); manifestation comes in diverse forms, DV being one of them. Revenge-inspired anger towards the faceless and nameless perpetrators of colonial-based harm is projected onto those closest to the victims – usually family members, specifically spouses (Duran, 2006). The closer to the victim family members are, the more likely they are of receiving the brunt of such anger (Poupart, 2003). These dynamics are further complicated because the victims of colonialism are both spouses – in fact, the entire community is negatively impacted. In the case of intimate partnerships, spouses who are DV victims learn to expect abusive treatment since abuse and violence has been directed at them, not only at a singular, but also at collective and generational levels. Indeed, it is not inconceivable to link within the entire people, a vast burning rage at the oppressions into which they have been submerged, at the towering grief and loss for a heritage and traditions of another distant life that had always provided refuge, structure, knowledge and

reality. The First Peoples could only view the legacy they were to have inherited, if it were not for the onslaught of colonialism, through a dark glass, and never come to live it out.

There is reason for hope, however, and all is not lost. Huron-Wyandot historian, philosopher and educator Georges Sioui (2008) speaks of what he sees as societal “reflection about how to recover a sense of balance” (p. 138). Change must include a reversal in the acceptance of only men holding power in society’s essential mechanisms because “[t]he sacredness of creation then gets lost. Linearity implies father-centredness. . . . women, from their original position of dignity and even social primacy, become themselves servants in the possession of men, who are themselves servants of other masculine masters” (p. 138). He clarifies the point that further separating women and men by propelling “enmity between genders” (p. 139) is not conducive for harmony in any society. EuroCanadian society today has “. . . inherited the European patricientist mode, and has been in it for many centuries and it will be a long journey before we strike a new balance”. Apache/Tewa clinical psychologist Duran (2006), as well, states that

[i]f instead such violence is understood within an accurate historical context, the family will be able to step into a more objective treatment paradigm. . . . Instead of feeling like a dysfunctional and defective system, the family will be able to understand the choices allowed it by history that brought it to the point of having defective behaviours. These behaviours can be rewritten into the family’s “new” story, which can then have a new ending. (p. 24)

Duran is emphatic that individuals and families ought not excuse themselves from responsibilities for self-healing which, by extension, heals entire communities. First, there must be acknowledgement of the specific historic and destructive outside meddlings that have become

ingrained into contemporary communal and individual lives. Bent-Goodley (2005) concurs with this; she observes that the understanding of colonization “is critical to being able to assist survivors and perpetrators (Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999; Bent-Goodley, 2001; Carrillo & Gouband-Reyna, 1998; Dennis, Key, Kirk, & Smith, 1995; Franklin, 2000; Gondolf & Williams, 2001; McEachern, Van Winkle, & Steiner, 1998)” (p. 195). Duran envisions a re-creation of new and empowering family systems that overcome the overwhelmingly brutal systemic forces that have significantly contributed to the birthing of the dysfunctional behaviours and dynamics in many contemporary Native groups. Markers of oppression, such as class, gender, sex, sexual orientation, disability, and “off- or on-reserve” status that exemplify unbalanced power relations within First Nations communities must be recognized before remediation. Avoiding pathological interpretations and analyses, he sees the need for families to provide “the historical context for subsequent generations to reinvent themselves as necessary to continue life in a more balanced life-world” (p. 24). Clearly, there are many who recognize the healing factor of historical knowledge.

I emphasize, though, that the attitudes of settlers and groups of settlers towards Aboriginal people were, historically over the centuries and regions, varied (Romaniuc, 2000). Not all relationships were disparaging of the original inhabitants of the country, and undoubtedly, many strong bonds were formed. Borrows (2010) states that, “From the 1500s onward, a number of European individuals submitted themselves to Indigenous legal order. For example, many traders and explorers adopted Indigenous legal traditions and participated in their laws” (p. 134). He observes that, as time went on, mutually-beneficial conceptions and demonstrations of reconciliation of differences through the blending of legal and other practices were attenuated: “[i]nteractions became more dependent on non-Aboriginal cultural and legal

norms as these groups grew stronger in North America” (p. 135). As the new government strengthened in power, and Eurocentric law became entrenched, “the aborigines of the New World were always disregarded for these purposes [of law-making] also, no matter how numerous they might be” (Côté, 1977, p. 42).

Canadian law, an important organizing activity reflecting the distinct cultural roots of dominant ideology, was institutionalized; its outcomes have not been favourable to Aboriginal people. The extremely high rates of both federal and provincial incarceration of Native people (Balfour, 2008; Gray & Lauderdale, 2007; Smandych, Lincoln & Wilson, 1993) bear testimony to this, as does the under-representation of Aboriginal people among those with authority within the justice system. Indeed, the late Dr. Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) stated that the rules of law

compound the First Nations or other dispossessed collectivities’ sense of powerlessness.

Our understanding of law is not represented within the structure of the Canadian legal system. We experience that system, particularly the criminal justice system, as racist and oppressive. . . . We did not participate in the process of agreeing to the assumptions and values reflected in that system. . . . Only by understanding the history of the Canadian legal system can we then understand why the result of this system is not justice but exclusion and force. (pp. 34-35)

While some groups were, without doubt, less hostile than others towards the First Peoples, all – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – had to comply with Canadian law, a system with distinct leanings that were not empathetic towards the epistemologies, values and judgments of Indigenous populations anywhere in the country.

1.3 Colonial revision of Aboriginal tradition

Colonialism found a site for dominance by disrupting the existing structures of Aboriginal populations, such as traditional gender roles. Indeed, these locations, because they included the placement of Indigenous female bodies, were “an important site for achieving colonial rule and male relations of governance” (Emberley, 2001, p. 71). The violence of colonial legislation against Indian women in Canada parallels the domestic and other types of violence against women that founded and maintained the interrelationships between later governments and *Indian Act*-elected political leadership (Green, 1985; Jamieson, 1986). Violence has always cemented alliances and complicities (Kebede, 2001; Robertson Cremer, 2008); in this case, colonialism initialized a conjoined oppression against women, particularly on reserve lands in relation to the disempowerment of gendered traditions. Turpel (1993) observes that the private and public divisions of gender and power are deeply intertwined with the history of imperialism and colonization, and that violence against women within the home ensures their long-term oppression.

1.3.1 Gender parallelism in traditional Aboriginal populations

The traditional gender roles in pre-contact Aboriginal cultures were balanced and stable; they provided safety for women, and powerful places within those societies (Agtuca, 2008; Altamirano-Jiménez, 2009; Gunn Allen, 1986; Monture-Angus, 1999; Sinclair, 1999, ix-x). In some patrilineal groups where men held political office, women were still honoured and highly esteemed for their life-sustaining contributions to the survival of the whole nation, and for their places as mothers, grandmothers, wives, aunts and sisters (Barker, 2006; Blair, 2005; Carter, 2003; Williams, Jr., 1990). The fact that many pre-Contact Aboriginal societies were both matrilineal and matrilineal ensured the maintenance and continuation of women’s authority and

legitimate place. In these cultures, a husband joined his wife's family and yielded to its authority (Williams, 1969), a social arrangement that effectively prevented him from excesses in authority and domination over his wife and children (Parrillo, 2009). Gender complementarity among Indigenous populations was not limited to the lands that later became known as Canada and the United States. Vieira Powers (2000), for example, described the Andean cultures as

societies in which women and men performed distinct social, political, and economic roles, but roles that were perceived as equally important to the successful operation of the society, whether performed by women or by men. Women's roles were not seen as subordinate to or less significant than those of men; instead women's and men's contributions were equally valued, considered essential one to the other and to the whole of society; that is, they were complementary. Women's roles were not auxiliary; rather women and men were partners in the business of life. (pp. 511-512)

Anderson (1993) states that the Huron-Wyandot and Innu were “. . . a picture of a complex and delicately balanced series of power relations in which authority, submission and domination were always in play, but usually stalemated” (p. 227). Other Native societies, even though they may have been more patriarchal in structure, were similar to the Iroquoian in their recognition and placing of women in high standing (Eberts, McIvor & Nahanee, 2006). Hunting and gathering peoples knew women were essential and valued economic partners in various work activities associated with the seasonal cycles (Buss, 2008). In these societies, women took on domestic roles that included food preparation, child care and socialization and garment-making, as well as essential livelihood activities such as preparing fish nets and weirs (Kaye Lamb, 1970). It was common understanding that any harm suffered by women would impact negatively on the whole nation.

Among the Anishinaapbe, women were given the responsibility of directly relating to the Earth and keeping up the sacred fires of Creation (Keenan, 2007). In addition to watching over community fires for ceremonial purposes and vigilance in ensuring that their attitudes were spiritually pure and honourable to the Creator and Mother Earth (Poupart, 2001), they maintained the fires for cooking and heating. Both the physical and spiritual activities were recognized and esteemed for it was established that not everyone could serve in the same capacity (Boatman, 1992). Anishinaapbe women were personally autonomous, appreciated and treated as valued members in all aspects of life.

The basic foundation of education within many Indigenous cultures was based on matricentrism and reflects gender equality (Strang, 2001) – although this was not “equality” in the modern sense of gender relations because it was not a desired principle in organizational ideology. Rather, it was “a ‘communitarian’ notion of responsibilities to our peoples, as learned through traditional teachings and our life experiences” (Turpel, 1993, p. 178). Among the Anishinaapbe and Cree, Creation history begins with a woman descending from a hole in the sky; her task is to care for the Earth and work as its steward. As a part of her work, Nookomis (Grandmother Moon) taught the original people about the ways of keeping Mother Earth alive and well; this included instruction about its healing ways and how to maintain it for future generations (Benton-Benai, 1988). Mishoomis (Grandfather Sky) is honoured for the four directions and the ways of the firmament, and is often represented in the many-faceted Medicine Wheel.

In Aboriginal tradition, both women and men exercised a great deal of personal autonomy. At the heart of all teaching, though, was the expectation of treating one another with honour and respect, including within wife-husband relationships. Consequently, there was very

little family breakdown in most Indigenous societies (Manitoba Justice Implementation Commission, 1999). The First Peoples held strongly to beliefs that the Creator gave women special and sacred gifts in their roles as life-givers and caretakers of life, and as mothers and wives. They knew that everything, including gender gifts and roles, were bestowed by the Creator. Gender complementarity in pre-Contact times was accepted as the voice of Creation. While their roles and responsibilities were different, men were not considered “better” or “more important” than women, nor vice versa (Buffalohead, 1983; Klein & Ackerman, 1995; Mihesuah, 1996). The fulfillment of both roles together held a balanced interrelationship that was necessary for meeting both the economic livelihood and spiritual needs of the entire nation (Deerchild, 2003). These understandings were a continuing source of strength and peace within families in Aboriginal societies. Indeed, Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel¹ (1993) has written that, “It is upon women that the focus of the community has historically been placed Our communities do not have a history of disempowerment of women from political or productive life” (p. 180).

1.3.2 Changing realities

The long-standing realities of Aboriginal peoples changed with the influence of imposed European standards through colonial rule. Mackey (2002) states that:

During the colonial period and in the early decades of nation-building, the dual process of creating Canadian identity and managing diverse populations involved complex and contradictory representations of internal and external others, and of Canada’s land itself....They all reinforce British or white settler hegemony and construct a settler (usually British) identity. (p. 49)

¹Dr. Turpel-Lafond is on leave (2006-2011) from her position as Court Judge in the Provincial Court of Saskatchewan. In the interim, she is a Representative for Children and Youth, Province of British Columbia.

While most Aboriginal societies and governments in what the Europeans called the “New World” were egalitarian, the Europeans themselves originated from strictly hierarchical societies. In establishing settlements and governments, one of the first institutional principles they promoted was the concept of male superiority and female inferiority – a model of their own traditions (Lawrence, 2003; Lugones, 2007; McGrath & Stevenson, 1996). Referring to the French and English, Carter (2003) observed that “[r]egimes of government administration that were introduced in both nations in the late 19th century had much in common. The imposition of European gender norms was central to the assimilation program of both nations” (p. 565).

Native women with European husbands, coming from societies in which gender parallelism was normal, bore the brunt of the imposed hierarchical placement of value and dualism in gender roles since it placed them as inferior to their husbands. With the sedentarism of the later Fur Trade years and the merging of the Hudson Bay and the North West Companies in 1821 came more formal changes: the clergy and others in high social standing increasingly frowned on and spoke out against interracial marriage, particularly *à la façon du pays*. In retaliation to these country living arrangements, they promulgated theories about Native women being promiscuous and “easily available” in a sexual sense (Van Kirk, 1999). These manufactured “truths” provided a ready and convenient explanation for European men being willing participants in marital-type relationships with Aboriginal women. There appears to have been little real effort expended at making men accountable for their own sexual behaviours and partner choices. As well, deliberate misinterpretations about Aboriginal marital and premarital practices² were threatening the emerging social order that was based on “godliness and civility”,

²These included polygamy, divorce at the request or desire of either partner, and sexual freedom before and after marriage (Leacock, 1991).

not so much because those practices were so different from conduct “back home”, but because of their similarity to the colonists’ behaviour – patterns that religious colonial leaders were trying to eliminate (Godbeer, 2002). Mixed marriages were also discouraged because of the European concept of the “best” race marrying into a “much lesser” race, of “civilized” men marrying “pagan” women, and of Christians marrying non-Christians (Spear, 1999).

Establishing the “male superiority and female inferiority” tradition was a significant part in re-making Indigenous people into what was deemed acceptable according to “Old World” standards. European worldviews, based on various interpretations of Christianity, identified Indigenous peoples as “non-Christian” and pagan, although they were acknowledged for their *potential* to become Christians, and along the same vein, of becoming *potentially* Europeans and ready for “eventual absorption into European society” (Francis, 1998, p. 53). From what was interpreted as divine instruction, colonial leaders saw themselves as the initiators and propagators of religious assimilation, which meant total reconstruction of Aboriginal people (Axtell, 1985; Merrell, 1991). In English society where many colonial governors had been socialized, women’s legal status was the same as that of minors and wards of the Crown; women were relegated into a state of property that passed from fathers onto husbands. The idea of women as autonomous, contributing individuals was unthinkable in European ideology (Givens McGowan, 2006).

The new EuroCanadian social order was infused with many overriding Christian notions. One was that marriage meant “taking a wife” which consisted of both a marriage ceremony and physical transfer of the wife to the husband’s home (Genesis 24: 67 & 29: 23; Bloch, 1980). According to the Christian gospels, a wife was the “weaker vessel” (I Peter 3:7); husbands were to help their wives “overcome sin” (Ephesians 5: 26-27); wives were to submit in obedience to

husbands (I Peter 3:1); and, a woman was bound to her husband as long as she lived (I Corinthians 7:39). King Solomon, known by many living under Christ as the wisest man of all time, stated in his old age about the rarity of wisdom: “one man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all those have I not found” (Eccl. 7: 28). Alexandre (2006) observes that biblical portrayals of women are derogatory and as “. . . weak-willed temptresses susceptible to sexual temptations. For example, according to Rose Weitz, Eve is blamed in Genesis for the fall of humankind in the eyes of the Creator and for the attachment of original sin to the human race” (p. 180).

Colonial powers institutionalized the systematic relationships of marriage, property and patriarchal appointment of male dominance by which men were authorities over their wives and households (Howell, 1987). Women could not vote, bear arms, enter into political office or hold contracts (Meyers, Albanese & Stein, 2003). Zealous clerics worked to enforce these mores which were foreign and contrary to the ideals of Aboriginal societies. Leacock (1991), for example, states that, “Women and children alike suffered punishment at the hands of converts. ‘A Young Christian, getting into a passion, beat his wife, who had insolently provoked him’, le Jeune wrote” (p. 17). Such newly-implemented Christian principles caused disunity, disharmony and discontent between Aboriginal men and women; correspondingly, the long-established gender roles of their own societies were falling into disuse and disfavour. Aboriginal women responded in many ways “from zealous compliance to rebelliousness” (p. 18). Even towards the beginning of the twentieth century, as non-Aboriginal women were making significant inroads towards receiving important rights as Canadian citizens, these were not extended to Aboriginal women. For example, the “final steps toward full federal voting rights for most Canadian women

were taken between 1918 and 1920” (Brent, 1974, p. 364) whereas it was only in 1960 that both Aboriginal women and men were allowed to vote federally.

Colonialism was also responsible for the degradation of cohesive family systems and infrastructures. A wide web of cousins, aunts, uncles, adopted children and grandparents, in addition to parents and children, comprised the foundational family. As basic units of survival, families facilitated the economic, social and political well-being of the entire collective (Ball, 2010; Carleton University Centre for Community Innovation, 2005; Morrisette, 1994). Children’s education on their roles for meaningful contribution to society was undertaken by grandparents, Elders and others in the larger community. However, outside policies, such as the imposition of residential schools among Native populations began to corrode these older ways (Miller, 1996); the public school system in contemporary times further distances Aboriginal children from their parents and community. As well, the administration of registering Indian people under the *Indian Act* is according to the family structures of non-Aboriginal origin. These forces all work at re-shaping Aboriginal family institutions into “nuclear families” that are defined by EuroWestern values (Kufeldt & McKenzie, 2003).

1.3.3 Displacement through gender assimilation & settlement

Systematic denial of the importance of women, an elaborate and strategic tool of colonialism, is essentially destroying an entire culture, particularly in societies in which women are highly esteemed. Anderson’s (1993) work is a well-portrayed and detailed example of the specific intricate manipulations of an outside power that had infiltrated Indigenous societies to alter their customary institutions. In the seventeenth century, the Society of Jesus, commonly known as the Jesuits, an élite order within the Roman Catholic church, was utilized by the French crown to establish order in “New France”. Charged with reconstructing the Huron-

Wyandot and Innu societies, the Jesuits focused on integrating the ideology and practice of domination and subordination into the main traditional institutional structures – that of family and marriage. They worked towards substantially replacing the egalitarian aspects of power dynamics within the existing familial and marital relationships with those from their home country. Anderson states that the Jesuits were

concerned with relations between men and women because those relations did not conform to the pattern of domination and submission called for by 17th-century Christian doctrine. . . . Christianity depended, in the final analysis, on fear and submission, on the recognition of hierarchies and on the subjugation of inferiors to their betters. (p. 226)

Extensive violence directed at women was “clearly the outcome of the intervention of the French, as colonists, fur merchants, administrators, and especially as missionaries” (p. 227) so that, as part of new traditions, women would submit to men. Governors in New France “did not perceive any difference between Christianity and European culture. Christianize and Frenchify, or convert and assimilate, were regarded as synonymous” (Jaenen, 1966, p. 271) and the means of European colonization of the “New World” was morally sanctioned by Christian churches.

During the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries in Fur Trade societies, Aboriginal women were considered ideal wives because they comprised the essential economic and linguistic link to their own nations and were skilled in meeting the survival needs in what European traders saw as the harsh wilderness (Brown, 1980). Their mediation efforts and knowledge of the environment heightened their husbands’ prestige and standing as successful in business. Around 1820, however, when the Hudson Bay Company lifted a ban against white women in its posts and as settlement included increasing numbers of white women, Native women fell in status within the new society (MacDougall, 2006; Sleeper-Smith, 2005). After the

1870s, as agrarian settlement standards were taking stronger root in the West, “there would be little basis for the continuation of the economic and social exchange between white and native peoples which had been the foundation of the fur trade” (Van Kirk, 1999, p. 202). The image of who was ideal as future wife and mother had shifted in favour of single white women who, as part of the preferred classes for immigration into the country, had been leading sedentary and subjugated lifestyles in relation to Christianity and the men in their societies (Perry, 1997). Thompson (2010) observes that “Victorian myths of the Ideal Woman created images of delicacy, refinement, and moral superiority, her image as a mother and wife always derived from her relationship to a male” (p. 364). Thus, the clergy and other leading spokesmen increasingly deemed Aboriginal women as unsuitable wives for British men because of the unlikelihood of any Native parent supporting primogeniture and other essential traditions that would maintain and bolster British sovereignty. As such, they were unacceptable mothers for the envisioned citizenry of an ever-expanding British Empire (Cunningham Armacost, 1995). Often, colonial judges declared interracial marriages non-binding – a notable exception being the *Connolly v. Woolrich* case of 1867³ – the progeny were refused legitimacy for inheritance and other rights (Van Kirk, 1999).

³This case is well-known because of its exception to the era’s standard of Aboriginal progeny being prevented from receiving inheritance rights. Justice Monk (Quebec, 1867), however, affirmed the existence of Cree law on the prairies and recognized it as a part of common law; the doctrine applied is known as the law of continuity. Quebec’s Superior Court had the jurisdiction and the affirmation power to make these decisions because of the particulars of the case: the parties involved came from the prairies; in the mixed marriage, the woman was Cree (commonly, children of mixed marriages were raised in their mother’s traditions) and had married her white husband “in the Cree way”; and, the union lasted 28 years until the husband decided to pursue and marry his cousin in Montreal. Monk noted the prairie territory where the original couple lived was under non-English rule of law and

Discrimination against Aboriginal women continued as legislation, “based on colonialist assumptions about race, Nativeness, and civilization” (Lawrence, 2003, p. 24), was enacted. As well, popular notions about race were utilized to establish a class system. Because white people were seen as superior to Aboriginal people, and congruously, white women as superior to Aboriginal women, conscious efforts were expended on alienating Aboriginal women from “respectable” society (Nelson, 2002). Common thinking was that white women, by associating with Aboriginal women, would themselves become tainted through what was seen as Aboriginal women’s inherent capacity of polluting the body politic. Some historians note that the increase in numbers of white women during the settlement years paralleled the mounting racism against First Nations and Métis women (Carter, 2000; Nelson, 2002; Van Kirk, 1999). In describing the extent of the mobilization of white women immigrants in fulfilling colonial ideology, Perry (1997) writes, “[i]ndeed, for most colonial promoters, white women's role as agents of white supremacy was a matter for celebration, not a problematic issue for reflection” (p. 508).

Armstrong (1996) links the destruction of women’s roles to the way in which colonization in Canada was implemented: “It was through the attack on the power of Aboriginal women that the disempowerment of our peoples has been achieved, in a dehumanizing process that is one of the cruelest on the face of the earth” (p. x). Her stance is that through colonial targeting of the core family system and specifically the role of Aboriginal women within the family system, “the disintegration of our peoples towards genocide has been achieved” (p. x). Froc (2010), as well, notes that “[d]estabilizing Aboriginal women’s political and social

religion, and that the couple lived exactly as any other Christian man and wife. The conclusion is that the children were allocated a fair share of their father’s estate (Borrows, 2010; J. Borrows, personal correspondence, December 27, 2010; Brown, 1980; L. Chartrand, personal correspondence, December 25, 2010).

attachment to their communities was key to assimilating First Nations into European patriarchal, non-communitarian society, as well as permitting the government to make land previously occupied by Indigenous peoples available to settlers” (p. 31).

Indigenous people worldwide are impacted in very similar ways by colonialism, including the pernicious problem of DV becoming integrated into home societies. Jessica Hughes (2004), who authored *Gender, Equity, and Indigenous Women's Health in the Americas* for the Pan-American Health Organization, wrote regarding the Indigenous populations within the Pan American region:

The most significant root of domestic violence is gender inequality. Indigenous men often say they feel entitled to use sexual, physical, and/or psychological violence to control their partners' behavior if they suspect them of having an affair or believe them to be a “bad” wife. (p. 8)

Contemporary attacks in the form of DV against Aboriginal women are not decreasing and play significantly into women's continuing subordination; clearly, the effects of colonial-inspired gender relations are still unfolding in Indigenous communities. DV, as a manifestation of oppression, is a common means of control among those in society without institutional power, the largest group being women (Boyle, Bertrand, Lacerte-Lamontagne & Shamai, 1985; Laird McCue, 2008).

Although disrupted gender relations do not necessarily and entirely explain DV (Yick, 2008), there exists an unquestionable correlation between the destruction by colonialism of traditional gender roles in early contact times and DV in Aboriginal communities in contemporary times (Billson, 2006; Williamson, 2004). An example is in Nunavut where 49% of all Inuit in Canada live (Brzozowski & Brazeau, 2008). Rapid changes to Inuit society have been

devastating to all Inuit, especially since the mid- to late-1940s when the Cold War era began. During this period, American military presence and political influence combined with Canadian exploitation of natural resources in the Arctic and, to the detriment of the Inuit, led to their relocation into permanent settlements (Diubaldo, 1992; Duffy, 1988). To this day, there are uniquely debilitating effects on men that relate to gender roles from their older societies. While many Inuit women's roles have transferred comparatively readily into the newer Western ways, those of men have not. Many Inuit men continue to suffer from subsequent dislocation in the contemporary world, and the new images of men, from a Western perspective, have little to do with life in the far North. This means that reinforcement of self-confidence and self-worth for Inuit men is difficult, both individually and collectively. There is difficulty in being neither modern nor traditional; the transitional image often emerges blurred and ambiguous. Finding a right place that is congruous to the Inuit male's sense of self may be extremely difficult, especially without guidance or strong role modeling. Looking at outside views of First Nations or Métis men is not helpful, either. This imagery tends to be critical and expressed without the understanding of Aboriginal cultural values and does not reflect the role that the foundation of colonialism is playing in the lives of these populations. Such ethnocentric portrayals work at alienating men from society – whether it is Western or Inuit society. Alienation perpetuates struggles for a clear self-identity and eats away at the individual's sense of well-being within everyday social and familial contexts and relationships.

By further probing this example, one can question the reasons for the relationship between DV and the outcomes of colonialism such as dislocation, unemployment, traditional family disruption, poverty, class inequality. Gilligan (1996, 2001), who has done clinical work with violent men for over twenty-five years, concludes that disadvantaged men are not

necessarily any more violent than anyone else in their societies. However, he theorizes, they react with violence to being treated with disrespect, condescension and implications of their being less than human from those more elevated in societal hierarchies. Layers of racism on top of a lack of self-confidence, feelings of shame and a sense of worthlessness make violence more of an option for these men, and those close to them often become targets of that violence. Viewed in this light and the fact that white people hold the reins of power in the North, it should not be surprising that the rates of DV among the Inuit in Nunavut are the highest in the country (Chartrand & McKay, 2006; Freeman Marshall & Asselin Vaillancourt, 1993; National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009; Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002; Johnson, 2006). Regarding the Inuit, Billson (2006) observes that “[t]he changes in gender regimes led to increased violence toward women, decreased female well-being, and violations of women's human rights” (p. 72).

1.4 DV: A representation of neocolonialism

In my writing, I define *violence* as the deliberate expending of unwanted physical force by one person onto another (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg & Zwi, 2002). While I focus on corporeal violence or violence directed at the human body, I also consider implied, or the threat of violence which may be as powerful a controlling tactic as literal violence (Kuennen, 2007). Jaaber (2001) defines DV as “a purposeful course of action buttressed by familial, institutional, social and cultural practices” (p. 2) while Evans (2005) calls it a “category of violence that occurs in a couple/intimate relationship” (p. 37). I concur with both these definitions. There are many sub-categories of DV: emotional, psychological, physical, financial, and sexual (Lazarus-Black, 2008); their commonality is that they are forms of oppression and constitute social-control mechanisms by one partner over the other (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2008). DV does not restrict itself to the terrain of Aboriginal peoples; indeed, it is a growing universal problem (Howley & Edwards, 2004; Penn & Nardos, 2003; United Nations, 2000) that transcends both cultural and national boundaries (Johnson, 2006; Paglione, 2006; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Warry, 1998).

1.4.1 Lasting legislative changes & DV

In historic moves to shift the First Peoples into substandard status and physically apart from ever-increasing white populations (Higham, 2003), the Provinces of Canada East and West enacted legislation shortly after receiving responsibility for Indians from the British Crown in 1844. The 1857 *Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes of Canada* disenfranchised all Indian people into a specially-conceived category that promised them a place in white society. According to Henry & Tator (2006), however, this really meant relegation into serving and labouring positions, and schooling “for inferiority” (p. 110). The government was unsuccessful

in this endeavour because, by that time, Indians were highly suspicious of and resistant to federal offerings that involved assimilation. Only one person, in 1876, was enfranchised under this legislation (Dickason, 2002). Aboriginal people continually withstood what they rightfully saw as attempts to assimilate them into Canadian society for they desired only to maintain their own traditions and societies.

Shortly after Confederation, public opinion and common thought mobilized legislation against Indians in the form of the *Indian Act* (1876) which “consolidated and expanded previous Indian legislation” (Borrows & Rotman, 1998, p. 615). The new *Act* was particularly harsh on Native women for it underpinned patrilineality as the determinant of Indian status. Imposing its own self-serving criterion, it usurped and deleted Aboriginal peoples’ internal identity conceptualizations. Early policy, for example, defined only men as “Indians” (Fitznor, 2006) and imposed male lineage and wrote male and female inequality into law by delegating status to any male person of Indian blood. A female could only have Indian status in her father’s or husband’s right, not in her own (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb & Hampton, 2004; Lawrence, 2003; Turpel, 1993). Inconsistencies within the *Indian Act* regarding registration, too, favoured men. If an Indian woman married a white or other non-Indian (such as a Métis or non-status Indian), she and her children lost their places in the Indian Affairs Central Registry. Further, the Indian woman did not even have to marry the non-Indian to lose status; Indian agents considered what had been known as *à la façon du pays* as sufficient grounds for taking away her status, even going into the mid-twentieth century. Conversely, the Canadian state legitimized marriage between a registered male and a white woman by bestowing the union and resulting offspring with status. Consequently, many Native women became disenfranchised from their own communities, for they “could no longer reside on the reserve, secure treaty rights and policy

initiatives designed to assist Indians, or participate in the political and social life of the community” (Fitznor, 2006, p. 61). The result on the Central Registry from this part of the *Act* was that up to 95% of all enfranchisements were involuntary, and except for the children involved, all who became ineligible for status were women. The *Indian Act* illuminates the extent to which the Canadian government engaged legal mechanisms to alter inextricably the identity of Indian women since the *Act* has been highly biased towards men in defining legitimate Indians. As well, it allows for the eventual disappearance of entire First Nations since it is only through women with status that Native nations are legally perpetuated (Brant Castellano, 2009; MacIntosh, 2005).

Indian agents exercised supreme authority in the daily lives of Indians and regularly reported on reserve activities (Dickason, 2002). While their overall portrayal of Indians was derogatory, descriptions about Native women were particularly disparaging. For example, Aboriginal women were depicted as poor housekeepers and even worse mothers – qualities far removed from what was being defined as ideal womanhood. Perry (2003) writes that the *Department of Indian Affairs* was critical of the traditional prairie housing, teepees, “for being responsible for immorality and bad health on reserves and First Nations women as responsible for both” (p. 593). Further, she states that housing became useful for imperial reform:

It became such a tool because missionaries and others saw housing as something of a mirror, a powerful reflector of people’s character Yet housing’s meaning stretched beyond its service as an outward manifestation of inner culture and character. Rather, it was an animate social force that was generative of respectable gender and familial identities, life habits, and work roles Aboriginal and European housing became opposites, the former savage and the latter not only civilized but civilizing. (p. 593)

Moreover, *Indian Affairs* recruited various churches to implement the residential school system by which Indians, perceived as deficient, would receive the tutelage and instruction to elevate them to the levels of European stature. These schools, in reality, served only to erode further the image and traditional roles of Aboriginal women for they were designed to make it difficult, if not impossible, for Aboriginal parents to rear their own children (Ing, 1991). Mothers, suddenly finding themselves in a vacuum without their children, experienced deep spiritual desolation. There were no accessible services for them; they became more and more isolated, without legal protection and, often, without support from within their communities. By this time, the *Act* had disentitled Aboriginal women from political activity – a ruling that hit hard because, in some nations, women had been traditional governing agents (Emberley, 2001). As well, “the Act demeaned and supplanted all Indigenous modes of descent” (Simpson, 2009, p. 124) and imposed European patriarchal hereditary practices.

Adding to stressed outlooks and fractured inter-community relationships are generational disconnections from residential schooling, the consequences of racism which are legally founded by and packaged within the *Indian Act*, and forced isolation. For example, from 1885 to 1930, on-reserve residents required a pass from the Indian agent at any time and for any reason they wished to leave the reserve (Carter, 1985). Having to abandon age-old tradition, as well, Aboriginal peoples have not been free of a crippling poverty that continues to exacerbate relationship-adjustment problems and DV (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991). The way reserve populations are perceived by non-Aboriginal Canadians regarding high unemployment and low education—that they have initiated and continue to foster a culture of financial dependency on government—is not helpful to individuals, either. The reasoning is that First Nation people prefer living in specific geographic locations where, knowing there are few options for

advancement, they bring poverty on themselves. However, missing from such outside conclusions is, first, the fact that what is still unfolding on reserves are colonial government policies implemented since Confederation that were aimed primarily at protecting colonial society from Indigenous people, and next, carrying out threats of either assimilating into society at the lowest echelons or becoming economically and socially marginalized (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Traditional governance structures, cultural knowledge transmission and gender functioning had fallen under the auspices of EuroCanadian law, and were forbidden (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997). Because government will to exclude Aboriginal people from sociopolitical participation has been girded by a potent desire to lay claim to the land that Aboriginal peoples have occupied *ab initio*, and to maintain that claim with absolute certainty, no other minority group has ever posed such a significant and lasting threat to Canadian political legitimacy. The result has been that even today, Aboriginal people are not welcome in overall society and are subject to racism whether on- or off-reserve. These dynamics definitely affect the functioning of Aboriginal peoples' relationships within their own homes and continue as isolating factors.

A serious problem further maligning the position of Aboriginal women as wives and mothers in their own communities, *yet* unresolved in 2010, is what is known as the Matrimonial Real Property (MRP) issue. The crux of this matter is that there are no matrimonial property laws applicable on-reserve. MRP concerns resulted directly from omissions in the *Indian Act* and constitute a continued denial of women's equality in marriage (or marriage-type) break-downs. Outstanding cross-jurisdictional entanglement between federal and provincial authorities has left this area void of constructive activity to protect women and children in these circumstances. Additionally, there is no specific authorization for First Nations governments to enact by-laws

regarding MRP although Indian Affairs allows and holds approval rights for band councils to allot land to members through a Certificate of Possession (CP) even though most are in men's names, even when a man and woman, as a couple, are approved applicants. Not uncommon is the situation where women who actually own houses on their reserves (*i.e.*, hold the title from the Band administration) are prevented from living in them because of well-grounded and legitimate fear of their spouses and of Chiefs and Councils who tend to support the men – a tendency that was created and is perpetuated by the patriarchy of the *Indian Act*. The Supreme Court of Canada dealt with the *Derrickson v. Derrickson* case in 1986 by ruling that MRP, as provincial and territorial family law, cannot apply on-reserve (Bastien, 2008). The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (Hilling, 2003) reported a connection between the lack of matrimonial property law on-reserve and an exacerbation of violence against women and children.

It is impossible to measure the impact of the divestment of First Peoples' traditional territories; lands have been the heart of identity, both collective and individual, and culture for countless generations. Relocation onto reserves, which were lands deemed unsuitable for white settlement (Wilkes, 2004), decimated traditional Aboriginal economies and meant having to find entirely new ways for economic survival and sociopolitical function. These, though, were legislated under *Indian Act* dictates. Gender role changes from complementarity and family roles that were contrary to Aboriginal traditional norms were infused into First Nations' societies. Based on heteropatriarchal values, they placed male leadership as superior in the resulting hierarchical structuring, and women's dependence on men for economic survival (Anderson & Lawrence, 2003; Cheah & Nelson, 2004; Dieter & Otway, 2001; Smith, 2005b). In terms of DV, research provides evidence that, for women, economic reliance on spouses or partners is one of the main motivations for tolerating abuse at home (Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Widiss, 2008),

and explains at least one reason for Aboriginal women remaining in DV relationships. Aboriginal men, among all population groups in Canada, have the highest unemployment and lowest scholastic achievement levels (Ball, 2009a); these stressors are strongly linked to higher probabilities for DV, particularly as their societies are now solidly interwoven with patriarchal belief (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997; Hamberger, 2009; Smith, 1990; Spiwak & Brownridge, 2005). Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, McIntyre and Harlow (2004), Hughes (2004), McClennen (2005) and Renzetti (1992) conclude that power differentials between men and women combined with patriarchal values in societies are a primary or strong contributing source of DV and these factors, according to Nahanee (1995), underlie DV in contemporary Aboriginal communities. The combined risk factors of gender hierarchy, low education, high rates of joblessness and historic dislocation are associated with DV and common in Aboriginal populations, some more notably so. The societies of all First Nations, especially from the influence of the *Indian Act* have become hierarchical and patriarchal, and as such are yet fertile grounds for the development of in-family dysfunctions which often involve DV.

The *Indian Act*, over the generations, has certainly worked at fulfilling a goal of one of its earlier Deputy Superintendents, Duncan Campbell Scott, who in 1920, stated in an address to Parliament:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question. (Leslie & Maguire, 1978, p. 115)

Those in power were thus paving the way for the victimization of Aboriginal women and of perpetuating their placement in vulnerable and subordinate places, one that continues to this day. Certainly, the present status of Aboriginal women is diametrically opposite that of their historical

standing. Their former place as integral and key sustainers of tribal life has, over the generations, been replaced with a sense of their being at ready disposal, vulnerable and marginalized, within the many spheres of contemporary dominant society.

1.4.2 High incidence of DV

The meager research conducted this far on the *status quo* of DV incidence in Aboriginal communities in Canada (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008) and in the United States (Hamby, 2008; Shepherd, 2001) strongly implies a very high incidence of DV. For example, a YWCA report (Tutty, 2006) states that “[r]esidents of Aboriginal background were significantly more likely [than non-Aboriginal women] to have used the [women’s] shelter previously” (p. xv). Official federal government statistics reveal that women’s shelter use in Nunavut for victims of DV from 2001 to 2004 increased by 54%, compared to 4.6% with the rest of Canada (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006; Canadian Heritage, 2009). Amnesty International (2009) states that “Indigenous women reported rates of violence, including domestic violence and sexual assault, 3.5 times higher than non-Indigenous women” (p. 1). It also reveals that assault against Indigenous women is “often particularly brutal” (p. 1). Tutty (2006) writes that “[w]omen of Aboriginal and Métis backgrounds have long reported higher levels of intimate partner violence” and “the rates of abuse remain startling” (p. 8). Regarding the statistic that Aboriginal women are 8 times more likely to suffer abuse than non-Aboriginal women (Woman Abuse Working Group, 2008), the Ontario Native Women’s Association (2007) believes that “in fact, abuse likely occurs at significantly higher rates than those commonly cited” (p. 3).

Exact figures on the numbers of Aboriginal women in DV situations and the rate of DV in Aboriginal groups are still unclear. However, it is known is that those who suffer from societal

inequities and social conditions such as poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, low educational attainment and poor health also experience the highest rates of DV (Evans, 2005; McKendy, 1997; National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008; World Health Organization, 2001a, 2002) and Aboriginal people collectively are part of this group. Other concurrent dynamics contribute to the high rates of DV: racism, religious values that maintain family cohesiveness regardless of circumstances, stigma associated with “codes of silence”, community opposition, and, more recent traditions that adopt principles of male dominance. Many Aboriginal women, as well, fear having their children apprehended and taken to foster homes when they disclose violence or abuse in their homes; they may fail to seek medical, legal or social support because of this.

These complicated and often conflicting social pressures are significant everyday realities for Aboriginal women. The geographic isolation of many communities works against addressing DV because family problems, particularly between partners, are considered private so an informal policy of non-interference usually results when a partner expresses a need for help or advice. As well, disclosure is sometimes seen by Elders as a type of betrayal and disloyalty to the entire group; women in such environments are encouraged, perhaps in a passive way, to keep silent and suffer through the violence in their homes, just as their mothers and grandmothers had done. Victims seeking solutions through the criminal justice system often find further traumatization: first, by the processes of the system itself (Cameron, 2006) and then by patriarchal domination within their communities (Brownridge, 2003; Dylan, Regehr & Alaggia, 2008; Shepherd, 2001). DV victims often find culturally-sensitive and appropriate programs and services difficult to access, particularly in the north (McGillivray & Comaskey, 2000; Thomlinson, Erickson & Cook, 2000). The role of recent history and its effects on all Indigenous

peoples' identity, culture, language and way-of-life is often not a part of DV victims' programming, even in on-reserve women's shelters. Such omissions tend to result in victims blaming themselves for the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Dominant society is concerned with achieving gender parity and equality. "Gender equality", however, is not what many Aboriginal groups desire. For example, Altamirano-Jiménez (2009) states that, regarding the creation of Nunavut in 1999, ". . . the notion of equality between the sexes was foreign to Inuit society" (p. 149). As well, Turpel (1993) states that

Equality is simply not the central organizing political principle in our communities. It is frequently seen by our Elders as a suspiciously selfish notion, as individualistic and alienating from others in the community. It is incongruous to apply this notion to our communities. (p. 180)

Colonial policy and practice has fragmented Aboriginal matricentrism and re-structured traditional governing structures to the degree that Western notions such as "gender equality" can sound quite appealing and something with which First Nations' women and community ought to be involved. However, re-claiming traditional gender practices, especially the principles on which they are founded, does not necessarily mean "gender parity" or "gender equality". White Canadians' experience of their own practices differ greatly from that of Aboriginal people; the latter, who have very different ways of knowledge and being, do not, and cannot, react in the same ways as non-Indigenous Canadians. I believe that Western culture's attempts at "gender equity", "gender parity" and "gender equality" are held up as an example of the standard that Aboriginal peoples should meet and that this is simply another example of neo-colonial practice in contemporary settings. While the imposition of foreign forms and relations of family and governance have significantly interfered with Aboriginal traditions, this does not mean that

traditional thought in the area of gender structure does not exist. These foreign traditions were not of Aboriginal making, nor adopted from free-informed choice, but Aboriginal people are still in disarray about them. In order to address pernicious gender issues, Aboriginal people (children, women and men) must first, as an entirety, recognize the perils of patriarchy and secondly, deal with it in ways that uphold each community member so that communities can start to become more orderly and peaceful.

1.4.3 On-reserve women's shelters

In North America, awareness campaigns by women's advocacy groups paved the way for open acknowledgement of the existence of family violence and, as part of their activities, lobbied for adequate services for victims. Most efforts were directed at family support and social service agencies (Ursel, 2001) and a tangible outcome was the women's shelter movement which began in Canada in the 1970s and early 1980s (Janoviček, 2007; Pennell, 1990). During these decades, DV came to be recognized as having a strong and undeniable link to significant morbidity and mortality, particularly among women (Chalk & King, 1998). Consequently, a network of women's shelters was established, mostly in urban areas, and included counseling and other related services for residents. In First Nation communities, women's shelters began to be built about 15 to 20 years after this earlier broad push. They were established in two phases: first, in the early 1990s, decisions were made at the regional level regarding the locations of the upcoming shelters and how they would be funded. From 1997 onwards, such decision-making has been taking place at the national level. During these phases, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) provided capital funding for the actual building of the shelters, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) provided funds for operating and maintenance

expenses. There are 41 INAC-funded women's shelters, most of which are on-reserve; five of these are presently in the process of being built, or have very recently opened.⁴

There were no provisions for funding for management training from INAC to help establish on-reserve shelters as well-functioning agencies. Some Executive Directors (EDs) learned shelter administration on a "trial-and-error" basis, but since 2007, INAC has identified resources within shelters' operational budgets for some training needs (L. Zwart, personal communication, July 21, 2010). As well, an INAC-funded agency, the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence (NACAFV) has been providing annual 3-day training for EDs to help them in a more formal and structured way. Provincial women's shelter associations, of which there are 12 across the country⁵, are, to varying degrees, helpful to on-reserve shelter staff in training, helping with costs for attending conferences and seminars, and general networking. The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) is an example of a provincial association that readily includes the six on-reserve women's shelters in its activities. During its 2005 AGM, ACWS formed the *On-reserve Shelter Board Committee* which is mandated to advocate for the needs of on-reserve women's shelters in the province.

Funding is problematic for on-reserve women's shelters: financial resources from INAC are well below that provided by provincial governments for mainstream women's shelters. In Alberta, for example, two reserve shelters are funded at less than half the amount received by provincially-funded shelters, and staff salaries are significantly lower than those of provincially-funded shelters (Novick, 2005). Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (2009) states

⁴INAC's policy is to keep the names of First Nations with women's shelters unstated.

⁵For a complete listing of the names and locations of these mainstream associations, see Appendix A, page 333.

that, “[o]n-reserve shelters receive on average \$200,000 less in annual operating funds than provincially-funded shelters of the same size” and that an “[o]n-reserve crisis counselor earns about \$23,000/year as compared to nearly \$38,000/provincial counterpart” (Overview of Presentation section, ¶24, ¶26). The lack of adequate funding is therefore a continuous problem for those managing on-reserve shelters. Shelter EDs are cautious about fund-raising because of the fear that the amounts raised could decrease the amount received from INAC; as a consequence, the incentive to find outside funds is largely quelled. As well, INAC does not consider capital costs an allowable expense but simply recommends, at a regional level, that shelters apply to CMHC’s *Shelter Enhancement Program* (SEP) for renovations or additions that, in most cases, are desperately needed.

On-reserve women’s shelters face many problems within their own communities. Some are marginalized by Chiefs and Councils who do not want to address DV, and who, in fact, may be perpetrators themselves. Of the 41 on-reserve women’s shelters, only two are in First Nations with women chiefs. As well, shelters are sometimes viewed by community members as agencies that encourage and facilitate the “splitting up of families”. Not all Elders are supportive of younger people who seek changes that contest sexism and empower women. They may believe in the normalcy of women being subservient to men and that women’s places are not as fully-functioning members at home and in the community. Such views are not surprising considering that many reserves are fractured along the lines of Christian denominations, each of which maintains sole (and soul-) saving truth, gender imbalance that favour males, and patriarchy. Very common in Aboriginal communities is self-colonization and its associated manifestations; many leaders, unknowledgeable and unable to relate to women within traditional contexts, have been shaped by colonial-inspired institutions, such as residential schools and the general Canadian

public. The result is that they devalue their own legacies. Many in leadership have experienced so much spiritual, mental and emotional uprootedness that they have embraced and internalized the colonial attitude of normalizing contempt or indifference for their extended selves – their own people, families and community. The words of many grassroots members, their own truths, reveal the extent to which Native leadership has normalized abuse toward women; they point to the structure and dealings of band governments that privilege Native patriarchy (Goeman & Nez Denetdale, 2009). Goodwin (2002) also observes that women accessing shelter services for themselves and their children are often punished by band councils and can find themselves evicted from their homes when returning from the shelter.

On-reserve women's shelters' funding, which is determined by INAC and first passed through Chief and Council administration, puts the shelters at increased vulnerability. Band governments receive the funds, take a percentage, and then forward the remainder to the shelter. Many shelter EDs report that unless they administer the shelter in a way that is specifically approved by Chiefs and Councils, their funding can be seriously delayed. They, as employees, sometimes find themselves in a precarious position regarding the security of their employment. While this predictable scenario of internalized colonialism is not ensconced in all the INAC-funded shelters, it is nonetheless far too common and works against the DV victims who seek shelter services.

1.5 Well-being, health & resilience in a DV context

The fundamental purpose of my research is to contribute to the decolonization of Aboriginal people. Although this gargantuan task is being shared by all Aboriginal students simply by being scholars, my own efforts are specifically directed at examining resilience among Aboriginal women living in DV situations. The main message of my research is one that I envision will be sent to women through existing educational infrastructure and programming within reserve agencies, such as women's shelters. My research findings will provide documentation for social services, justice, education and health directors working at the band and Tribal Council levels who seek new research for empirical support for interventions that help reduce DV in their communities.

Decolonizing the mind and life in the context of one's home first entails recognition that DV is not a part of *minoopimatissiwini* which is a "good life" in the Anishinaabe language. In his writings about the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee and the Inuit of Nunavik, Papillon (2008) emphasizes that "quality of life involves more than income and standard of living. For example, a healthy body and environment, as well as a supportive community, are increasingly considered integral to a good life" (p. 5). The concepts of health and well-being among the Whapmagoostui, a Cree First Nation in Quebec, are related directly to the land – specifically, it is the actual living off the land as a daily practice for meeting livelihood needs. Other aspects of well-being are strong social relationships and an unshakable cultural identity. Their own word for "well-being" directly translates as "being alive well" (Adelson, 2000, pp. 14-15). Native historian and philosopher Donald Fixico (2003) discusses the central place that the concept of balance plays in the interpretations of this word:

Balance is between two things or more and it is the purpose in life for American Indians whose philosophy is inclusive of all things in the universe. At least five kinds of balance exist: (1) balance within one's self, (2) balance within the family, (3) balance within the community or tribe, (4) balance with external communities, including other tribes and the spiritual world, and (5) balance with the environment and the universe. (p. 49)

In Fixico's explanation, the place of gender complementarity fits particularly well into his categories of balance within the family, and within the community and tribe.

Many Aboriginal people conceptualize the Medicine Wheel as the basis for defining "well-being", "health" and "quality-of-life". This circle, in many variations, encompasses quadrants representing the four areas of human growth and fulfillment: intellectual or mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional; they cannot be understood separately. In some teachings, the four areas include animal and bird helpers from each direction. The Anishnawbe Health Clinic (2006) explains that sickness results from the spirit losing its health and/or becoming wounded—its interconnectedness with the other three areas has been, or is being eroded. In order to regain health and well-being, these separations must be bridged (Bartlett, 2005) for only then can all life areas gravitate towards completeness and balance. In a study conducted by Parlee, O'Neil and the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (2007), the authors record one interviewee who described this aspect of spirit's interrelatedness:

Health is not just physical; it is also emotional, mental, and spiritual. Not everyone in the community has connected it all together yet. But often the nurses say that people will complain about some physical health problem but later they find out that it is tied to an emotional or mental health problem. When we talk about mental health, we are talking about unhappiness, depression, loneliness, sadness, not being able to feel good about

oneself; these problems can be related to some abuse in the past. The people who can connect all of these things together—mental, emotional, spiritual and physical are healthier (Addie Jonasson, 19 August 1996). (p. 125)

Among many other representations, the Medicine Wheel symbolizes the wholism, balance, and the interdependence and interrelatedness of human growth that make up *minoopimatissiwini*. According to Anishinaapbe thought, *minoopimatissiwini* is the individual's core responsibility towards self and all Creation; other groups of First Peoples use their own concepts in their unique languages for describing these rights and responsibilities. As well as fulfilling Life on an individual basis, *minoopimatissiwini* becomes integrated into a greater whole – the cosmological family from which human families are patterned. The Anishinaapbek and many other First Peoples view the land as the Mother, or Mother Earth, from which all beings, animate and inanimate, are birthed (Monture, 1989; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

Well-being is defined in Aboriginal thought in wholistic terms and founded on the notion of security, stability and harmony: “free of chaos and disorder” and “a balance between different aspects of a people's surroundings (Salée, 2006, p. 8). One particularly interesting concept is seen from the words of “Kehehti:io who stated that, in her Six Nations language, there is no word for “health”. In articulating this, Smylie, Williams and Cooper (2006) state that

Instead, language actively represented concepts of well-being, reciprocity, and the interconnection of all life. For example, there is a word in her language whose main root is ‘everything that keeps us alive’. This word can also be translated as ‘love’ and ‘love medicine’. (p. S23)

This particular construct of health has no room for DV because it destroys, rather than enhances, the well-being of both perpetrators and victims. DV is one of the most potent of human problems that works against achieving *minoopimatissiwini*. It prevents balance in an individual's daily life and environment; personal security and feelings of safety, warmth and peace cannot exist in DV relationships. Further, it tends not merely to be a problem affecting certain Aboriginal families – it is underpinned and fostered by an imbalance of community conditions and dynamics. On a communal level in all First Nations, the balance and interrelatedness of the spiritual Medicine Wheel has been destroyed to varying degrees. The traditional cultural values that had always supported well-being and health need to be revived so that the nurturing and support necessary for fulfilling each person's total growth can again be a part of everyday family living.

The role of spirituality is paramount in concepts of well-being; it includes a process of knowing, finding or recovering a strong sense of identity. The term itself is difficult to define and highly problematic because of the wide range of meanings and opinions to which it is attributed, and encompasses (Crago, 2003; Hoyland & Mayers, 2005; Mayers & Johnston, 2008). However, Dr. Cyndy Baskin (2002), an Indigenous educator, explains that spirituality includes

an individual's ultimate values, her/his relationship with others and one's perception of the sacred (Canda, 1988; Titone, 1991; Ingersoll, 1994; O'Rourke, 1997; Pellebon, Anderson & Angell; 1999; Gilbert, 2000). Carolyn Jacobs (1997) defines spirituality as "heart knowledge where wholeness, meaning and inner peace occur. Spirituality is a sense of being at one with the inner and outer worlds". (Definition, ¶1)

As well, historian Georges Sioui (1992) observes that

all human beings are sacred because they are an expression of the will of the Great Mystery. Thus, we all possess within ourselves a sacred vision, that is, a unique power

that we must discover in the course of our lives in order to actualize the Great Spirit's vision, of which we are an expression. Each man and woman, therefore, finds his or her personal meaning through that unique relationship with the Great Power of the universe. (p. 9)

Questions also often arise as to the difference between spirituality and religiosity. A simplified explanation is that the latter is dependent on a formalized collection of specific institutionalized belief systems, whereas spirituality is not (George, Larson, Koenig & McCullough, 2000). However, not all who see themselves as either spiritual or religious (or both), agree with this differentiation. I suggest that discourses on Aboriginal spirituality more closely parallel explanations about spirituality, rather than what is commonly known as "religion", particularly in a judeo-christian sense.

Resilience as a Western concept emerged from the fields of psychiatry and psychology (Masten & Powell, 2003; Phillips, 1968). Several related definitions of resilience, from a non-Aboriginal perspective, are in common use. Kaplan (1999) and Varghese, Krogman, Beckley & Nadeau (2006) use resilience to mean the capacity of an individual or community to cope with stress, overcome adversity or adapt positively to change. Robertson-Hickling, Paisley, Guzder and Hickling (2009) define it as the capacity of people to cope with stress and catastrophe and represents the manifestation of positive adaption despite adversity. Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) refer to it as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (p. 543). These and other definitions are most often accompanied by explanations of risk factors and protective factors. The latter are those that increase the probability of positive outcomes or responses to adversity, such as a stable home life, good nutrition, optimistic attitude and supportive social networks Conversely, risk factors are

comprised of life aspects that increase the probability of negative responses to adversity; these include poverty, DV, drug and alcohol abuse, ill health and poor educational attainment (Richman & Fraser, 2001).

Aboriginal people understand *resilience* in a much more expanded sense than that defined in most Western paradigms. Its meanings in Indigenous thought integrates spirituality, family strength, Elders participation, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, and identity and support networks (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Langton, 1994), and comprises much more than safeguarding behaviours (Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003). For example, Aboriginal peoples as a collective continue to endure many adversities that have resulted from policies and practices enacted many generations ago. Yet contrary to the expectation of many, they have not lost the will in trying to re-build their societies. This desire and perseverance is emphatically communal resilience over almost complete cultural catastrophes. Any portrayal of the descendants of the First Peoples must include *resilience* for, in spite of being targeted for complete assimilation (some would say genocide), we are still alive today. Armstrong (1996) writes about remembering and honouring the lives of the ancestors and the strong role that such commemoration plays in nurturing resilience:

We find our strength and our power in our ability to be what our grandmothers were to us: keepers of the next generation in every sense of that word – physically, intellectually, and spiritually. We strive to retain our power and interpret it into all aspects of survival on this earth in the midst of chaos. (p. xi)

Aboriginal peoples' struggles for well-being, wholism and balance in daily community and home life include addressing the heavy psychological and emotional burdens that are a consequence of colonialism, such as the high incidence of DV. Research on DV prevention with

resilience as an over-arching theme is necessary so that the historic pathological approach by researchers, social workers, health professionals and counselors can be replaced by more positive emphases on competency and support (Durlak, 1998; Wolkow & Ferguson, 2001) which, in Aboriginal populations, are rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions. Discourse on the subject of resilience in Aboriginal contexts by Aboriginal scholars and practitioners, however, is uncommon (Ungar et al, 2007).

There are many Aboriginal writers who discuss their experiences of dealing with overwhelming life obstacles but do not specifically use the word *resilience*. *Half-breed* (1973), an autobiographical writing about Campbell's struggles as a Métis woman within Canadian society, is entirely about her resilience in the face of constant and intense adversity. Basil Johnston's *Indian School Days* (1988) is a story of resilience, the first-person narrative of how one young student who calls himself an "inmate", survived his "sentence to Spanish", a residential school in northern Ontario. Without specifically using the word *resilience*, many other essays, narrations and novels depict and feature resilient lives. The constructs of resilience within these stories and their re-telling illustrate that personal lived experiences have deep and life-altering meanings to the authors; these interpretations often unfold according to the relationships that the writers have with their grandmothers, grandfathers and other ancestors. The overcoming of adversity which, regardless of its nature, and which comprises the basis of the narrative, is sometimes seen as originating from appropriate responses to the voices of family members, both recently passed and ancestrally, calling to individuals to re-claim the truth they know as part of their cultural identity. To me, resilience in Aboriginal people comes from listening to those ancestors or recently passed who, in a literal sense, show individuals the way of truth, according to their individual lives and the journeys they are meant to be taking.

In most cases, the adversity or trauma (*eg.*, addictions, prostitution, loneliness, racism, discrimination) suffered by a cultural insider in relation to the outer dominant society is not commonly understood by those outside the Aboriginal community. Those hearing the stories of resilience, particularly those relating to the story's theme in relation to their own lives, are hearing about the principles that need to be applied in order to overcome specific life traumas. Resilience, as well, is increasingly applied to counseling practice and mental health research in and among Aboriginal populations. Research identifies the complex interplay of factors such as cultural, social, spiritual, familial, communal, historic and personal characteristics, and how they contribute to an individual's positive responses to stress and affliction (Anthony, 1987; Assembly of First Nations & Health Canada, 2005; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003). Understanding cultural resilience has enormous potential for DV prevention and intervention programs; traditional practices and a strong sense of spiritual understanding can work towards stopping DV and also for maintaining family life that is free of DV.

2. Literature Review

2.1 DV in Aboriginal communities

My review of literature on domestic violence in Aboriginal communities encompasses the areas that are directly and specifically relevant to my dissertation: extent, colonialism as a root cause, gender changes, few options for victims, trauma and health issues, effects on children, and Aboriginal men's legacy relative to domestic violence perpetration. The term *domestic violence* (DV) in the context of my study is sometimes referred to in literature as *intimate partner violence* (IPV); Lee and Hadeed (2009) observe that it "has captured a great deal of public attention" (p. 143). Others who concur about the increasing proliferation of discourse on DV include: Anderson, 1997; Buzawa & Buzawa, 2003; Jaffe, Baker & Cunningham, 2004; Jasinski, 2004; Mears, 2003; Rinsky, 2006; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; and UNICEF, 2000.

2.1.1 Extent

Literature points to the higher likelihood of Aboriginal women being victimized by their spouses or partners than non-Aboriginal women (AuCoin; 2005; Bhungalia, 2001; Blagg, 2000; de Leséleuc & Brzozowski, 2006; Evans-Campbell, Lindhorst, Huang & Walters, 2006; Johnson, 2006; LaRocque, 2002; McEvoy & Daniluk, 1995; Morris & Reilly, 2003; Razack, 1994; Weinrath, 2000; Yukon Women's Directorate, 2004). In a recent study on IPV, Romans, Forte, Cohen Mont and Hyman (2007) conclude that, "Aboriginal women were at higher risk of physical and/or sexual violence, consistent with previous research (Brownridge, 2003; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000)" (p. 1510). Amnesty International (2009) states that, "Indigenous women in Canada face much higher rates of violence than other women" (p. 1). Also, Lehavot, Walters and Simoni (2009) observe that American Indian and Alaska Native women experience "higher rates

of sexual and physical violence than women from any other ethnic or racial group in the United States (AI, 2007; Perry, 2004)” (p. 275). As well, the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission (AJIC) reports that, "Aboriginal women are the victims of racism, of sexism, and of unconscionable levels of domestic violence” (Pope, 2004, p. 10).

The actual extent of DV in Aboriginal communities, however, is undetermined and the body of related comprehensive studies on this is sparse (Baskin, 2006; Hamby, 2008; National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008; Shepherd, 2001; Weaver, 2009). As an indication of the extent, however, the past-president of the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC), Beverley Jacobs (2002), states that, “violence has invaded whole communities and cannot be considered a problem of a particular group or an individual household” (p. 3). DV is a national trauma of all Aboriginal groups (Goel, 2000; Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, 2007; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Varcoe, 2008; Warry, 1998). Also, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in Manitoba describes violence in Aboriginal communities as reaching “epidemic proportions” (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, p. 481). Baskin (2006) observes that in 2001, “approximately 20% of Aboriginal peoples reported being assaulted by a spouse compared to 7% of the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2001). Not surprisingly, here too, Aboriginal women in particular stand out as being at higher risk of spousal violence” (p. 20).

National statistics do not reveal the actual incidence of DV. While the overall rates are known to be rising, this trend may be an influence of more public willingness to acknowledge and destigmatize DV (Indian & Northern Affairs Canada, 2005), both in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society. In Canada overall, in the years from 2000 to 2006, five times more women have passed away because of DV than military and law enforcement deaths combined (Vallee,

2007). In Aboriginal communities, because precise statistics and the full extent of DV are unknown, any statistical information should not be seen as absolute (Bopp, Bopp & Lane, 2003). Amnesty International's *Stolen Sisters* report (2004) found that many violent incidents go unreported, particularly DV, because of limitations in the way victim data is collected and recorded, the absence of provincial or national resource systems for compiling statistics, and because police crime reporting does not include the racial background of victims. UNICEF (2000) identifies DV as "the most prevalent yet relatively hidden and ignored form of violence against women and girls" (p. 2) and is specific about Indigenous women being among those particularly vulnerable to DV. Dylan, Regehr and Alaggia (2008) observe that

[f]rom a crime and justice perspective, the violent crime rate for all Aboriginal people in Canada is significantly higher than the national rate and Aboriginal people are also far more likely to be victims of violent crime than other Canadians are (Auger, Doob, & Grossman, 1994). (p. 679)

Clearly, DV is common in Aboriginal communities and more coordinated and integrated research is needed for deriving accurate figures from accessible databases about its full extent. The importance of precise reporting in specific social contexts is outlined in one recommendation from Amnesty International (2008) to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): "The federal government should lead a coordinated effort among all governments in the country to develop a comprehensive national strategy to address violence against Indigenous women in Canada" (p. 10). One significant deterrent to such research, although not impossible to address, is that it may put victims at further risk (Btouch & Campbell, 2009; Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise & Watts, 2006; Sullivan & Cain, 2004; World Health Organization, 2001b; Yick, 2007a).

2.1.2 The role of colonialism in DV

Literature identifies the underlying cause of DV in Aboriginal communities as colonialism, specifically its distinct dislocation of traditional Aboriginal culture and blatant assimilative impositions (Adjin-Tettey, 2007; Farley, Lynne & Cotton, 2005; Hamby, 2008; Smith, 2005a; Turzian, 2008; Weaver, 2009). Writing that addresses causal factors of DV without mentioning colonialism is rare. For example, Keel (2004) states

[a]ny discussion of violence in contemporary Indigenous communities must also be located within an historical context. It is now increasingly being recognized that the experience of colonialism and the violence perpetrated against Indigenous people by white colonialists has had an indelible impact on Indigenous people. (p. 8)

Specifically articulated is colonialism's destruction of traditional Aboriginal family structures which were replaced with Eurocentric concepts of society and family (Battiste, 2000; Emberley, 2007; Furniss, 2004; Gray-Kanatiiosh & Lauderdale, 2006; Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004; LaRocque, 2002; Udel, 2001). Imposed heteropatriarchy and hierarchical structures relocated Indigenous women into political, economic and social marginalization, a site of extreme vulnerability to violence (Andrews, 1997; Goel, 2000; McGillivray & Comaskey, 2004; Nancarrow, 2006; Smith, 2005c; Turpel-Lafond, 1997). A salient aspect of colonialism that was liberally imposed on Aboriginal populations is racism which further places Native women under constant physical and mental stress (Barker, 2006; Bent-Goodley, 2005; DiNova, 2007; Feinman, 1992; Harrell, 2000; Iwasaki, Bartlett & O'Neil, 2004; Ramirez, 2007; Woods-Giscombé & Lobel, 2008). Indeed, Campbell (2007) observes that "the subtext of racism underlies much of Canadian government policy, both historical and contemporary, towards Aboriginal people" (p. 74).

Another form of colonial imposition on Aboriginal peoples was European religion. Canada, in partnership with various Christian churches, implemented the egregious residential school system which perpetrated violence and worked tirelessly at removing the agency of Native students (Alexander, 2009; Clark, Ryan, Kawachi, Canner, Berkman & Wright, 2008; McPhaden & Sarsen, 2008; Hawkeye Robertson, 2006; Nabigon, 2006; Milloy, 1999; Puchala, Paul, Kennedy & Mehl-Madrona, 2010). Kirkness (1999) stated that “The residential school was notable for its high mortality rate among the students” (p. 15); their deaths resulted from assaults and beatings, suicide, disease, malnutrition and inadequate clothing and shelter (Blackstock, 2009a; Kelm, 1999; Woolford, 2009). In the US, the boarding school system largely paralleled both the ideology of Indigenous inferiority and infrastructure of residential schools in Canada (Kuokkanen, 2003; Million, 2008; Wasserman, 2005). Tsianina Lomawaima (1994) summarizes the history of American Indian schooling:

The United States government established off-reservation boarding schools in the late 1800s as part of its civilizing plan to transform Native American people. Federal policymakers and administrators cooperated to remove thousands of Native American children and young adults from their families, homes and tribes in order to educate them in a new way of life. Indian education flowed far beyond academic or vocational boundaries, soaking the child’s growing up in the cleansing bath of Christian labor. Tribal/communal identity, primitive language, heathen religion: these pernicious influences would be rooted out and effaced in the construction of a new kind of American citizen. (p. xi)

While only several decades have passed since the last residential schools closed, many of their effects remain in the minds and spirits of past students and continue to have deleterious and

long-lasting intergenerational effects (DeGagne, 2007; Foster, 2006; Kuokkanen, 2008; McKeown, Reid & Orr, 2003; Dickason, 2002; Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995). Many experienced culture shock and tried to cope by drinking and drugging to excess (Campbell, 2008; Feldthusen, 2007; Furniss, 2004; McKegney, 2005; Roy, 2005). Other long-term consequences include internalized oppression, racism and violence (Duran, 2006). Violence is often linked to alcohol abuse and substance addictions which sustain DV and exacerbate family and other personal relationship problems (Bachman, 1992; Duran, Oetzel, Parker, Malcoe, Lucero & Jiang, 2009; Duran & Duran, 1995; Mirsky, 2004; Valverde, 2004; Midford, Wayte, Catalano, Gupta & Chikritzhs, 2005; Saylor & Daliparthy, 2006). Asawa, Hansen and Flood (2008) state that, “there is significant evidence that parental alcohol and drug use are related to family violence” (p. 77). Historically, too, students in both Canada and the United States suffered from residential schooling, the effects of which were also passed onto the following generations. On returning home after semesters, seasons or years, they could not relate to home life since they were indoctrinated by the coercive and intense nature of their education to denigrate everything traditional about their own heritage (Barman, Hébert & MCaskill, 1986; Hukill, 2006; LaPrairie, 2002; Miller, 1996; Simpson, 2009). Regarding Native children in schools, Mohawk (2003) observed, of the period around the late 18th century, “. . . the marginalized Indians this strategy produced were suited for neither the white nor the Indian world. They were likely to suffer an identity crisis that rendered them susceptible to a variety of degenerate behaviours, including alcohol abuse and an inability to function in Indian society” (p. 23).

Another area that colonialism targeted was the collective political will of the First Nations; legislated disempowerment led to forced dependency on government, and as an entirety, the Aboriginal peoples experienced governance breakdown and societal instability (Barker,

2009; Cowlshaw, 2003; Gagne, 1998; Mayer, 2007a; Monture, 1993). Colonialism is also a major contributor to the high-risk factors that perpetuate DV in Native communities such as poverty, un- or under-employment and under-representation in leadership positions (Kershaw, Pulkingham & Fuller, 2008; Miller, 2009a; Million, 2009; Mithlo, 2009), sexism (Barker, 2006; Logan McCallum, 2009; Mankiller & Wallis, 1993; Naples & Dobson, 2001), lack of high-quality educational attainment (McGill, 2008; Redwing Saunders & Hill, 2007; Spence, White & Maxim, 2007; Tunison, 2007), overrepresentation as both victims and offenders in the criminal justice system (Grekul & Laboucane-Benson, 2008; LaPrairie, 2002; Milward, 2008; Neilsen, 2006) and disruption of Aboriginal identity that now includes one of victimization (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009; Deer, 2009; Lawrence, 2008; Simpson, 2009; Woolford, 2009). Weaver (2009) observes that it is “useful to understand that violence against Native women exists in a social environment, largely shaped by the context of colonization, which allows and promotes ongoing violence” (p. 1554). hooks (1981) also identifies colonization and its accompanying mechanism, oppression, as a process that degrades women and breeds DV.

2.1.3 Gender changes & DV

According to Dei (2010), gender is a “contested, fluid and paradoxical discursive formation”, “a form of identity and knowledge production” and also “about embodiment and how bodies are read” (p. 3). Further, he states: “[m]uch of the scholarly discussions around gender speak about the aestheticized heterosexual performativity of femininity and masculinity” (p. 3). Mann (2003), Pleck, Sonenstein and Ku (1993), Senn, Desmarais, Verberg and Wood (2000), and Totten (2003) all note that there is a clear relationship between acceptable Western masculine identity with accompanying behavior and expression of physical and sexual violence against women. That gender violence is institutionally sanctioned is expressed by Ptacek (1999):

“. . . individual women are assaulted by individual men, but the ability of so many men to repeatedly assault, terrorize, and control so many women draws on institutional collusion and gender inequality” (p. 9). DV is described by Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) as being a part of “a systemic pattern of dominance and control” (p. 6). Entire institutions, such as the Western concept of “family”, the criminal justice and legal systems and the military, are gendered (Acker, 1992; Carr, Hudson, Hanks & Hunt, 2008; Hudson, 2006; Kimmel, 2000; Kümmel, 2002; Wharton, 2005). As gender is not innate (Butler, 1999; Gatens, 1996; Petersen, 1998; Phillips, 2006), patriarchal hierarchies of importance and value are assigned through internal interactive processes and entrenched by reiterated cycles of replay (Acker, 1992). Through the colonizers’ processes, that “at first claim the land of the colonized as their own through a process of violent eviction, justified by notions that the land was empty or populated by peoples who had to be saved and civilized” (Razack, 2000, p. 97), Western-based gender systems and its accoutrements (*eg.*, the assumption of the historic innocence of white women in aiding and abetting the oppression of Indigenous people) were imposed on Aboriginal populations (Carter, 2000; Lydon, 2007; Nelson, 2002; Perry, 1997; Van Kirk, 1999). As with contact itself, however, the extent and depth of colonialism has not been consistent across the country (Bonvillain, 1989; Neilsen, 2006; Woolford, 2009) even though all First Nations have experienced substantial and devastating losses to their traditional social, economic and political institutions (Miller, 2000; Trigger, 1985).

As colonialism became rooted in Canada, gender, alongside race, was important in forming government policy and legislation pertaining to the downward spiral of Aboriginal women’s status (McGrath & Stevenson, 1996). As a tool of oppression, it creates uniquely deleterious experiences for women and, in fact, deliberately operates to marginalize them further

(Crenshaw, 1993; Hill-Collins, 1990; hooks, 1981). Examining the history of the vital and complex social phenomenon of gender production within an Aboriginal community context is one of the first places to start in combating DV since gendered violence is now so prevalent in Indigenous communities (Balfour, 2008; Mancini Billson, 2009; Merry, 2006; Smith, 2005c; Zellerer, 2003). Jaffe, Crooks and Wolfe (2003) note that addressing DV involves legislative, justice and community responses that are “embedded within a context of massive social change and gender equality” (p. 212). Acknowledging gender differences and recognizing the use of violence relative to those differences is imperative to illuminate fully the issue of DV and its dynamics.

The production of gender is grounded in cultural beliefs and constantly reproduced and reinforced by existing social structures (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Butler, 1990; Kendall 2000; Lucal, 1999; Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Arguss’ (2007) observation is that it is “imagined through the discourses of colonial desires and anxieties” (Abstract). Because men are usually more economically independent than women and women bear most child-minding responsibilities, they fall into the wider category of gendered social disadvantage and inequality (Anderson, 2007; Barnett, 2000; Garcia, 2003; Goodman, Fels Smyth, Borges & Singer, 2009; Humphreys, 2007; Raphael, 2003). Such a location augments their vulnerability to DV (Frye, Manganello, Campbell, Walton-Moss & Wilt, 2006; Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Murray & Powell, 2009; Strauchler, McCloskey, Malloy, Sitaker, Grigsby & Gillig, 2004). DV is a reflection of gender relations and becomes a part of the reproduction and stabilization of male-dominated practices (Kwesiga, Bell, Pattie & Moe, 2007; Logan, Walker, Jordan & Leukefeld, 2006; Phillips & Phillips, 2010; Schwartz, 2005) that contribute to males laying claim over females to societal resources (Dei, 2010).

In pre-contact Aboriginal traditions, inter-gender harmony rather than asymmetry, conflict and competition, constituted the socially-accepted dynamics between men and women (Anderson, 1993; Bonvillain, 1989; Powers, 2000; Zion and Zion, 1993; Viera Powers, 2000). Women in many societies held powerful political positions that strengthened gender egalitarianism (Agtuca, 2008; Eberts, McIvor & Nahanee, 2006; Sinclair, 1999, ix-x); the elderly, most commonly women, played pivotal roles in teaching socialization skills to the younger generations and in cultural transmission which maintained distinct tribal and familial identities (Asante, 2005; Barrios & Egan, 2002; Champagne, 1999; Cheshire, 2001; Gross, 2002). Traditional creation and celebratory stories that were part of a Nation's educational system honoured women (Benton-Benai, 1988; Poupart, 2001) without excluding men (Wilson, 2005). With waves of European encroachment, however, came upheavals to First Nations gender traditions, but the post-Confederation *Indian Act* of 1876 was indisputably the most significant tool that undermined the First Nation female's status and autonomy (Aleem, 2009; Emberley, 2001; Fitznor, 2006; Perry, 2003). Statutory impositions in the *Act* included the loss of women's status and band membership when they married non-Indians; this involuntary disenfranchisement ended women's formal relationships with their home communities (Barker, 2008; McGrath & Stevenson, 1996; Simpson, 2009). As well, women's participation in band politics was forbidden (Bartlett, 1978; Fiske, 1990; Isaac & Maloughney, 1992). Indian agents often travelled to reserves, and watched what was happening, sometimes down to very small details. For example, in 1959, *Indian Affairs* reported on

what they viewed as successful transformations in the gender dynamics of family and community life: speaking of the Shamattawa Band in northern Manitoba, for instance, Indian Affairs officials reported with approval that 'formerly it was the women's job to

provide the fuel while the men hunted and trapped. Shamattawa men have realized that this is not suitable women's work.' (Bohaker & Iocovetta, 2009, p. 443)⁶

Residential schools added to the destruction of whatever remained of gender complementarity in Aboriginal societies. Young girls and boys were entrenched in gender-specific training such as woodworking or farming for boys and domesticity in homes and institutions for girls; these were considered socially-acceptable roles by the social engineers of the day (Kuhlmann, 1992; LaFromboise, Heyle & Ozer, 1990; McCallum, 2001; Sangster, 2005). As time went on within the Nations, gender hierarchies emerged from the *Act's* dictates and according to the patterns paralleling those of the colonizers; women fell under the control of men, a control that men did not necessarily oppose (Napholz, 1995; Roberts, Harper, Caldwell & Decors, 2003). The *Act*, by legally destroying traditional Aboriginal gender relationships by disempowering women, founded the destructive legacy of the contemporary social status and dominant relationships between Aboriginal women and men.

2.1.4 Few options for DV victims

Documentation shows that the Canadian government does not address violence against women adequately, and categorically fails to address racism and bias when violent crimes are committed against Aboriginal women (Bazilli, 2000; Poverty & Human Rights Centre, 2007; Razack, 2000; Tutty, Weaver & Rothery, 1999; Tutty, 2006). Literature also points to DV not being taken as seriously as other disasters that strike similarly large segments of a population, that many, including those in other types of leadership, believe victims deserve the violence inflicted on them, and that violence is endemic within Native cultures (Fields, 2008; Quayle,

⁶‘Once Northern Nomads: Woodcutting Operation Helps to Settle Band,’ *Indian News* 3, no. 3 (March 1959), p. 8.

2002; Seuffert, 1994; Tarrant, 1990). An example of the latter is Widdowson and Albert (2008): “This is not to say that there is anything ‘naturally’ violent in the aboriginal character, only that there is a pragmatic cultural sanction for the use of force to aid survival in pre-civilized modes of life” (p. 132).

A recent study (Olsen Harper, 2008a) showed that three prominent self-government agreements signed by First Nations or groups of First Nations (*James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*, 1975; *Sechelt Indian Band Self-Government Act*, 1986; *Nisga’a Final Agreement Act*, 1999), only one – the JBNQA – includes provisions for women’s shelters although a single shelter has yet to be built within its territories. Nisga’a includes family violence prevention funding from the federal government through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). DV victims who are members of the Sechelt Indian Band receive services in the non-Native town of Sechelt; the shelter there is funded by the provincial *Ministry of Community Services*, without involvement from INAC. These weakly-linked arrangements imply a lack of importance and priority placed on DV by First Nations self-government leadership, all of whom were male at the time of the agreements’ signings.

Other than the 41 on-reserve⁷ women’s shelters in Canada, there appears to be little movement to garner other support to help address DV in most Aboriginal communities (Olsen Harper, 2006). Shelters are often acutely under-funded, some to the point of half that received by provincially-funded shelters; inadequate human resources, childcare and culturally-appropriate programming are often chronic issues (Novick, 2005). Some on-reserve women’s shelters suffer from the hands of their own Chiefs and Councils who have the liberty of apportioning INAC

⁷Although not all 41 are technically located on-reserve, they are all at least partially-funded by INAC. Most are fully-funded by INAC.

shelter funding to the detriment of the shelter. INAC, not wanting to involve itself in “reserve politics”, does not come to the aid of shelters.

Legislatively, status on-reserve First Nations women receive limited or no benefits in matrimonial real property division because of the constitutional partitioning of provincial-federal jurisdictions. Provincial laws protecting a woman’s share of real property upon dissolution of marriage or marriage-type relationships do not apply on reserves which are under federal authority (Alcantara, 2006; Bastien, 2008). Xanthaki (2010) states:

In the 2006 concluding observations on Canada, the HRC (Human Rights Committee) expressed its concern about the discriminatory effects of the *Indian Act* against Aboriginal women and their children in matters of reserve membership and matrimonial property on reserve lands and urged the state to seek solutions with the informed consent of the indigenous peoples. The HRC also stressed “that balancing collective and individual interests on reserves to the sole detriment of women is not compatible with the Covenant. (p. 42)⁸

Literature describes overcrowding in almost all reserves, the result of an unremitting lack of adequate housing. The consequence is an exacerbation of the severity of victimization of those already enduring DV (Auditor General of Canada, 2003; Barker, 2006; Cornet & Lendor, 2002; O’Donnell & Tait, 2003). Across Canada, the number of emergency shelters and services is extremely limited for those who must leave their homes for safety and support (Cameron, 2006; Crnkovich, 1995) and most shelter services and programs are directed at white middle-class women (Bograd, 1999; Kanuha, 1996). There is a scarcity of services specific to the unique

⁸*Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee: Canada*, U.N. ESCOR, Human Rights Committee, 85th Session, ¶22, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/CAN/CO/5 (2006).

needs of Aboriginal DV victims (MacDonald, 2004). A lack of resources and English language proficiency as well as cultural isolation are specific impediments to Aboriginal women's awareness of the availability and access to services and programs that could help them in dealing with DV (Douki, Nacef, Belhadj, Bouasker & Ghachem, 2003; Foss & Warnke, 2003; Nason-Clark, 2004; Sumter, 2006; Yick, 2007b; Yoshioka & Choi, 2005). Culturally-appropriate services that address the specific challenges of Native families are needed and all non-Aboriginal staff should be trained to increase their capacity and expertise for adapting services to the range of cultures in Aboriginal populations accessing those services (Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, 2007; Fernández, Bowen, Gay, Mattson, Bitai & Kelly, 2003; Hoffman-Mason & Bingham, 1988; Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003; Lane, Bopp, Bopp & Norris, 2002). Ideally, other agencies would collaborate and coordinate among themselves to serve Aboriginal families and help ensure that available services are accessible. This means that all those in the area of programming must have the knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and attributes to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Antone, 2000; Bang, Medin & Atran, 2007; Chapman, 1991; McBride, 2003). Such agencies might be those with strong links to DV victims, their children and the perpetrators themselves; in this way, entire households and extended family members can access anti-DV services and maintain the family focus of Aboriginal tradition (Bearheart & Larkin, 1995; Coyhis, 2001; McCormick, 2009; Warry, 1998). Community-based offerings are best positioned to address barriers to shelter and other services needed by Aboriginal DV victims (Ferraro, 2008; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Zellerer, 2003; Longclaws, Barkwell & Rosebush, 1994). The criminal justice system, often involved in DV cases, utilizes a punitive approach that further marginalizes Aboriginal women (Dylan, Regehr & Alaggia, 2008; Cunliffe & Cameron, 2007; Dean, 2005; Reina, 2000) so as an intervention, it is inadequate.

2.1.5 Trauma & other health issues from DV

Rinsky (2006) states that DV “must be counted among the most historically underappreciated threats to public health” (p. 357). Others see DV as combinations, layers or intersections of ill health, trampled human rights and grave societal flaws (Brownridge, 2003; Ferris, 2007; Gazmararian, Lazorick, Spitz, Ballard, Saltzman & Marks, 1996; Libal & Parek, 2009; Morgaine, 2009; Yang, Yang, Chang, Chen & Ko, 2006). A significant outcome of DV is the negative health experiences that are firmly linked to women living in abusive intimate relationships (Campbell, 2002; Carbone-López, Krusttschnitt & Macmillan, 2006; Coker, Smith, Bethea, King & McKeown, 2000; Golding, 1999; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2002). Mental disorder is common; among the mental illnesses, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with symptoms such as hypervigilance, heightened anxiety and sleep disturbances is most commonly exhibited in DV victims (Bargai, Ben-Shakhar & Shalev, 2007; Coker, Weston, Creson, Justice & Blakeney, 2005; DeJonghe, Bogat, Levendosky & von Eye, 2008; Dutton, 2009; Stampfel, Chapman & Alvarez, 2010). Other types of psychological health dysfunction are suicide ideation or attempts, fear, depression, emotional distress, memory loss or poor recall, sleep and eating disorders, low self-confidence/ self-esteem, difficulty with everyday activity, and addictions (Ellsberg, Janse, Heise, Watts & Garcia-Moreno, 2008; Goodman, Fels Smyth, Borges & Singer, 2009; Laroche, 2005; Martinez-Torteya, Bogat, von Eye, Levendosky & Davidson, 2009; Wekerle & Wall, 2002).

Physical ill health, too, plagues DV victims. These include headaches, migraines, irritable bowel syndrome, gynaecological problems, chronic pain, (*e.g.*, lower back pain), dizziness, broken bones, bruises and unexplained injuries, (Choo, Nicholaidis & Lowe, 2008; Fletcher, 2009; Johnson, Ollus & Nevala, 2008; Svavarsdottir & Orlygsdottir, 2009; Velzeboer et al, 2003;

Wuest et al., 2009). Research suggests that many expectant women living in DV are especially vulnerable to assault during their pregnancies (Campbell, Oliver & Bullock, 1998; Janssen, Holt, Sugg, Emanuel, Critchlow & Henderson, 2003; Mackie, Kupper, Buescher & Moracco, 2001; Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Noel & Yam, 1992; O'Reilly, 2007) and that a strong predictor of pregnancy violence is pre-conception violence (Letourneau, Fredrick & Willms, 2007; Martin, Harris-Britt, Li, Moracco, Kupper & Campbell, 2004; Rådestad, Rubertsson, Ebeling & Hildingsson, 2003; Saltzman, Johnson, Gilbert & Goodwin, 2003; Wathen, Jamieson, Wilson, Daly, Worster & MacMillan, 2007). Considering the high rates of both birth and DV in the Aboriginal populations in Canada, this is an especially serious health concern. Taillieu and Brownridge (2010) state that, "Aboriginal women have been found to be at an increased risk for experiencing violence during pregnancy compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts in Canada (Heaman, 2005; Janssen et al., 2003; Muhajarine & D'Arcy, 1999)" (p. 25). Further, pregnant women living in DV have greater numbers of risk factors for becoming homicide statistics than non-pregnant abuse victims (Decker, Martin & Moracco, 2004; Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Krulewitch, Roberts & Thompson, 2003; Macy, Martin, Kupper, Casanueva & Guo, 2007; Shadigian & Bauer, 2005). Serious health concerns in pregnancy are not confined only to the mother, but also to the developing fetus (Campbell, Webster, Koziol-McLain, Block, Campbell, Curry, et al., 2003; Coker, Sanderson & Dong, 2004; Espinosa & Osborne, 2002; Heaman, 2005; Neggers, Goldenberg, Cliver, & Hauth, 2004).

Aboriginal women suffer the same health outcomes because of DV as non-Aboriginal women (Canadian Council on Social Development & Native Women's Association of Canada, 1991). Lehavot, Walters and Simoni (2009) observe that, regarding American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) women, "Current manifestations of colonization include an epidemic of violence

. . . [they] are sexually and physically abused from early on in life. . . . [this] contribute[s] to their poor physical and mental health outcomes” (p. 275). Aboriginal women are a part of groups that are socioeconomically disadvantaged and suffer inequities in health and access to health care (Kurtz Landy, Sword & Ciliska, 2008; Isaacs, Pyett, Oakley-Browne & Gruis, 2010; Lawrence, Binguis, Douglas, McKeown, Switzer, Figueiredo, et al., 2009; Manion, 2010; Williams, Mohammed, Leavell & Collins, 2010). As such, the everyday life for marginalized women most often already includes chronic stressors such as racialization, racism, ill health, poverty, language barriers, inadequate housing, insufficient nutritional care, underemployment or unemployment, poor education and any number of other possible disparities-related social determinants of health (Baum, Bégin, Houweling & Taylor, 2009; Kirmayer, 1994; Nelson, 2009; Richmond, Ross & Egeland, 2007; Schneider, Zaslavsky & Epstein, 2002; Willows, 2005). Whitaker et al. (2007, p.191) observe that, “Evidence also suggests that Latino women may experience poorer health compared to non-Latino women because of IPV” [intimate partner violence]. Globalization has not helped prevent violence against Indigenous women, either (Denetdale, 2006; Kuokkanen, 2008; Martin-Hill, 2003; Nash, 2001), particularly as public services are increasingly privatized and more difficult for poorer populations to access. This is because of many developing nations’ “poor domestic conditions, an unequal distribution of foreign investments and the imposition of new conditions further limiting the access of their exports to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] markets” (WHO, 2001, p. 834). Creese and Strong-Boag (2005) state that, “Reduced services associated with the centralization of health care hits rural areas especially hard, with very serious consequences for Aboriginal women” (p. 1). These findings consistently place Aboriginal women living in DV at extremely high risks for continued poor quality-of-life, even in comparison with non-Aboriginal women also living in DV.

2.1.6 Effect on children

Until about the last 15 years, children largely lacked visibility as DV victims (Busby et al, 2005; Edleson, 2004; Øverlien, 2010; Sutherland, 2002). Michele Landsberg (1982) offers an early expression of children's distress in violent homes; more recent literature also shows the devastating impact of DV on children (Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, 2002; Duman & Margolin, 2007; Edleson, 1999a; LaRocque, 2002). These impacts arise from either direct assault or having witnessed or otherwise been exposed to assault in the home (Bogart, DeJonghe & Levendosky, 2006; DeJonghe, Bogart, Levendosky, Von Eye & Davidson, 2005; Griffing, Lewis, Chu, Sage, Madry & Primm, 2006; Ballif-Spanvill, Clayton, Hendrix & Hunsaker, 2004). Jackson Katz (personal communication, February 8, 2010) believes that children are victims of DV not only when they are at risk of being directly assaulted, but even when they have actually seen or heard inter-parental violence. Other researchers similarly recognize the victimization of children living in homes with DV: Geffner, Jaffe & Sudermann, 2000; Graham-Bermann & Edleson, 2001; Letourneau, Fredrick & Willms, 2007; Mullender, 1996; and, Vatnar & Bjørkly, 2008.

Some observe that one effect of DV is that children can become abusers themselves (Lamberg, 2000; Trevethan, Auger, Moore, MacDonald & Sinclair, 2001; Proulx & Perrault, 2001; Dion Stout, 1997) and perpetuate the cycle of violence in the home (Belsky, 1993; Hecht & Hansen, 2001; Osofsky, 1997). Covell and Howe (2008) state that, “[c]hildren learn violence from their parents” (p. 95). Indeed, childhood abuse, common in homes with DV, contributes to both victimization and violence in later life (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Mann, 2000; Potter, 2006; Renner & Slack, 2006; Schwartz, 2005; Worcester, 2002). According to Finkelhor (2009), children living in homes “characterized by parental discord” (p. 172) and

violence are risk markers for child sexual victimization which, in turn, is “strongly associated with adverse social, psychological and health outcomes” (p. 171). The risk of problem behavior, including emotional and social maladjustment, is increased in children exposed to DV (Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998; Hecht & Hansen, 2001; Kitzmann, 2007; Minze, McDonald, Rosentraub & Jouriles, 2010; Onyskiw, 2003; Sterne & Poole, 2010; Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith & Jaffe 2003). As well as suffering from psychological disorders because of DV, many children experience a host of long-term health-related problems that are difficult to diagnose, or are misdiagnosed (Penhold, 2005). Many authors have shown that exposure to DV is deleterious on children’s physical well-being, health and self-esteem. These include Asawa, Hansen & Flood, 2008; Black, Trocmé, Fallon & MacLaurin, 2008; Chiumg-Tao Shen, 2009; Grych, Jouriles, Swank, McDonald & Norwood, 2002; Mullender, Hague, Imam, Kelly, Malos & Regan, 2004; Smith Stover, 2005; and, Yates, Dodds, Sroufe & Egeland, 2003. As DV negatively affects parenting skills, it constitutes another risk factor for children raised in abusive homes. DV increases stress among family members and leads to feelings of anxiety and isolation in both children and mothers (Hecht & Hansen, 2001; Thompson, 1995; Thompson, Flood & Goodvin, 2006). DV and child maltreatment often occur concomitantly, particularly as children are at risk of being injured during DV outbursts (Edleson, 1999b; Graham-Bermann, 2002; Osofsky, 2003). There is overall support for the assertion that mothers’ care of their children is compromised in DV situations (Holden, Geffner & Jouriles, 1998; Kelleher, Hazen, Coben, Wang, MGeehen, Kohl, et al., 2008; Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2000; Walker, 1984). When mothers leave abusers, however, the improvement in their childcare most often skyrockets (Holden, Geffner & Jouriles, 1998) but it is still vital to support mother-child relationships in the aftermath of DV (Humphreys, Mullender, Thiara & Skamballis, 2006).

Literature on the effects of DV on specifically Native children is scarce, particularly in comparison with non-Aboriginal children (Duran, Duran, Woodis & Woodis, 2004). However, Trocmé, MacLaurin, Fallon, Knoke, Pitman and McCormack (2006), in *Mesnmimk Wasatek*, a report derived from the *Canadian Incidence on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect Study 2003*, conclude that

[i]In First Nations child maltreatment investigations, exposure to DV was the primary substantiated form of abuse in 20% or an estimated 2,375 child investigations (5.93 investigations per 1,000 children) while in non-Aboriginal child maltreatment investigations, exposure to DV was the primary substantiated form in 30% or an estimated 26,095 child maltreatment investigations (6.13 investigations per 1,000 children). (p. 33)

The specific report from this national study concludes that the rate was lower in First Nations populations compared to that of non-Aboriginal populations. Osofsky's (2003) observation of "the most important protective resource to enable a child to cope with exposure to violence is a strong relationship with a competent, caring, positive adult, most often a parent" (p. 38) may be a reason for the lower rate (although in the case of Aboriginal children, the referenced adult is most probably a grandparent). Griffiths and Belleau (1998) observe that in many areas of Canada there are, "inadequate services available to Aboriginal women who are victims of violence, including a lack of emergency shelter services and 'safe' houses and services for children who have been victims and/or witnesses to family violence and abuse" (p. 181).

2.1.7 Men's place: A context as perpetrators

Aboriginal men's contemporary place has its historic roots in colonial deviousness and manipulations such as Neinhuis (2009) describes about the Jesuits who "understood that in order

to introduce Catholic and French culture to the native peoples of New France, they would need to completely reformulate relationships between women and men as hierarchical ones, with women subservient to men in a domesticated context” (p. 52). Several other writers also note that colonialism routed the social and other standards of mainstream culture in Native life—one heteropatriarchal outcome being that Aboriginal men have come to dominate over women: Adjin-Tetley, 2007; Alfred, 1999b; Brownridge, 2008; Hamby, 2000; McEachern, Winkle & Steiner, 1998; Napholz, 1995; Roberts, Harper, Caldwell & Decora, 2003. Many Native men (and some women) have accepted and normalized the Western-based worldview of men being leaders over women, and of women’s subordination to men (Champagne, 1999; Hukill, 2006; Mussell, 2005; Smith, 2005b; Weaver, 2009). One significant source of acceptance by women of their being subservient to men is their adherence to Christianity; biblical references strongly uphold this placement (I Peter 3:7; I Cor. 7:39; Eph. 5:24-27; I Peter 3:1). Sexism, a major artery in the heart of heteropatriarchy, has been internalized in First Nations governments to the extent that many of the newer social, economic and political traditions are male-dominated with often little room for women (Barker, 2003; Braveheart-Jordan & DeBruyn, 1995; Fiske, 1995; Waters, 2003). LaRocque (1991) states that, as part of colonization, “Aboriginal men have internalized white male devaluation of women” (p. 75). Kiyoshk (1990) relates DV to colonial-inspired acculturation: “the patriarchal norms of the dominant society through imposition of policy and legislation and religion that have over many generations minimized the significance of women’s roles. These power imbalances...are causal factors in family violence” (p. 15).

Changes to the traditional Aboriginal societal order also means that men’s cultural roles relative to women, children and the outer community have been displaced and that men have been disenfranchised from their own social locations (Duran, Duran, Woodis & Woodis, 2004;

Kershaw, Pulkingham & Fuller, 2008; Kiyoshk, 2003; Manahan & Ball, 2007; Neimi-Bohun, 2009). No longer is the self-esteem and self-worth of Native men derived from a strong personal place within a supporting collective, and many men today are left with neither being allowed full participation in dominant society, nor with information and guidance to fill the cultural vacuum from a home society (Billson, 2006; Krech, 2002; Williamson, 2004). Ball (2009a) summarizes the downward displacement of Aboriginal men from their own traditional societies:

The Aboriginal male, their job title used to be hunting and gathering. They used to have gathering food, making shelters and doing all those things. So, that whole thing with the Europeans coming in and wiping it all out. . . . First, it was the residential school and they took away the language, or tried to take the language away. They took the entire role of the male in the Aboriginal community away so that left a big empty gap for males. They didn't know what to do, where to go, what to say, when to say it, or anything . . . the men, they had to go off, they had to go and learn how to build certain kind of houses and they had to relearn how to live in society, how to get a wife and what to do as a husband, as a father and as a member of a community. (p. 44)

Ernest Hunter, in two separate research studies (Hunter, 1998; Hunter & Desley, 2002), notes that in Canada, United States, New Zealand and Australia—countries where Anglo settler colonialism took place—the rates of DV and self-harm among young Aboriginal men is very high. This research concludes that the root cause is aggressive, blatant and inappropriate male identity formation and that the imaging is particularly damaging because of the lack of culturally-significant role models in the families and communities of these young men, and also because the tattered remnants of traditional male identity were so seriously undermined as to be almost invisible to all children and youth. Hunter believes that DV and self-harm are closely

related and re-enacted within the family as a representation of the destructive long-term effects of colonialism that is so deeply situated in Aboriginal bodies and societies.

Activist belle hooks (2004) identifies patriarchy as a sociopolitical network that “insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence” (p. 18). As such, the system of patriarchy informs and appears to justify the historic, cultural and social precursors that influence Native men’s abusive behaviour and perception of women, and also the psychosocial context in which they perpetrate violence against women (Duran, 2006; Puchala, Paul, Kennedy & Mehl-Madrona, 2010). Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo (2003) conclude that in Canada today, Aboriginal men have the highest rates of mental illness, suicide and addictions among all ethnic groups; Johnson (2006) places Aboriginal men in the category of having the highest unemployment, poverty, homelessness and mobility and lowest education, marriage rates and household income among the population groups in the country. Poupart (2003) quotes BraveHeart and DeBruyn as they ascribe the causal factors of these social ills: “We contend that the high rates of depression . . . suicide, homicide, domestic violence and child abuse among American Indians can also be attributed to [the] processes of internalized oppression and identification with the aggressor” (p. 88). Many Aboriginal men, trying to cope with their own pains, have fallen into drug and alcohol addictions; through the disastrous route of “trial and error”, many have come to realize that addictions are not the pathway to desired outcomes. Use of violence which many learned either in residential schools or from those who attended residential schools, is also another means of attempting to cope (Ball, 2009a; Dion Stout &

Kipling, 2003; Lovrod, 2005; McKegney, 2007; Milloy, 1999; Vickers, 2005). Bowen (2005) describes a study by Krech (2002) who notes

that alcoholism among Native men is related to a sense of not being useful or having a purpose. This lack of self-respect is changing, he states, as Native men gain a “respect for the self [that] is grounded in a healthy respect for others, emphasizing the importance of being connected with a community” (2002, p. 78). (p. 129)

Even though residential schools are now closed, other government-sponsored activities replaced them—such as the “sixties scoop” and the continuing removal of First Nations children from their homes (Blackstock, Trocmé & Bennett, 2004; Boag-Strong, 2005; Butler Palmer, 2008; Fournier & Crey, 1997; Kimmelman, 1985; Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003), the outcomes of which have not proven any more stabilizing for Aboriginal families (Janovicek, 2003; Sinclair, 2007).

2.2 Resilience

2.2.1. A synopsis: Resilience in Western thought

Resilience has multiple definitions (Arrington & Wilson, 2000; Kaufman, Cook, Army, Jones & Pittinsky, 1994; Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Rutter, 1987a, 1993; Windle, 1999) and has various interpretations among researchers and academics (Merritt, 2007). A common definition posited by Luthar (2006) is “a construct representing positive adaptation despite adversity” (p. 739) and identifies *significant adversity* and *positive adaptation* as distinctive dimensions of resilience. Resilience is rooted in the concepts of risk, stress and coping; these become identifying factors for promoting interventions that increase constructive resistance to stress and adversity (Garmezy, 1993; Glantz & Sloboda, 1999; Lindstrom, 2001; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Ryff, Singer, Love & Essex, 1998; Smith & Carlson, 1997).

Contemporary research literature is based on studies that were primarily authored by psychiatrists and psychologists (Anthony (1983; Fox Vernon, 2004; Masten & Powell, 2003; Phillips, 1968). Gartland, Bond, Olsson, Buzwell and Sawyer (2006) helped increase awareness of the social dimensions of resilience and research is now concentrated far beyond mental well-being (DuPlessis VanBreda, 2001; Goldstein & Brooks, 2005; Ungar, 2008a; Waxman, Gray & Padrón, 2003; Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, 2009). Professionals and researchers in different fields now situate their unique socio-cultural constructions in the field of resilience and determine how they work with it. Present paradigms of resilience shift the emphasis from older pathological perspectives to ones more constructive and directed at achieving positive life outcomes (Antonovsky & Bernstein, 1986; Compass, Hinden & Gerhardt, 1995; Cowen, 1994; Strümpfer, 1990).

While earlier efforts focused on individuals or subsets of individuals (Anthony, 1974; Werner & Smith, 1982), the omphalos of more recent work is on resilience as a community resource (Blankenship, 1998; Bonanno, 2004; Bowen, 1998; McKnight, 1997). Health specialists and other professionals recognize that resilience can be promoted or supported by sources external to an individual (Davis, 1999; Gore & Eckenrode, 1996; Osher, Kendziora, VanDenBerg & Dennis, 1999; Werner & Smith, 1989). De Assis de Corrêa Sória, Rodrigues Bittencourt, de Fátima Batalha De Menezes, Antunes Crisóstoma de Sousa and de Souza (2009) believe that “[i]t should not be only an attribute of individuals, but rather, it can be present in institutions and organizations leading to a more resilient society” (p. 703). Resilience can be a definite characteristic of individuals, families and communities (Bernard, 1994; Davis, 1999; Hawley, 2000; Henderson & Milstein, 2003; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; McLachlan & Arden, 2009).

The theme of *risk factors* is a mainstay in resilience literature. Risk factors are “characteristics of the person or the environment that are associated with an increased probability of maladaptive developmental outcomes” (Compass, Hinden & Gerhardt, 1995, p. 273). Some researchers (Masten, 2001; Yates, Egeland & Sroufe, 2003; Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson & Collins, 2005) support the notion of unambiguous and substantial risk being a significant component of resilience, as this “risk” differentiates resilience from normative development (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Rutter, 1999, 2000, 2005). However, resilience is viewed by other researchers as normal development in problematic environments (Masten, 2001; Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt & Target, 1994). Studies of risk factors include examinations of the effects of adversities such as poverty, divorce, parental mental dysfunction and substance abuse, sexual abuse, birth impediments and racism (Luthar, Burack, Cicchetti & Weisz, 1997; Haggerty, Sherrod, Garmezy

& Rutter, 1994; Rolf, Masten, Cicchetti, Nuechterlein & Weintraub, 1990), all of which are articulated in terms of the possibility of negative or undesirable outcomes. More recent studies focus on concomitant risk factors in various life phases and how, when compounded, they can readily lead to more stressful experiences (Masten & O'Dougherty Wright, 1997), rather than single factors as earlier studies had done (Sameroff & Seifer, 1983; Sameroff & Chandler, 1975; Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). Consequently, many researchers discuss *cumulative risk*; the “additive model” suggests that the more risk factors, the greater increase in possible negative behaviours or outcomes (Appleyard, Egeland, van Dulmen & Srouge, 2005). Correspondingly, an increasing number of protective factors is likely to lead to positive outcomes (Rutter, 1999).

Literature on human development in unfavourable home environments also involves a discourse on resilience in terms of *protective factors* which counter the risk factors. They have the potential of cultivating positive outcomes in children, and developing healthy personality characteristics in spite of adversities (Garmezy, 1991; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1999; Werner, 1995). Garmezy, Masten and Tellegen (1984) followed Rutter (1979) in articulating these as arising from three areas: individual, family and community or agency outside the family (Condly, 2006; Sandler, 2001; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Luthar & Cichetti, 2000; Matson, 2001; Olsson, Bond & Burns, 2003; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). Ungar (2008b) spoke of the place of *culture* in contemporary resilience thought:

a preponderance of western social science concepts are still relied upon to describe phenomena. Resilience research is, after all, anchored in a Eurocentric epistemology. Concepts such as self-efficacy, secure attachments, social support, social justice, and economic development, though exports to non-western settings, are relevant to both minority and majority world cultures, even if the words used to describe these aspects of

children's lives are not Indigenous to the cultures in which the terms are used (Johnson-Powell & Yamamoto, 1997). (p. 222)

The need for inclusion of culture and diversity in resilience discussion has also been emphasized by Arrington and Wilson, 2000; Fraser, 1997; Greene, 2002; McCubbin, Fleming, Thompson, Neitman, Elver and Savas, 1998; and, Walsh, 1996. As well, Zautra, Stuart Hall and Murray (2010) observe that, “[t]here are cultural differences in how people rebound from adversity” (p. 7).

The awareness of non-Western perspectives of resilience and the need to understand them are increasingly emerging from resilience literature; there is, however, no international group that has addressed the question of whether or not resilience is “understood differently in minority and majority world contexts” (Ungar, Clark, Kwong, Makhnach & Cameron, 2006, p. 6); this is a finding which Ungar (personal communication, May 17, 2010) still finds true. While, for example, Clauss-Ehlers (2004) recognizes the need for a more inclusive definition of the factors that promote resilience, and suggests that ethnicity, culture and environment are key in the manifestation of resilience in individuals or groups, this is not the same as employing an Indigenous perspective of resilience for contexts such as DV in Aboriginal communities. Rather, Clauss-Ehlers' version of what would be appropriate is to expand Western-defined versions of resilience for application to Aboriginal groups and life circumstances.

2.2.2 Resilience in Aboriginal epistemology

The understanding of resilience in Aboriginal epistemology is as an integration of spirituality, family and Elder strength, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, identity and support networks (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Langton, 1994). It is far more than what is implied in the staid tone of this descriptive statement from a non-Aboriginal source: “a process of

identifying vulnerability and protective factors that might modify the negative effects of adverse life circumstances and then identifying mechanisms or processes that might underlie associations found” (Harrop, Addis, Elliot & Williams, 2007, p. 8). Resilience in Aboriginal terms remains active and alive, regenerated from the constant iteration of cultural expression. The inclusion of moral and spiritual resources as forces that significantly elevate individuals above life hardships was also noted by Dugan and Coles (1989).

A concept traditional to Native worldviews is that spirit is the core of the self, and that it is spirit which generates the “bounce back” capacity known in the English language as “resilience” (Dell, Hopkins & Dell, 2003). The National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) (2005) conceptualizes spirituality as encompassing the wholism of resilience and while recognizing this as traditional to Indigenous worldview, it utilizes a resiliency concept that melds both Aboriginal and Western constructs. The practices and guiding policies of its National Native Youth Solvent Addiction (NNYSA) program, is “grounded in the wholistic concept of resiliency as defined. It emphasizes the inner spirit through traditional Native teachings and wholistic healing” (p. 5). The same program, though, draws on the work of Wolin and Wolin (1998) that identifies “seven personal resiliency dynamics: morality, humour, creativity, initiative, relationships, independence, and insight. The components of this perception of resiliency parallel conceptions of traditional teachings and wholistic healing within First Nations culture” (p. 6). Non-Indigenous sources also acknowledge the strong role of spirituality in addressing adversity: Hill et al. (1997), for example, observe that, “[r]eligion and spirituality have also been shown to be effective in coping with disability, illness, and negative life events” (p. 55). HeavyRunner and Morris (1997) visualize the embodiment of spirituality in resilience as the interconnectedness and inter-relationships with all Life, and the essence of survival in spite

of extreme adversity, such as the overwhelming suppression of Aboriginal peoples by colonialist powers (Seashore Louis, 1997; Zinn, 2003). McGregor (2004), in discourse about Indigenous knowledge which is spiritually-grounded and as such, integrates resilience “is viewed as a circle and as a process of re-generation and re-creation . . . [it] comes from many sources, including Creation itself . . . from our ancestors, but it will also come from our future” (p. 404, 405).

The term, “cultural resilience”, is becoming increasingly common and signifies the role of culture as a resource for resilience (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). Healy (2006) describes cultural resilience as “the capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctness” (p. 12). This concept framed research on the response to oppression under apartheid by the “Coloureds” and “Asians” in South Africa (Sonn & Fisher, 1998) and other studies examined the way communities responded to violence and adverse socio-economic conditions in post-Apartheid times (Ahmed, Seedat, van Niekerk & Bulbulia, 2004). Australian Aboriginal lecturer Shane Merritt (2007) concurs with Harvey and Delfabbro’s (2004) recommendation that the interpretation of resilience should include “culturally or socially relevant ratings of success” (p. 11). However, he also notes the paucity of authorship by Indigenous researchers and writers in what they consider a function or process of resilience in achieving cultural and social success in terms of their own tribal views. Freire (1993), as well, discussed the “cultural circle” as a means of mobilizing resilience from oppression; he defined this as a group that enhances words, symbols and thoughts from common language that reveals internal life experiences, feelings and ideals. Reflections from within the circle encourage salient cultural aspects that foster group empowerment and realization of creative ways for self-attainment.

Filbert and Flynn (2010) state that, “In Canada, Lalonde (2006) showed that the promotion of Aboriginal culture is associated with increased cultural resilience, which is reflected in outcomes at the community as well as the individual level” (p. 561). Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Washienko, Walter and Dyer (1996) discussed “enculturation” which they defined as “the process by which individuals learn about and identify with their traditional ethnic culture” (p. 296). They see it as a protective mechanism that mitigates the negative effects of stressors (risk factors) or enhances the effects of buffers, both of which lessen the probability of negative behaviours such as substance or alcohol abuse. Dion Stout and Kipling (2003) identified culture as a germane aspect of resilience in Aboriginal thought contexts. To some, resilience is inextricable from individual and communal survival in the face of life adversity (Iwasaki, MacTavish & MacKay, 2005; Koptie, 2009; McKegney, 2006; Ungar, 2008). Life adversities, however, are not the same for everyone, nor is the extent or degree of adversities the same. LaFrance, Bodor and Bastien (2008) note the possibility that, “Aboriginal children and their communities have been subjected to far more risk factors than the general population in Canada, as have many Indigenous people in all parts of the world” (p. 290). Additionally, there are risk factors that are unique to Aboriginal populations, in particular, having to live out a colonialism-inspired legacy that includes historic and psychological trauma (*eg.*, forced removal or dislocation, legislated oppression, social exclusion and racism) (Frank, Moore & Ames, 2000; Homel, Lincoln & Herd, 1999; Szlemko, Wood & Jumper Thurman, 2006; Waller, Okamoto, Miles & Hurdle, 2003; Westerman & Vicary, 2000). For example, discrimination, a risk factor that Aboriginal people constantly face, was “associated with a marked decrease in the likelihood of a resilient outcome”, according to a recent study of several hundred reservation students

enrolled in Grades 5 to 8 in the US upper Midwest (LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver & Whitbeck, 2006, p. 203).

A significant risk factor that works at negating positive health outcomes among Indigenous people is racism and racial discrimination (Bodkin-Andrews & Craven, 2006; Gee, 2002; Gorkoff & Runner, 2003; Hauser & Bowlds, 1990; Krieger & Sidney, 1996; LaViest, 2003; Nairn, Rega, McCreanor & Barners, 2006; Vicary & Westerman, 2004; Williams, 1999; Williams, Neighbors & Jackson, 2003). One study found that when racism leads to the targeting of ethno-racial minority groups for dispossession, dislocation, re-location and violence, the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) increases in proportion to the type and degree of psychological trauma involved in these extreme living adversities (Pole, Gone & Kulkarni, 2008). In Australia, Aboriginal women allege that police generally do not regard DV complaints as important because police forces retain their own institutional white-constructed image of Aboriginal women as being presupposed as targets of violence (Atkinson, 1990). Some researchers too have pointed out that racism stemming from health care providers and society in general further contributes to the ill-health of non-white people seeking wellness and balanced health outcomes (Ong & Edwards, 2008; Maddi & Khoshaba, 2005; Sokoloski, 1997; Tarrant & Gregory, 2003).

Cultural sovereignty is an element of resilience, according to Lalonde (2004) who recognizes differences between Western and Aboriginal conceptualizations of resilience: “If the [Western] concept of resilience can be stretched to apply to First Nations, as I believe that it can, then the best chances for success lie in the efforts of First Nations to reassert cultural sovereignty and to expand the indigenous knowledge base that has allowed them to adapt to, and in some cases, overcome the climate of adversity” (p. 68). This view asserts that self-government is

necessary for Aboriginal people to apply internal resilience conceptualizations into their own governance systems, and that this would guarantee empowerment and success in problematic life areas. One student, (Nichol, 2000), from research of residential school survivors in graduate studies, concluded that “The participants stressed the importance of their spiritual beliefs to their well-being, and revealed that they came back to their traditional beliefs through awareness of the value of Aboriginal people and an understanding of their history” (p. 117). The link between spiritual and cultural beliefs to resilience is increasingly an area of discourse among scholars.

Research efforts and clinical intervention practices in the 1990s have initiated important theoretical and conceptual work aimed at understanding colonialism-based damages that Aboriginal peoples face in daily life (Solkoff, 1992; Duran & Duran, 1995; BraveHeart, 1998, 2003; BraveHeart & DeBruyn, 1998), particularly since historic trauma, deep senses of loss and unresolved long-standing grief comprise significant risk factors. Knowledge of these historic and enduring dynamics is foundational for healing therapies in many Aboriginal-inspired interventions; many professionals, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have deemed traditional spirituality and culture as key and appropriate responses to long-term trauma and grief (Bone, 2008; Gone, 2009; McBride, 2003; Portman & Garrett, 2006; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt & Adams, 2004; Wihak & Merali, 2005). Research studies by Indigenous mental health professionals and social workers have taken the lead in promoting spirituality and culture as resources for healing and prevention of alcoholism, substance abuse and addiction, domestic violence, chronic anger, suicide, and other behavioural and developmental pathologies plaguing many Indigenous communities. They integrate culture and traditional spirituality into their practices, or have developed them from within the scope and breadth of traditional teachings and spirituality. Workers in the area of suicide among Aboriginal youth promote resilience by having clients

identify and expand on the modifiable factors in culturally-appropriate interventions (Borowsky, Resnick, Ireland & Blum, 1999). Conceptualizations of resilience are now established in a range of social concerns: suicide prevention programs (Goldston, Davis Molock, Whitbeck, Murakami, Zayas & Nagayama Hall, 2008), therapeutic interventions and individual counselling (Sanchez-Way & Johnson, 2000), small group psycho-educational interventions (Duran & Duran, 1995), and larger-scale addiction recovery programs (Abbott, 1998).

Authors note the paucity of Aboriginal-driven research on resilience (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Iwasaki & Bartlett, 2006; LaBoucane-Benson, 2009; Luthar & Zelazo, 2003; Weaver, 2002). For example, according to Filbert and Flynn (2010), this area of research on Aboriginal youth is “very scarce” (p. 561) even though much of non-Aboriginal resilience research revolves around children and youth. Aboriginal writing on interpretations of *resilience* encompass concepts beyond overcoming stress and adversity, and include the natural, human and spiritual capacity that is foundational to individuals’ and communities’ living according to long-standing concepts of wellness and health (Long & Nelson, 1999; Martin-Hill, 2000; McKenzie & Morrissette, 2003; Wilson, 2004; Wuttanee, 2004). Resilience is viewed wholistically, as achieving balance in the areas of full human development with an aim of always seeking to fulfill the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual aspects of being (Waller, et al., 2002; Strand, Peacock & Thomas, n.d; Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005). The concept of balance relative to resilience is expressed by de Assis de Corrêa Sória, Rodrigues Bittencourt, de Fátima Batalha de Menezes, Antunes Crisóstoma de Sousa and de Souza (2009) and is congruous with Aboriginal thought: “a quality and skill of people to resist, individually or as a group, to adverse situations without losing the initial balance; that is, the ability to constantly accommodate and rebalance” (p. 703). Aboriginal researchers and

educators attempt to avoid conceptualizations of resilience that begin with implications of damaged and dysfunctional people and communities, and more from the perspective of resilience encompassing and resulting from wholistic development of each human's spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional capacity (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997).

Resilience research in the context of DV as an over-arching theme is necessary so that the historic pathological approach by researchers can be replaced by a more positive and proactive emphasis on protective factors (Bernard, 1994; Durlak, 1998; Saleeby, 1997; Wolkow & Ferguson, 2001) or processes which, in Aboriginal populations, are rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions (Atwool, 2006; Lafrance & Bastien, 2007; Pitama, 1996; Tsey & Every, 2000). Angell (2000) recognizes the need for intercultural sensitivity and cautions that non-Aboriginal "social workers must recognize that when considering the concepts of risk, resilience, and protection a multicultural template does not exist" (Conclusion, ¶3). Since resilience results from a complex interplay of social, cultural and spiritual functions at individual, family and community levels, much more than reinforcing behaviours are needed in anti-DV efforts (Health Canada, 2004; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003; Anthony, 1987). The continuing government policy of forcibly removing children from their parents, for example, results in disruptions to home and community supports, is extremely traumatic, and plays significantly in on-going expressions of violence in Aboriginal societies (Nipshank, 2001; Fournier & Crey, 1997). It is extremely difficult to cultivate resilience in such circumstances. However, because not everyone experiencing such trauma develops violent-prone behaviour, an exploration of *resilience* in the context of DV can lead to an understanding of its specific meaning to Aboriginal communities and individuals. The interpretations of resilience according to Indigenous thought are germane to successful and supportive anti-DV educational interventions and programming.

2.2.3 Educating for resilience

Literature shows that educational systems can be maximized to teach, support and enhance resilience (Brown, D’Emidio-Caston & Benard, 2001; Condly, 2006; Conrad, Dietrich, Heider, Blume, Angermeyer & Riedel-Heller, 2009; Knitzer, 2000; Richardson, 2008; Richardson & Waite, 2002). Samuelson and Robertson (2002), in a study of Aboriginal youth involved in criminal activity, observe that, “. . . education is a powerful tool for social change. Resilience to offending, or antisocial behaviour in general, should be approached primarily from an educational perspective” (p. 54). For Aboriginal students, educational resourcing of resilience must be culturally-grounded since Indigenous worldviews are wholistic and spiritual (Jegede, 1995; Kawagley, Norris-Tull & Norris-Tull, 1998; Peat, 1994; Pomeroy, 1992; Snively, 1990). As well, “what is considered risk or resilience in one culture may be the norm or rebellion in another” (Condly, 2006, p. 226). Atwool (2006) makes this additional assertion about culture as protective: “Culture is only an asset when children are connected and grounded, particularly when the culture they belong to is treated as ‘other’ by the dominant culture” (p. 325). Clearly, educating for resilience among Aboriginal students in Canada involves strong emphasis on cultural traditions and the recognition that values and the context of values in Aboriginal tradition may be different from those of the mainstream cultures.

Indigenous and other specific cultural groups with control of education within their own communities or societies have more opportunity for supporting and nurturing the resilience of students (Abbate-Vaugh & Paugh, 2009; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Sutherland, 2005; Vargas-Reighley, 2005; Wang & Gordon, 1994). Ramirez’s observation (2006) that, “Tribal identity is a powerful positive force” (Abst.) makes it expedient to build on community capacity to strengthen cultural identity for addressing risk factors including cultural discontinuity and the

legacy of colonialism (Nichol, 2000; Samuelson & Robertson, 2004; Waller, Okamoto, Hankerson, Hibbeler, Hibbeler, McIntyre, et al., 2002). Educational instruction for abused groups, such as Aboriginal victims of DV, needs special attention that integrates strong cultural emphases (Mayer, 2007b).

The land and traditional homelands are seen as a source of resilience, social well-being and spiritual health for Aboriginal people (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2009; Battiste, 2008a; Berkes, Hughes, George, Preston, Cummins & Turner, 1994; Nicholas, 2006; Niezen, 1993; Todd, 2000/2001). Kirmayer, Brass and Valaskakis (2009) observe that, “Knowledge of living on the land, community, connectedness and historical consciousness all provide sources of resilience” (p. 464). Educational offerings that encourage a solid family foundation, trusting relationships with teachers and pride in cultural heritage also work towards enhancing self-efficacy and the strong spirit of resilience in students (Fleet, Kitson, Cassady & Hughes, 2007; Gomez, 2005; Kurszewski, 2000; Morales, 2008; Waller, 2002). Indigenous peoples’ cultural traditions are still often taught through story and narrative; many are instructional for resilience, perseverance and endurance to achieve desired goals (Abadian, 2006; Colson, 2003; Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; Tousignant & Sioui, 2009). Aboriginal education, whether formal or informal, very often includes Elders, as their own life accounts readily translate into knowledge generation for younger and peer groups (Atleo, 2009; Fraser, 2002; Couture, 2000; Graveline, 2002; Meadows, Thurston & Lagendyk, 2009; Rieken, Scott & Tanaka, 2006). Silko (1996) articulated the powerful link between the Elders with their stories and life beyond: “The old folks said the stories themselves had the power to protect us and even to heal us because the stories are alive; the stories are our ancestors” (p. 152). The concept of the connectedness and flow of life past with present, represented mainly by the narrations of the Elders who demonstrate the skills

needed for enhancing self-identity, memory-keeping and meaning-making, is common among Indigenous peoples (Marshall, 2001; White Hat, 1999).

Elders and councils of Elders in Aboriginal communities have always been vital to education and knowledge transmission; they encourage the will of many to accomplish educational and other life objectives, and help youth with their needs for validation and belonging. They are frequently mentors and help show the upcoming generations how to cope with the realities of life in an often overwhelming and dominant society that tends not to value their difference, and also how to deal with racism and discrimination (Bowen, 2005; Cooke-Dallin, Rosborough & Underwood, 2002; Irlbacher-Fox, 2009; Kulchyski, McCaskill & Newhouse, 1999; Suzuki & Knudson, 2006). Elders also work with clients of various service agencies and provide key collaboration for educating community groups about resilience in difficult and adversarial times. Liaison is ideally with coordinators in child welfare, justice, mental health, the churches and social services. Elders, both men and women, offer their incredible diversity in strength, and knowledge of cultural teachings and principles, ceremonial activities and counseling. They act as advisors, advocates, healers and role models (Audlin & Abbott, 2004; Kulchyski, McCaskill & Newhouse, 1999; Ellerby & Ellerby, 2000; Smith, Breazeale, Hill & Bolzle, 2000; Stiegelbauer, 1996; Wall & Arden, 2006). Elders and leaders from historic Aboriginal societies are contemporary models of emulation.

One study by the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) (2006) discusses resilience in the educational context of suicide prevention among the Inuit. A focus group session yielded the following results about how resilience was learned, which was by

direct experience; listening to their parents make specific points on how they should view life and live their lives; stories and legends which taught how to think, behave, react, and

manage; hearing indirectly, through others, how situations should be viewed; observing living examples of how to be; and, sayings that reinforced values and beliefs. (p. 7, 8)

As well, the participants “were accepting of their role in carrying this knowledge and insight, and certain that this must not end with them: younger people must take up the responsibility to carry it too” (p. 8). Educating for the future is common among Indigenous traditions, such as the Anishinaapbe’s “Next Seven Generations” concept which emphasizes that appropriate and relevant teaching today will positively impact the next seven generations (Clarkson, Morrisette & Régallet, 1992; LaDuke, 1999; Weaver & White, 1997). Aboriginal education for resilience initiates and propels a strong and positive identity in students and comprises much more than adapting Western offerings (Blackstock, 2009b). Congruously, concerning the current education system and why it is inadequate for Aboriginal needs, Edwards (2004), observes that it is “structured to meet the needs of an individualistic Euro-culture, excluding collectivist cultural values; it is based on curricula developed from a mainstream cultural perspective, degrading to minorities and originally designed to ensure ongoing white (male) privilege” (p. 77). Traditionally, transmission through culture had always been the conduit by which the resilience, survival and thriving of Native peoples was continuously generated and re-created. HeavyRunner and Morris (1997) observe that when cultural values are cherished, taught, and nurtured, children develop natural resilience which then becomes foundational for healthy and self-respecting cultural identities.

2.3 Indigenous approaches to research

Research is becoming less daunting for we Aboriginal researchers working within Eurocentric institutions on issues pertaining to our own populations, even though theoretical and empirical frameworks are dichotomous to our traditional thought. Also challenging are the many discrete layers of interaction embedded within knowledge production in the social science fields. Some, such as knowledge transmission across various cultures, are more complex than others. Non-Aboriginal researchers have recently become more aware of the need to pursue appropriate research methodologies in seeking new information that benefits both Aboriginal individuals and communities.

This portion of my literature review focuses on the understanding of research design by Aboriginal scholars and those who recognize a need for developing specific non-Western research processes that are congruous with various Indigenous worldviews. The key areas are: the tension between Indigenous peoples and the broader research community, the need for decolonising research, and characteristics of Indigenous-friendly methodologies. The review of this literature led me to a broad framework of reference for my research planning; it accommodated, as much as possible, the emerging ideals articulated in the literature.

2.3.1 Tensions between Indigenous peoples & the broader research community

A significant body of literature recognizes the multifarious shortcomings and omissions of many non-Aboriginal outsiders conducting research on Aboriginal populations (Absolon & Willet, 2004; Bishop, 1997; Gegeo, 2001; Humphery, 2001; Smith 1999; Struthers, 2001). According to Aboriginal scholars and professionals, much of what has become known (or thought to be known) from such research has been interpreted and expounded by “peering in”, sometimes in voyeuristic ways and as research done on “others” (Bastien, 2005; Battiste, 2000;

Ranco, 2006; Steinhauer, 2002; Stevenson, 1998; Wilson, 2001). Research of this kind continues to contribute to the colonization of Indigenous peoples. Over the years, it has laid the groundwork by which the rights to control and manage internal knowledge and knowledge systems were overtaken by outsiders who were foreign in many ways: culturally, socially, politically, spiritually, economically, and, in particular, epistemologically (Adedze, 2003; Aharonson, 1996; Atalay, 2006a; Miller, 2009b; Rigney, 1999; Smith & Jackson, 2006). Much of what has been produced has been through Western paradigms and still negatively impacts the everyday reality of Aboriginal peoples (Albers, Child, Howard, Jones, Miller, Miller & O'Brien, 2002; Cram, 2009; Deloria, 1999; Ndunda, 1995; Rashmi, Whitmore & Moreau, 2001; Wilson, 2004). For example, Bowe chop and Erikson (2005) describe active Native research involvement as serving "a vital function in remediating some of the dehumanizing historic practices of museology (such as collection and exhibition of human remains)" (p. 264). As well, a particularly egregious research study took place between 1982 and 1985 when Dr. Ward, under the guise of a Health Canada-funded study of arthritis among the Nuu-chah-nulth, began to use blood samples for his own research purposes. Without consent from those who participated, Ward also loaned the samples to other researchers for a variety of purposes. Many academic papers were produced on topics as diverse as population genetics and HIV/AIDS (Arbour & Cook, 2006; Baird, Wiwchar & Henderson, 2001; Dalton, 2002; Pullman & Arbour, 2009).

Studies have been motivated by outside researchers' fervency in creating knowledge and information for the consumption of various audiences within their own ranks, keeping up conventional appearances and for maintaining established hegemonies (Absolon & Willett, 2004; Henry, Dunbar, Arnott, Scrimgeour & Murakami-Gold, 2004; Kuokkanen, 2003; Mignolo, 2002; Quijana, 2000; Zizek, 1998). It was approached without consideration to outcomes being

beneficial to the Indigenous peoples themselves, nor according to their terms or complementary to their cultural beliefs. Fitznor (2006), Humphery (2000) and Manderson, Kelaher, Williams and Shannon (1998) clearly express their view that Western-based research is far too often a reflection of paternalistic probing and exploitation in neocolonialist practice. Repeatedly, the research experience of Aboriginal communities involves a process of self-serving scholars or professional scouts condescending into traditional territories or reserves with some form of generic consent, seeking specific data, leaving with little or no feedback to the community and without lasting benefit to those whose data was taken.

Marx, philosophizing about the role of ideologies within a society, contended that “knowledge is socially constructed by and in the interest of the dominant in society” (Farganis, 2004, p. 192). Likewise, Aboriginal scholars and practitioners who seek new processes based on their own epistemologies and struggling with Western research methodologies, understand that knowledge production serves the elite while those researched are subjugated and marginalized (Banahene Adjei, 2007; Berg, Evans & Fuller, 2007; Briggs & Bauman, 1999; Fleras & Elliot, 2006; Lawrence, 2003; Nadasdy, 2003; Walsh, 2002). They can identify and articulate the hegemonic aspects of such knowledge production since they recognize, sometimes from first-hand experience, the place of research subjects in the disparate dynamics of research processes (Adas, 2001; Aparicio & Blaser, 2008; Carroll, 2009; McNaughton & Rock, 2009; Quebec Native Women Inc., 2004). Deloria (1994) discussed ideology in the United States as “divided according to American Indian and Western immigrant” thought where an underlying difference was of “great philosophical importance” (p. 62). He identified the difference as more than antipodal perspectives but also as markings of significant power inequalities that were

entrenched by colonialism. Such tensions still lead to issues of power and control distribution in research processes and outcomes, and a question of who reaps the final gains.

2.3.2 The need for decolonizing research

Literature shows that, oftentimes, those from Western traditions and worldviews have comprehended, interpreted and distributed information about Aboriginal peoples through various research agendas. L.T. Smith (1999), author of undoubtedly the most well-known piece of decolonizing research literature, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research & Indigenous Peoples*, links the outside research of Indigenous societies to the hegemony of colonialism. She states that research became institutionalized in the colonies, not just through academic disciplines, but through learned and scientific societies and scholarly networks. The transplanting of research institutions, including universities from the imperial centers of Europe enabled local scientific interests to be organized and embedded in the colonial system. (p. 8)

As Aboriginal people, we understand that Eurocentric thought is the origin of the misconstructions made of our ancestors and of ourselves, and that research processes and outcomes are used to distort the views of our traditions for various colonially-inspired albeit contemporary purposes. Increasingly, however, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal academics, scholars and researchers are inching towards formal research methodologies that are decolonizing in nature and produce outcomes that are much more harmonious with Aboriginal belief systems (Habashi, 2005; Miller, 2009b; Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Nicholas, 2006; Noley, 1993; Thaman, 2003; Walker, 2004; Wilson, 2004). My own observation is that the efforts of the writers I list and others, including Aboriginal scholars in various stages of university education, are laying the groundwork for decolonizing research methodologies that increasingly uncover the ancient and lasting truths of Indigenous knowledge-seeking.

There are now multiple sites of study for engaging decolonizing methodology. This may entail only an awareness of the need for research change and not the actual development of methodologies that are compatible with Aboriginal thought. Nonetheless, this is a strong start.

Some areas of study include:

- art (Belnap, 2006; Gere, 2004; Kalu, 2000; Mithlo, 2009; Palmer, 2008)
- anthropology, archaeology (Atalay, 2006b; Fabian, 1983; Olsen Harper, 2008b; Nicholas, 2006; Ranco, 2006; Trigger, 1998; Watkins, 2003)
- education (Ball, 2004; Carroll, 2009; Diaz, 2004; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Lambe, 2003; Smith, 1999; Thaman, 2003)
- gender issues (Barker, 2008; Butler, 1990; Cook-Lynn, 2005; Mithlo, 2009; Monture, 1995; Ouellette, 2002; Shami, 1988; Smith, 2005b)
- health, healing (Bartlett, Iwasaki, Gottlieb, Hall & Mannell, 2007; Duran; 2006; Humphery, 2000; Meadows, Lagendyk, Thurston & Eisener, 2003; Snarch, 2004; Stevenson, 1999; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004)
- history, historiography (Brown, 2008; Deloria, Jr. & Lytle, 1983; Dickason, 2002; Martinez, 2006; Miller, 2008, 2009; Paci, 2001; Sioui, 1999, 2008; Stevenson, 1999; Vizenor, 1991;)
- intellectual property (Assembly of First Nations, 2003; Konkle, 2008; Lee, 2008; McGregor, 2004; Ng'etich, 2005; Ostergard, 1999)
- language recovery (Armstrong, 2006; Ball, 2009b; Bell & Marlow, 2009; Eze, 2008; Wagamese, 1994; White, 2006; WmEEK (Atleo), 2005)
- literature (Armstrong, 1992; Damm, 1993; Krupat, 1989; Kuokkanen, 2003; Lutz, 2002; Vizenor, 1993)

- justice, law (Alfred & Cornassel, 2005; Darrow & Thomas, 2005; Haring, 1998; Irwin, 1997; Milward, 2008; Mirsky, 2004; Stairs, 2004; Williams, Jr., 2005)
- museology (Atalay, 2006b; Bowe chop & Erikson, 2005; Colwell-Chanthaphonh & Ferguson, 2006; Horse Capture, 2004; Riding-In, 2002)
- politics (Alfred, 1999a, 2009; Gomez, 2005; Mathur, 2001; Price, 2009; Rodman, 2004; Valandra & Deloria, Jr., 2006; Wood, 2006)
- religion, spirituality (Ablazhei, 2005; Churchill, 2005; Deloria, Jr., 1994; Rigney, 2006; White Shield, 2009)
- science (Bang, Medin & Atran, 2007; Cajete, 2000; Colorado, 1988; Cronin & Ostergren, 2007; de Castro, 2004; Deloria, Jr., 1997; Porterfield & Koeke, 2003; Talbot, 2002)
- social work (Burke, 2007; Davison, 2004; Kanuha, 2000; Lavallee, 2009; Ledesma, 2007; Nabigon, Hagey, Webster & MacKay, 1999; Sharp & Foster, 2002; Thompson Cooper & Moore, 2009)
- traditional knowledge, epistemology (Battiste, 1998; Bhola, 2002; Ermine, 1995; Moore, 1998; Varkey, 2007; Warner, 2006; Wilson, 2004)

These authors address the reasons for needing specific non-Western research practices that are compatible with Aboriginal epistemologies. Talbot (2002), for example, discusses “a distinct Indigenous paradigm that structures the new research. This paradigm has its own theoretical premises and methodological approaches.... [it] tackles different research issues and asks new questions” (p. 69). Strier (2006) views the systemic inequality of power relations within social work research as a reason for implementing “anti-oppressive research” (p. 2), a kind that also breaks down prevalent integrated hegemonic practices. Closely related is the need to address the marginalization of Aboriginal societies, a consequence of centuries-long

colonization (Garfield, 2000; Maaka & Andersen, 2006; Marchetti, 2006; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Smith, 2006) that was facilitated by Western research processes (Barnhardt, 2005; Battiste, 2004; Doxtater, 2004; Kelm & Townsend, 2006; Smith, 1999).

Others have identified the need to uncover, utilize and expand internal epistemological thought (Bastien, 2004; Cochrane, et al., 2008; Cruikshank, 1991; de Castro, 2004; Freire, 1993; Lambe, 2003) and establish strong cultures and identities as Aboriginal peoples (Brayboy & Morgan, 1998; HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997; Iseke-Barnes, 2003; Kanuha, 2000; Mussell, 2005; y González & Lincoln, 2006). Others seek to correct historic and other erroneous academic assumptions (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil & Powell, 2008; Konkle, 2004; LaRocque, 2006; Little Bear, 2000; Ramirez, 2007; Sioui, 1999). Many want to utilize the unique voices of grassroots community members in their research to start mobilizing solutions to unique needs (Abbott, 1998; Alfred, 2005; Bell & Marlow, 2009; Brave Heart, 2003; Castellano, 2000; Nicholas, 1997; Dei, Hall & Rosenberg, 2000).

These authors, however, may not have written about *single* reasons for the need of decolonizing research and articulated a combination of reasons. Most, though, portray an overriding theme based on their specialized areas. Importantly, all these writings reveal that Indigenous knowledge and research are inextricable from decolonization processes and articulate a clear need for empowerment from on-going oppressions by establishing appropriate research practices.

2.3.3 Characteristics of Indigenous-specific methodologies

Literature shows that traditional Western-based research practices are viewed with cynicism by Aboriginal, post-modern and postcolonial theorists. Indigenous students and professionals encounter difficulties trying to straddle both worldviews in their research studies

and careers, particularly in light of historic cultural and social dispossession (Aparacio & Blaser, 2008; Raven, 1996; Richland, 2009; Mayer, 2007b; Smith, 1999; Townley, 2006; Yellow Bird, 2005). They clearly see the need for research processes that accommodate the specific paradigmatic properties of various cultures and epistemologies.

Worldview is an important aspect of epistemology (Cajete, 2000; Galtung, 1990; Oguamanam, 2004; Walker, 2004). Hall (1983) defines worldview as “the underlying, hidden level of culture . . . a set of unspoken, implicit rules of behavior and thought that controls everything we do” (p. 7). Various assignations about humankind’s role within the universe and exchanges among humans with other creations are included, and represent the more profound levels of culture, identity, beliefs and values that shape the thought and behavior of a people (Johnson, 2008; Lee, 2006; Sioui, 1999; Tinker, 2004; Umcek Atleo, 2005). Different cultural groups consequently identify, assemble and understand information in specific ways, and internalized truth and knowledge vary from culture to culture, even within the category of First Peoples (Donahue, 2006; Garrouette, 2003; Gross, 2002; Ross, 1992; Stratton & Washburn, 2008; Trudelle Schwarz, 2001). Those outside a studied culture often miss essential nuances because their stance and conclusions are derived from their own worldviews. Epistemological thought and understanding of one’s own position as a researcher and also of the group under study are essential for all strategies in planning, shaping and directing research processes (Archuleta, 2004; Barton, 2004; Cochrane, et al., 2008; Roppolo & Crow, 2007; Smith, 1999).

The epistemological foundations of Aboriginal thought must be considered to ensure the integrity of research methods (Battiste, Bell & Findlay, 2002; Kim, Yang & Hwang, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Paul & Marfo, 2001; Pihama, Cram & Walker, 2002). Compatible methodologies must also serve the needs of participants by acknowledging and working within

their social and cultural realities (Aronowitz, 1998; Hutchinson, Mushquash & Donaldson, 2008; Pallas, 2001; Pe-Pua, 2006; Stone, 2005; Tillman, 2002). This means that researchers must have strong empathizing abilities and attempt to understand what it means to be a member of the Native community under study; they must also carefully consider the impact of the research on the community and on individuals. As well, data must be collected using methods that are compatible with groups' distinct communication styles (Derman, 2003; Eckenwiler, 2001; Lauria-Santiago, 2004; Tomaselli, Dyll & Francis, 2008; Turner Strong, 2005; White & Tengen, 2001). Among Aboriginal people, communications are mainly oral in nature and involve life histories, narratives and high-context exchanges (Hamdan, 2009; Hooley, 2009; Andrews & Buggey, 2008; Mathur, 2008; Lanigan, 1998; Said, 1978). They include conversation (Haladay, 2007; Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; Sarkar & Metallic, 2009; Stewart, 2008; Struthers, 2001), open-ended interviews, story-telling and may focus on sharing circles (Baskin, 2005; Hampton, 1995; Iwasaki & Bartlett, 2006; Lavallée, 2009; Lekoko, 2007; Magowan, 2001; Wilson, 2008). Methodologies also must be conducted in an ethical, appropriate, respectful and empathetic fashion, seen from the perspective of those to whom the research is directed (Battiste, 2008b; Fine, Tuck & Zeller-Berkman, 2008; Lincoln, 2007; Smylie, 2005; Tillman, 2002; Weijer, 1999). The wholism of Aboriginal epistemology must also be reflected in methodological approaches (Cajete, 2000; Loppie, 2007; Lowe, 2002; Meyer, 2001) even though no single or universal Indigenous paradigm exists (Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005; Huhndorf, 2009; Jimenez Estrada, 2005; Malezer & Sim, 2002; Martinez, 1997; Miller, 2009a). As well, since cooperative relationships are foundational to human interactivity in Aboriginal thought, relationship-based efforts must be accommodated in all research processes (Fediuk & Kuhnlein, 2008). Settings

must additionally encourage mutual engagement between the researched and researcher (Kanuha, 2000).

Other characteristics of Indigenous-friendly research processes are discussed in literature. Active participation is salient and interviewees must be more involved than as inert or reactive subjects, or as specimen under microscopic examination (Bowe chop & Erikson, 2005; Kowal, Anderson & Bailie, 2005; Masuzumi & Quirk, 1993; Uhlik, 2006; Smith, 2001; Street, Baum & Anderson, 2009). Participatory research positions as reviewers, data collectors, data assessors, co-producers and counter-narrators of research are indicated as necessary in ideal research interaction (Ambler, 2003; Bowe chop & Erikson, 2005; Lambert, 2003; McCarthy, 2008; Million, 2008; Ranco, 2006). Dialogical research is also important (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994) and includes the voices and cultural perspectives of all individuals involved (Battiste & Henderson, 2002; Cajete, 1997; Champagne, 2008; Deloria, Jr., 1997; Doerfler, 2009; Thornton, 1998). As well, research reformers articulate the necessity for outcomes that reflect community cultural values and needs, and meet communal priorities (Arnold & Fernandez-Gimenez, 2007; Baydala, et al., 2009; Champagne, 2008; Madsen, 2008; RCAP, 1993; Santos, 2008). Others emphasize ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) of research and research outputs while denigrating claims to scholarly privilege (Brant Castellano, 2004; Epsey, 2002; National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2007; Graveline, 2000; McGregor, 2004; Snarch, 2004; Talbot, 2002).

Another objective of Indigenous research is that it must have social justice aspects that can be utilized in activism and advocacy efforts (Mihe suah, 1998; Mihe suah & Wilson, 2004; Nicholls, 2009; Potts & Brown, 2005; Rios & Sands, 2000; Ross, 2005). A final point is that research in Indigenous spheres is relationship-building and characterized by reciprocity (Berman,

2003; Bishop, 2005; Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006; Ellis & Earley, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Kovach, 2003; Manson, Garrouette, Goins & Henderson, 2004; Wilson, 2003). Both relationship-building and reciprocity further equality in power relations between participants and researchers and help break down any alienation and unease that may exist between them. Reconsidering and re-evaluating mainstream approaches can further reconciliation instead of tension in Western research processes that involve Aboriginal populations.

2.4 Research gaps

The most blatant research gap is the unavailability of data on the extent of DV in Aboriginal communities. First Nation band authorities can take a lead in this area, but because of cross jurisdictional parameters, provincial and federal authorities must also be involved. Most useful would be data on all the First Nations in order to track violence against women and for planning sufficient and appropriate intervention strategies. Stigma and denial still associated with DV is strong in Aboriginal communities, and outside researchers may be realistically fearful for the safety of informants and unknowledgeable or uncertain about discussing DV within a population to which they themselves do not belong. A related problematic gap is DV in urban communities, and its impact on victims' mental and physical health. We do not know, for example, if victims are freer to access abuse-related services because of the increased anonymity afforded from living in larger population centres.

Added to the lack of research itself on DV in Aboriginal communities is an absence of common terminology regarding violence within the home. The term I have chosen to use, DV, is sometimes referred to as family violence, intimate partner violence (IPV) and inter-personal violence, which is meant to be gender-neutral (even in cases where women are the victims). I have found in my own work in on-reserve women's shelters, *domestic violence* is the term used, and the context, understandably, is DV perpetrated by men against women. This term in the given context implies that women perpetrators do not exist in Aboriginal communities. However, women as DV perpetrators are a rising statistic but again the literature on this aspect is virtually non-existent. Research focuses primarily on women being victims and men being perpetrators; indeed my own study is a demonstration of this perspective.

Another area of little or no research is the parenting practices of both DV victims and DV perpetrators (Letourneau, Fredrick & Willms, 2007). Some documented results are in the area of child maltreatment, such as neglect, absence of safety provisions, threat of harm and sexual abuse. In others cases, victims and perpetrators support the child through compensatory practices. Stress in parenting and maternal distress and trauma have strong adverse effects on children's emotional development and behavioural outcomes, according to Hutch-Bocks (2008). The hidden nature of DV makes it challenging to measure a child's exposure to DV and derive determinants that could contribute to appropriate programming and services for both mothers and children. This is important, however, because as victims, children are vulnerable from home environments they did not create. Their counseling, support and other needs relative to DV as they mature must be considered so they do not either repeat the abuse cycle or become so accustomed to being victims that they continue to seek, perhaps unconsciously, victim roles in their lives. Herman (1992), for example, believes that there is a link among women between childhood abuse and psychological vulnerability. Those involved in anti-DV efforts need understanding of the contextual variables that are relevant to children living in homes with DV, such as the degree of a mother's child-centredness, attitudes of the perpetrator towards the children (which, in the case of Aboriginal families, are likely to include step-children,), and other parenting behaviors. Children's psychological adjustment and emotional health may be affected in different ways depending on these and other risk or protective variables; of particular concern is a child who is directly and deliberately violated. The incidence of child welfare cases that separate children from mothers and fathers within the Aboriginal community is very high and appropriate measures at the family level in abusive homes may curtail continuing increases.

Literature is sparse on the substantive changes to Aboriginal society in terms of the shift in men's traditional roles to what is deemed acceptable in terms of masculinity today, and the impacts of those changes. Research that acknowledges and expresses an understanding of Aboriginal cultural values and the role of colonialism in the lives of male populations is lacking and men continue to suffer from an absence of reinforcement of self-esteem and self-worth, both individually and collectively. Some women's roles, for example, have transferred comparatively readily into EuroCanadian society, but few of men's have. Eurocentric analyses and attitudes tend to be critical of Aboriginal interpretations of well-being among men and women in everyday social and familial relationships and do not view them with respect. Literature is almost non-existent about how these changes are causal to DV, and more importantly, ways that this information can be used for anti-DV education, interventions and family reunification programs. Most often the case is that when women leave a crisis shelter and return home, the men have not received any kind of direction and guidance as to how to bring the family together, so the conditions are ripe for the cycle of violence to keep repeating itself—indeed, anything different would be a surprise. Intervention programs for men are not common, and discourse about them is even less common.

The entire area of resilience interpretation according to Aboriginal thought needs to be initiated and expanded since the question of the relevancy of mainstream diagnostic criteria and prevention-oriented interventions among Indigenous groups is constantly being asked. While DV may be mentioned in a listing of adversities that women face or as one of many risk factors, research is needed on resilience in the context of DV as its sole focus. Various terminology used in resilience literature, even basic terms such as *risk* and *protective factors* or *adversity* need to be translated because of the dissonance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous epistemologies.

Also lacking is literature about the role of victims' spirituality in DV circumstances, particularly in Aboriginal contexts. Spiritual healing from the ravages of DV remains an unexplored resource even though there is evidence of its effectiveness in other areas of health care (Larson & Larson, 1994). Spiritual approaches are not foreign to Aboriginal tradition, and are increasingly used in treating addiction disorders, depression and a host of other ailments, both physical and psychological. Propst, Ostrom, Watkins, Dean and Mashburn (1992), in a study of clinically depressed patients, concluded that those receiving spiritually-oriented therapy scored better on a measurement of post-treatment depression and positive life adjustment than those who did not. Also, in a study on post-traumatic growth and spirituality in burn recovery, Wiechman Askay and Magyar-Russell (2009) observe that patients who receive social support "from others who share similar beliefs is quite helpful in the face of a trauma. Spiritual beliefs can also help an individual restructure their worldview in a way that makes sense to them" (p. 572). While spirituality has been core to Aboriginal healing since æons past, its value is relatively newly recognized in Western practice; more research can help close the gap in understanding since most professionals and health-care practitioners for Aboriginal patients are themselves non-Aboriginal. Such an openness of mind and practice delivery can only result in more appropriate and effective outcomes for Aboriginal families living in tragic circumstances such as DV.

3. Research Design

3.1 Conceptual framework

In literature on conceptual frameworks, I often note diagrams, some plain and some extremely elaborate. There may be arrows, circles, squares, sinusoidal forms and text which are confusing, even with attached words and titles. Further, I am rarely certain as to where to start deciphering the various symbols, and conclude that it must be arbitrary. I believe the reasoning is to allow a pattern to emerge, but most often, that pattern eludes me. After moving on, I am left wondering whether or not everyone creates their own rules and uses their own logic for making a conceptual framework and that readers must interpret such creations as they see fit?

As such, I eventually found an image to meet my own understandings and unimaginatively named it “My Conceptual Framework”. It reflects borrowings from a vast library of outside conceptualizations. I am a *bricoleur*, a methodological idea-thief – worse, the tools I take do not entirely work for me – the hammer to nail the frame together is made of rubber so I end up using the heel of my shoe instead. Very little in the toolbox is an actual fit for my needs since the logic, rationality, understanding and goals are Eurocentric, foreign and inappropriate for Aboriginal ways-of-thought. However, I creatively use my stolen equipment to achieve Aboriginal-friendly processes and outcomes.

I created a 2-dimensional representation that is somewhat functional as a place to hang, examine and expand on the most salient aspects of Aboriginal ways-of-knowing, and finding knowledge in the context of my study. This is a difficult exercise because of the unification and absence of compartmentalization within Aboriginal epistemology, and its wholism. I am not sure of what it is that fills the spaces between the trusses and studs because when something is whole,

one cannot pull out bits and pieces without changing the whole—the whole becomes unwhole. Perhaps it is Western thought encroachments that invade these spaces.

Resilience was the primary lens through which I conducted my research. The general unsatisfactory status quo of First Nations life conditions on-reserve, particularly in relation to most other Canadians, is well documented (First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, 2005; Ladner & Dick, 2008; MacDonald & Attaran, 2007; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Johnson, 2006; Yessine & Bonta, 2009). Because of this, I find it important to concentrate on narrating the positive accounts of hope and resilience emerging from a specific aspect of unhealthy living: the pernicious and sometimes deadly dynamics of DV. Insights directly from my research participants also work at countering pathological perspectives such as Aboriginal peoples' inherent dysfunction, and without hope for change. They challenge widespread stereotypes and upend common Canadian conceptualizations of knowledgeable outsiders coming into Native communities to problem-solve as experts. The practice of defining "health" in terms of what is absent or omitted encourages individual and communal dependence on specialists and other professionals; ignoring the ability to look inwards at valuable internal communal resources is detrimental to entire communities and grassroots members (McKnight, 1993). Concentrating on resilience and acknowledging the devastation from colonization is a departure from the pathologizing of Western research methods that have, according to Pualani Louis (2007) "found us deficient either as genetically inferior or culturally deviant for generations . . . We have been dismembered, objectified and problematised" (p. 131). Resilience is therefore the only blueprint from which my conceptual framework could have materialized.

In deriving a visual representation of my conceptual framework, I used as many circular forms as possible; they symbolize the cyclical nature of Indigenous philosophy. As well, there is,

in Native spirituality, a sense of an omnipotent Being at its heart who is inclusive of all creation, whether animate or inanimate. Traditional Native belief is not anthropocentric. Black Elk, a spiritual advisor of the Oglala Lakota, spoke these words from his own cosmological perspective:

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the world always works in circles and everything tries to be round. In the old days, when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation and so long as the hoop was unbroken the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living center of the hoop and the circle of the four quarters nourished us. The East gave peace and light, the South gave warmth, the West gave rain and the North, with its cold and mighty wind, gave strength and endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with our religion. Everything the Power of the World does, is done in a circle. The sky is round and I have heard the earth is round like a ball and so are the stars. The Wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always come back again to where they were. The life of man is a circle from childhood to childhood and so it is in everything where power moves. Our teepees were round like the nests of birds and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children. (Neihardt, 1979, p. 199)⁹

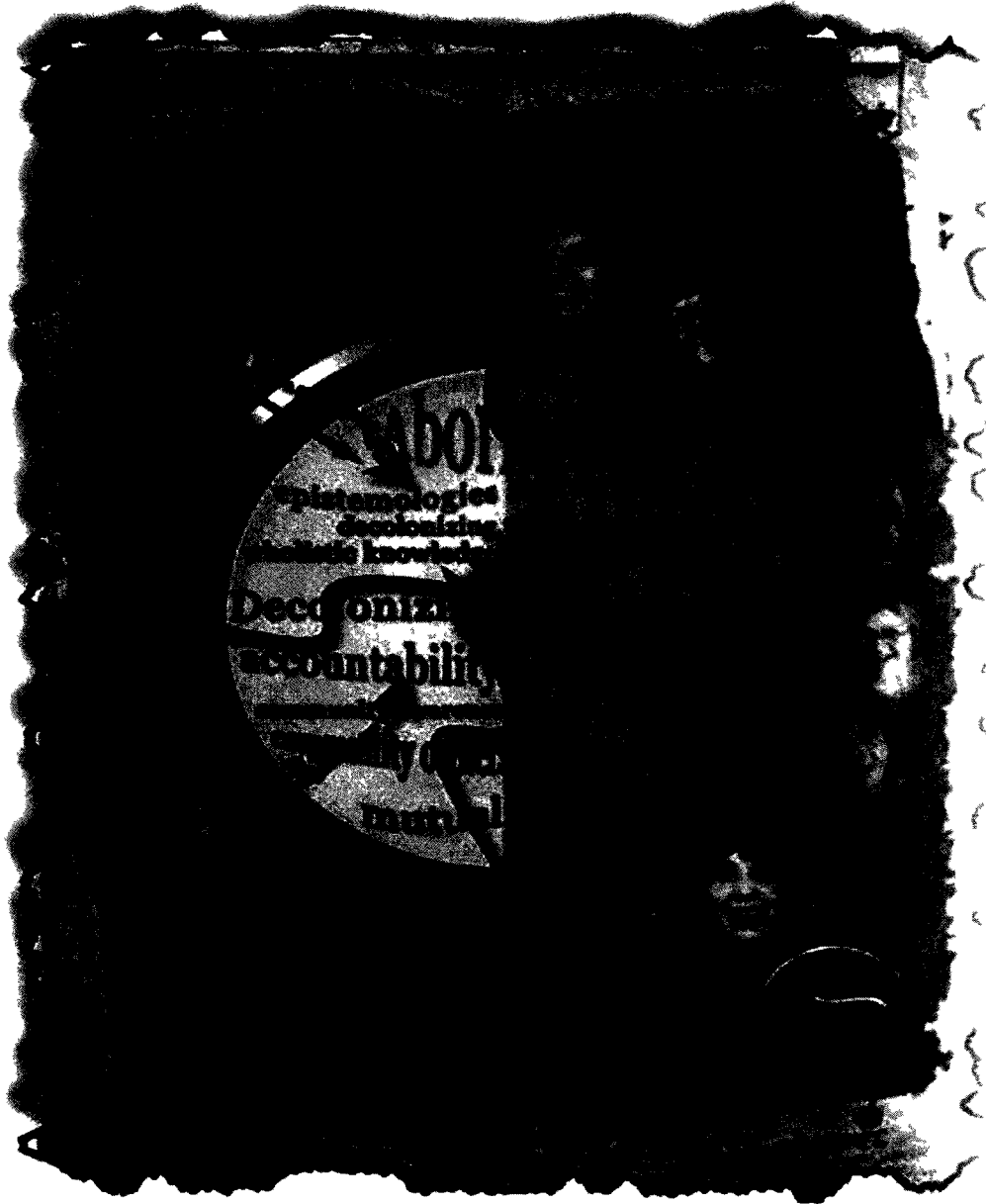
⁹Although there is controversy about whether or not Black Elk spoke these actual words (in translation), Vine Deloria, Jr. (1988) states that this work is a modern religious classic. As such, the teachings therein

This passage shows Aboriginal Peoples' beliefs in the interrelationships of humankind with all entities, human and non-human, living and non-living; this link was symbolically integrated into Aboriginal rituals and ceremonies, the primary vehicles for deep religious expression. According to Black Elk and other spiritual leaders, the fundamental focus of all earthly and universal activity was not particularly humankind, but rather Mother Earth and the Great Spirit who bestowed onto humankind the responsibility of stewardship of the land and creation. It was a reciprocal relationship, too, for in fulfilling this duty, Native people knew that the land and creation would take care of them and meet all their needs. Even today, many Native children are taught that they are not on levels above, nor are any more significant than the insects in the meadows, the trees on the mountainsides or the rocks in the fields. Some Elders teach that these creations are on greater levels than humans, and have more magnitude in the realm of the Great Spirit. Native traditional teachings always emphasize the need for individuals to seek and explore the unfathomable ways of the four directions so that they can gain a thorough understanding of their own natures in relation to the earth, resources and the Creator. Herein also lies a difference with Western thought: the latter considers all knowledge as knowable (Dudley Sylla, 1979) and Indigenous thought is the opposite (Smith, 2006). Knowledge in Indigenous cultures comes through relationships with other life – such as with beings of the natural world and those of the invisible world—those that human eyes cannot see, nor ears hear.

“encompass everyone who understands them and personalities become indistinguishable from the transcendent truth that is expressed. . . That it speaks to us with simple and compelling language about an aspect of human experience and encourages us to emphasize the best that dwells within us is sufficient. Black Elk and John Neihardt would probably nod affirmatively to that statement and continue their conversation. It is good. It is enough" (p. iv).

My own thoughts and contemplations circled around Black Elk's words, and the following visual emerged; its center is the core of my efforts which are symbolized by a picture of me.

My conceptual framework: The camera lens of resilience



My visual can only suggest and nudge at intended meanings. Arrows symbolize research processes and data aspects; they signify their origin from the 4 directions according to the sources (the participants). Data comes in various “packages” and meanings. The faded and tattered edges are symbolic of the incommensurability between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge-production. Further, my theoretical foundational approach is compatible with my own epistemological positioning. I conduct the research: I am its center.

The most essential pursuit encompassed within my conceptual framework was implementing respectful processes and procedures. To translate this from conceptualization to practice, I asked myself, “If I were an interviewee in this type of very sensitive research, what processes would be respectful to me? What would respect look and feel like in this interview?” From projecting answers to these questions, I constructed research instruments and activities in a way to demonstrate an honoring attitude towards the participants, their environment and their spaces. I showed respect for the community participants’ (CP) cultural heritage by my simply being cognizant of how much their heritage expressions varied across the country and noting how well worth the time and effort it is to research their histories of contact and neighbouring nations and how these have impacted on present realities. On another front, I worked at meeting their needs while still meeting my own. For example, as I had decided to conduct one set of interviews a month, I communicated regularly with the shelter Executive Directors (EDs) to determine the timing that would work best for them; my schedule became dependent on their schedules. It was not difficult or uncomfortable to communicate with the EDs regularly because of the continuity of having already established constructive relationships in a number of occasions through various related projects.

Establishing and maintaining good relationships is foundational to Indigenous knowledge and knowing, so this became another essential principle guiding my theoretical framework construction. Throughout research activities, my goal was to seek exchanges for cooperative creation of findings (Rebien, 1996); fulfilling this goal establishes strong relationships between researched and researcher. In my researcher role, I worked at participating in ways more than simply being a purveyor of methodology and more towards being in partnership with the EDs

and CPs in their specific community contexts (Greene, 2005). The importance of respectful relationships is revealed in the following quote:

It's important that we talk to one another with meaningful words. People should listen to each other and what they have to say. The prophecies say, we should respect and speak well to our loved ones—no swearing or calling them down and no violence. If your children do something wrong, you have to talk to them in a positive way and explain the details of what has been done. In the past we taught our children the traditional way of life... there was sharing amongst all the hunters and the families. We shared everything, even shared our work. People used to really help one another. (Parlee, O'Neil & Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation, 2007, p. 121)

The principle of *reciprocity* is embedded in this passage. The relationship-building aspect of reciprocity cannot be “one-sided” – we all must give, and we all must take. As a researcher, I had to contemplate the specific meaning of this, since I was the one privileged and welcomed into the communities, and trusted with sensitive and intensely personal information. Most significantly, I would eventually emerge with an education that would always enhance my career and employability – not the participants. In questioning myself about what they were receiving, I concluded that *reciprocity*, although not necessarily *equal* reciprocity, was being fulfilled in several ways: some mentioned the deep therapeutic value of talking about a stigmatized and denied topic – that it helped liberate and distance them from these traumatic experiences that had once been so central in their lives. All spoke about their wish to share with others in DV situations their own truths about DV, and what finally set them free to pursue much healthier lifestyles. They were able to see within themselves what held them back from *minopimatisiwiin*, as they themselves defined it, and what finally moved them forward from the incessant suffering

of DV. They hoped that their own truths would help others, particularly those with children, move away from DV, and recognized how their own lives had been contributing to the intergenerational cycles of violence that are prevalent in many Aboriginal communities. They wanted their revelations to help future generations become healthier and stronger.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Principles of research practice

The main principle of my research was to adhere to methodologies that are harmonious in principle to Indigenous worldviews and epistemologies. That stated, I experienced the common conundrum faced by Indigenous academics as articulated by Johnson (2008): “frequently the ontologies and epistemologies in which we were born do not mesh with the ones we discover through our academic work” (p. 129). One of the most propelling questions I faced was, *How do I create knowledge that explains my social reality in a way that appropriately challenges the assumptions, systems and origins of Aboriginal peoples’ position as ‘other’ and that also promotes Aboriginal self-determination?*” Because of these quandaries, my overall design represents what I consider an incomplete amalgamation of either Indigenous or Western methodological traditions, which as a fledgling, I have slanted more towards the “Indigenous side” with as much fettered creativity as possible. My observation is that total integration of an Indigenous methodology in research design is virtually unworkable within a Western university setting.

However, methodologies do continue to emerge in the evolution towards at least an uncomfortable ease between the incommensurate nature of Indigenous knowledge and Western research processes. Many scholars (Brant Castellano, 2000; Grande, 2004; House, 2006; Rains, Archibald & Deyhle, 2000; Smith, 1999) have identified qualitative inquiry as reconcilable to the numerous realities and unpredictable exchanges that can occur when non-Aboriginal researchers conduct research on Aboriginal populations. Creswell (2007) describes qualitative studies as “beginning with assumptions, worldviews, possibly a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems exploring the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to a social or human problem”

(pp. 51-52). Because the goal of all qualitative reporting “is to bring understanding to complex social phenomena that cannot be reduced to precise, statistical relationships and . . . written in a style that uses literary sensibilities to take readers inside the issues and settings under investigation” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 224), research results can be portrayed in ways that are relevant and compatible with Aboriginal ways-of-thought.

Because methodologies must be chosen to reflect the particular thinking approaches of interviewees, researchers have to be very specific about the information they wish to derive. They also must ensure that their querying and other data-gathering practices correspond to the preferences of the researched population (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As a people’s cosmology and perspective of humanness determine the means of knowledge construction, one specific Western methodology that stands out as quite congruous with Aboriginal research thought is *phenomenology*. In their opinion, for example, Struthers and Peden-McAlpine (2005) posit “a seamless link between phenomenology and the Indigenous oral tradition” (p. 1264). Compatibility of phenomenological interviewing is accorded by wholism, and the nature of oral and narrative style of articulating that is traditional in Aboriginal philosophy, education and cultural transmission.

A phenomenological study describes the lived experiences of research participants. One of its strengths is especially applicable to Aboriginal researchers: the specific lens of a participant’s culture in the exploration of experiences is legitimized and valued, not moulded or designated into a priori justifications (Shotton, Star, Oosahwe & Cintron, 2007). Meanings ascribed by any participant to life experiences or phenomena are strongly shaped by cultural constructs and unique epistemological realities (Marker, 2006). The distinct approach I utilized in my inquiry was *transcendental phenomenology* which highlights the fundamental meanings of

individual experience. It explores “how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p. 104).

Although Moustakas (1994) did not specifically mention Indigenous knowledge-producing, he formulated the following nine points that comprise principles, processes and methods of phenomenology (pp. 58-59). Beside each one, I have given a specific congruous example from Aboriginal educators regarding the various aspects that can be integrated into research processes:

1. It focuses on the appearance of things, just as they are given and removed from everyday judgments; what interviewees tell researchers is true in their own everyday world.

Example: Regarding Elders as teachers, Brant Castellano (2000) writes:

They teach without being intrusive, because the listener can ignore the oblique instruction or apply it to the degree he or she is ready to accept, without offence. Stories of personal experience can be understood either as reminiscences or as metaphors to guide moral choice and self-examination. (p. 31)

2. It is concerned with wholeness and examining entities in as many ways as possible until a unified vision of the essences of the phenomenon or experience is realized.

Example: Lanigan (1998) states that, in Indigenous cultures, “Stories incorporate several possible explanations for phenomena, allowing listeners to creatively expand their thinking processes so that each problem they encounter in life can be viewed from a variety of angles before a solution is reached” (p. 103).

3. It seeks meaning from appearances and arrives at essences through intuition and reflection on conscious acts of experience; this can lead to novel ideas, concepts and understandings.

Example: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) states the following about Aboriginal ways-of-knowing:

The need to walk on the land in order to know it is a different approach to knowledge than the one-dimensional literate approach to knowing . . . Persons taught to use all their senses – to absorb every clue to interpreting a complex, dynamic reality – may well smile at the illusion that words alone, stripped of complementary sound and colour and texture, can convey meaning adequately. (pp. 622-623)

4. It is committed to descriptions of experiences, not explanations or analyses. Descriptions keep a phenomenon alive, expand its presence, accentuate its underlying meanings and keep as close to its actual nature as possible.

Example: Ball (2004) articulates the importance of listening to Elders and other community members as “they derive knowledge through descriptions about themselves and their experiences that are set within the context of their reality” (p. 470).

5. It is rooted in questions that give direction and focus to meaning, and, initiate further interest and concern; the researcher is also very much involved.

Example: Bastien (2004) begins by defining “traditional knowledge”. Ways-of-knowing are dependent on relationships that, in turn, create and generate knowledge which is participatory in nature, and derived experientially. It is not inert and distant at some other place, it is “here and now”. Relationships of knowledge include those with non-human beings such as the earth, wind, plant and animal life. Bastien discusses ontological responsibilities, such as teaching children about the meaning and purpose of life based on relationships with the natural and outer world. She also discusses epistemology as a system by which the knower becomes a part of the knowing, and knowledge and self become one.

6. Subject and object are integrated – what and how I see are interwoven with whom I see, and with who I am.

Example: De Castro (2004) begins his discourse on perspectival multinaturalism by pointing out a virtually-universal truism of Indigenous thought: the original state of non-differentiation between animal and human, and the role that shamans play, in a spiritual realm, in delving into communication between the two. He brings up a de Saussurean concept of “the point-of-view creates the object” and contrasts it to “the point-of-view creates the subject” – whatever is agented by the point-of-view will become a subject – in Indigenous thought (p. 467). De Castro discusses the subjectification of objects: in objectivist epistemology, both subjects and objects are seen as resultant from objectification, but in Indigenous thought, an object is an incompletely-interpreted subject – efforts (work, a seeking) must be expended to subjectify so that one can know – which is the basis of epistemology. De Castro differentiates perspectivism from relativism: all beings (non-human and human) represent the world in the same way, but the world itself varies according to who does the representing (*eg.*, a dog is only a dog if another being, human or non-human, perceives it as such).

7. During all phases of the inquiry, inter-subjective reality is part of the process, but every perception begins with my own sense as a researcher of what an issue or object or experience is and what it means.

Example: In Cruikshank (1991), Elder Annie Ned states that, “We learn from Grandma, Grandpa, what they do, and they explain to us. I think everybody knows that . . . Just like you’re going to school, they tell stories to make your mind strong” (p. 18).

8. The data of experience and my own discernments and contemplations are part of the primary evidences of scientific investigation.

Example: In writing about the ways of identifying Indigenous community members in research, Smith (1999) states that, “One commonly used way is to introduce yourself by naming the mountain, the river, the tribal ancestor, the tribe and the family. Through this form . . . you locate yourself in a set of identities which have been framed geographically, politically and genealogically” (p. 126).

9. The research question is carefully and thoughtfully constructed because it is the focus of the entire study. It is captivating and encourages participants to keep seeing, reflecting and knowing. Each step relates to the question and provides a portrayal of the phenomenon under investigation.

Example: University of Saskatchewan professor Battiste (2005) states that,

The question ‘What is Indigenous knowledge?’ is usually asked by Eurocentric scholars seeking to understand a cognitive system that is alien to them. The greatest challenge in answering this question is to find a respectful way to compare Eurocentric and Indigenous ways-of-knowing and include both into contemporary modern education. (p.

1)

Knowledge transmission through research relationships can be used to reclaim entire traditional systems and locations, capacity-building within organizations and communities, and for transforming the status quo within scholarship to become more inclusive and accommodating of Aboriginal truth. To me, it is clear that phenomenology is useful, and core to a methodology of research in reproducing Aboriginal knowledge while remaining true to the unique epistemological truths of each participant.

3.2.2 Self-location

A salient aspect of Indigenous research, relationship-building and reciprocity, directly relates to self-location. As part of locating myself, I am a student researcher in the social sciences who does not attempt to be “scientific” and “objective” in a Western scientifically-derived sense. My location is also part of a framework for critique and expansion of thought. Putting myself as a researcher on the same critical plane as the research topic enables readers to evaluate the findings with an understanding of the processes and goals of what is being articulated.

To a certain extent, I identify as an insider, meaning that I am an apparently Aboriginal person with many of the same lived experiences as the research participants. In my presentation as a student, I am reminded of a statement from Talbot (2002): “The role of a Native American researcher conducting in-depth interviews is vastly different from that of a non-Native academic” (p. 70). I work at countering the hegemony of the prevailing practice of many research relationships that are riddled with unequal power dynamics, and consist of little more than an expert or academic conducting research *on* individuals regarding a specific issue. Contrary to that picture and those circumstances, I presented, as much as I was comfortably able, as a peer and did not urge, coerce or otherwise pressure participants into revealing any more than what was specifically asked. I did not seek further details — to do so would have been distasteful and disrespectful of their spaces, and places in life.

Locating myself in research addresses issues of accountability since the research outcome creates knowledge, knowledge for sharing through culturally-appropriate means, and ways. I aim to articulate the knowledge back to the community participants for the knowledge also belongs to them. My role as a researcher is to write, and as Monture-Angus (1995) has articulated, the only thing we can write about is ourselves and our views. Also, according to Turpel (1993),

In fact, there is really no such thing as having the complete or final word when one is part of a community driven by the dialogue of the oral tradition . . . one speaks only as another voice in an ongoing cycle of conversation. (p. 179)

Part I: Me in my research

I am a descendant of Old Chiiyaan who was born in the eighteenth century and belonged to the Atikotootem. From one of his five wives came his son, Kiishik, my great-grandfather and from whom my mother arrived, among the Namekosipiiw Anishinaapbek. The people revered their traditional territories for it was from those territories that their worldly and spiritual sustenance was derived. They lived entwined with the land—it was germane to their worldview, philosophy and epistemology. The communal memory of the people here is based on socially-constituted activities such as life events and happenings at home, the land – such as my birth on Olsen Island, one of the lake’s 516 islands. We shared life communities and identities with a diversity of forest creations such as the *keekooyun*, fish life; the *pinnesheshuk*, bird life; and the *munichooshuk*, insect life that prowls on the ground’s face.

The people prior to, and in my mother’s time, knew of the happenings beyond their own community for they were increasingly impacted in ways that made daily life more difficult. They remembered the signing of Treaty 3 in late 1873, the World Wars, the Great Depression and became aware of how life under the auspices of the Canadian Dominion’s *Department of Indian Affairs* (DIA) was eroding their traditional lifestyle. My mother recalls stories from her grandparents about Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of the DIA who had visited the Lac Seul area in 1905, and implemented a harsh and dictatorial life on Aboriginal students in residential schools.

The Anishinaapbek knew that Namekosipiingk was meant to be a part of the Lac Seul reserve and remembered the early departure of the Dominion surveyors in the 1870s because of severe weather conditions, and their intentions of returning the following spring to complete their work. As a consequence, Trout Lake escaped reserve status and the lake, originally designated “crown land” by the Government of Canada, is now provincial “public land”.

The Anishinaapbek of Namekosipiingk witnessed the lasting change that came with the increased encroachment of the *wemptikooshiwukk*. By 1880, the Canadian Pacific Railway across northwestern Ontario was complete and as the decades went on, the tension of outsiders came in the form of prospectors and miners as gold-mining activities exploded. Six small towns sprang up close to Namekosipiingk: Red Lake,¹⁰ Balmertown, Starratt Olsen, Cochenour, McKenzie Island and Madsen. Further eroding the lives of the Anishinaapbek was Ontario Hydro’s dam¹¹ on Ear Falls on the English River, for gold mining desperately required electricity for ever-expanding operations.

I remember ancient Aunt Quayyesh, with the rest of my family seated in a circle on a large blanket on the floor of our cabin, telling stories with longing for the larger community life and travels before the *wemptikooshiwukk*. She spoke of times when the people portaged, of temporary dwelling places, trapping and hunting expeditions, and particularly applicable to me, the birth of Tetipaayaash and Kaamatiweyaashiik’s daughter – my mother – on an early

¹⁰The Red Lake Mine is Canada’s largest gold mine and also the world’s lowest-cost gold-producer, and the richest. Barrick Gold Corp. (which bought out Placer Dome), Campbell Red Lake Mine and Goldcorp (formerly Dickenson Mine) are the mega-mining corporations that have infiltrated into this area of Aboriginal country (Joyce, D.K & S. McGibbon, 2004, 94-95).

¹¹This became operational in 1929. See Lac Seul First Nation website, homepage: <http://lacseul.firstnation.ca/> (accessed May 22, 2007).

siiygkwan morning. Less than two decades later, in January 1939, the men of her extended family, hearing a plane land on the ice, allowed the passengers of a Stinson to disembark and set up camp. The leader of these passengers was to become my father, and within the next ten years, several *kitchimookoomahnuk*¹² made use of his trails and other inroads to establish tourist camps in several locations around Namekoosipiingk. Prior to this time, *wemptikooshiwukk* were not allowed into the lake because of a formal pact The People had made with Queen Victoria herself. Time and change, however, eroded this old honoured agreement.

Part II: Me in my research

My father is Einar Olsen; he was born in Kristiania in 1899, an adventurous soul who meandered the world, seeking. Like many youth who completed schooling, he set out, at age fourteen, to make his way in the world; he joined the Norwegian merchant marines, the largest commercial fleet in the world at that time.

In the waning years of WWI, just after Germany began sinking all ships in the waters around England, my father was one of twenty-six crew members in the *S/S Solbakkens*. The ship, destined for Cherbourg, France, was returning from Argentina with a full cargo. Just prior to entering the English Channel, a German submarine, the UC24, spotted the *S/S Solbakkens*, ordered a halt and moved in to overtake it. The crew was rounded up at gunpoint and ordered into two rowboats and set adrift in the cold winter waters of the Atlantic. Conditions with very little food and almost no fresh water were extremely harsh and most died.

One rowboat, in fact, was never heard from again. The other, the one in which my father found himself, eventually washed up on the shores of San Lorenzo in Gijon on the Bay of Biscay in Spain. Thinking they were German enemies, the residents who found them decided to leave

¹²In English, these are Americans.

them, particularly since they were already very near death. The few words my father was able to say, however, were eventually understood as not being German; the survivors were then carried to the hospital where, over the months, they recovered. Before he left Spain, my father gave testimony in Bilbao about the German occupation and loss of the merchant marine ship (Sjoforklaringer Over Kirgsforliste Norske Skribe i, 1917).

Afterwards, my father, still seeking, joined whaling expeditions where he travelled to the southernmost parts of South America, Antarctica, Japan and Greenland. Eventually, he made his way through New York City into Canada where he moved westwards into Winnipeg. More years passed; his disembarkation from the bush plane which my mother's family heard on that cold winter morning marked the places of his permanent residence. It was there in the territories of the Namekoosipiingk Anishinaapbek, where, for him and in due course, time ended.

Part III: Me in my research

One of the things I remember most in my early education was that Canada is an enormous nation that was developed by explorers, fur traders, settlers and missionaries. My textbooks portrayed almost nothing about the Anishinaapbe people. I did not know then about the “hegemonic power of the ‘invisible Indian’ stereotype, through which writers render Aboriginal peoples invisible from their historical accounts”, as described by Furniss (1997/98, p. 19). Remarkable accomplishments were obviously made by other Canadians, not by us. Further, I did not understand colonialism nor its manifestations and even though I felt its consequences, I would not have been able to articulate them until much later in my life.

Such representations were incomprehensible to me, except that, apparently, we did not belong to what was happening “out there”, nor were we particularly welcome to participate. Any mention of our own history-keepers was ambiguous, with our presence being set in a form of

antipodean struggle against progressive Canada (LaSpina, 2003) – we were always fighting against the settlers or attempting to confront the government about vague and unfathomable complaints. The question, though not overtly made, begged: How can a people be so impossibly backward? Education was meant to assimilate the Anishinaapbe (Paul, 2006) but what that actually meant to many did not register until years later when it became obvious that communal memories were no longer cherished, or happy, nor thought of with longing.

However, we, the Anishinaapbek, knew that this outcome was not what the old people talked about; they referred to mutual respect and honour in our obligations to each other – as in the treaties. We should live in peace and harmony, they said, and not impose on each other, but share with each other. So the Anishinaapbek shared the land and its resources – that was the understanding of the old people, but most newcomers never acknowledged that. As well, the *wemptikooshiwukk* who insist that we and the land “seem to be virtually one” (Sack, 1997, p. 136) have it all wrong – we *are* one. This kind of outside reasoning, however, serves to self-legitimize the *wemptikooshiwukk*'s continued excursions into the land of memories of the First Peoples of Namekosipiinkg. Most are still uninvited by the broader Anishinaapbe community. In spite of efforts by a small group, some academics in their ignorance and condescending ways are researching, virtually unannounced as they continue spreading their own forms of colonialism and purposeful plundering of the Lake's remaining resources, even in this new millenium.

Using the gifts I have been given by my mother, father and forefathers, I counter the types of research that should never have existed in the first place. I self-locate as only one person in this time and place who believes that when a woman speaks from the perspective of her immediate experiences, something is created in her environment, for herself, sometimes for the first time. Focusing on her experiences allows her to claim a knowledge base from which she can

always speak (hooks, 1994). Further, I view my self-location as fundamental to issues of accountability and helping to fulfil a sense of responsibility for and participation in Indigenous knowledge creation.

3.2.3 Research objectives

My qualitative research is a part of what Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify as “any kind of research that produces findings not derived by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (p. 17). Its naturalistic approaches seek to understand phenomena in context-specific settings such as “real world situations as they unfold naturally; non-manipulative and non-controlling; openness to whatever emerges” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). The identical reproduction of specific knowledge in qualitative study is irrelevant and without a priori outcomes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moon & Trepper, 1996).

My research seeks to unearth unique knowledges from the community informants within the sphere of their own human circumstances and individual attributes that moved them away from violence in their home lives. During the interview process they uncover, perhaps not intentionally, knowledge and individual truths about resilience in the aftermath of DV. Their knowledge about resilience thinking can be integrated into educational offerings for women who experience DV, particularly for those wishing to improve their quality of life by leaving abusive spouses or working at other related interventions.

I purport that all educational offerings be founded on culturally-specific meanings of resilience, since resilience as a lens for research with Aboriginal populations must be defined from within Aboriginal contexts and founded on internal epistemological interpretations (Merritt, 2007). Epistemologies will inform educational offerings about the actionable content of resilience, as understood by Aboriginal people. DV risk education must not be taken from the

values, judgments and discernments of the colonial powers who subjugate – those whose truths are often diametrically opposite of Aboriginal value and truth systems.

I envision a strong link to curricula and training material, both formal and informal, that includes various concepts of resilience, such as that already in place in communities, households and within specific grassroots groups. On-reserve women's shelters, where my interviews take place, are ideally positioned to integrate those specifics within programs for clients and anti-DV outreach services within schools, for example. Powerful teachings emerge from community members who confidently know and share their specific stories of resilience; such outcomes draw from existing community knowledge resources.

As well, even though I feel obliged to ensure that my findings are used appropriately and for the intended purposes, I will not be able to track this. Ideally, they will feed into advocacy, policy-making and intervention activities. Too often, however, critical research findings never reach the attention of policymakers and advocates best positioned to use them. Hopefully, my research will be used in this way.

3.2.4 Research questions

All research plans involving Indigenous concerns, including the imperative research questions, must be designed to navigate, in Smith's words, "the spaces between research methodologies, ethical principles, institutional regulations, and human subjects as individuals and as socially organized actors and communities" (2007, p. 85). During my strategic planning, I worked mostly on formulating an appropriate questionnaire that would procure the answers to my research questions. My overall strategy was underpinned on the characteristics of Aboriginal-sensitive methodologies and the perspective that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal understandings of knowledge-seeking and truth are distinct and separate.

My final questionnaire was designed to respond to these three research questions:

1. How do survivors of DV in Aboriginal communities view resilience in terms of their own survival?
2. In addressing DV in Aboriginal communities, which features of resilience are salient?
3. In the context of DV, does the concept of resilience in Aboriginal epistemologies differ from Western views?

3.2.5 Procedures

My study, carried out on three First Nations reserves, was aimed at understanding the meaning of resilience by survivors of DV. As such, my procedures were designed with the participants' life realities in mind, and the highly sensitive nature of DV in the women's lives. Mostly my relationships and on-going correspondence with the Executive Directors (EDs) was invaluable in providing me with the guidance and direction I specifically needed for data collection and for procuring appropriate setting for the interviews. As my study was exploratory in nature, I also relied on the information derived from my literature review on Indigenous research methodologies.

The participants

I interviewed a total of six women. Three were EDs of on-reserve women's shelters; each identified a DV survivor within her community who agreed to participate. Had a man volunteered, fit the criteria of being a DV survivor, were he willing to participate, and had wanted to give input into educational offerings aimed at reducing DV in his community, I would have interviewed him. This, however, did not occur.

I have a long-standing work relationship with many of the EDs of the 41 INAC (*Indian and Northern Affairs Canada*)-funded on-reserve women's shelters. The nature of my work

continues to involve communication with shelter EDs: articulating "best practices" for administrating women's shelters, identifying the impacts on woman abuse of matrimonial real property cross-jurisdictional issues, mitigating the detrimental effects of Chief and Council fiscal authority on women's shelters; and, inventorying the participation of women's shelters in anti-DV programming in Canada. Two projects in particular brought me in direct contact with 12 EDs from across Canada, and it was to this group that I made a presentation in July 2008 about my desired research in three of their communities. Immediately after the presentation, one ED welcomed me to use her infrastructure for this purpose. Months later, I received approval from another two by simply making the request to them.

My attitude and understanding of all potential interviewees was not that they were "passive recipients of intervention, but active participants who possess information and strategize" (Long, 1992, p. 21). The significant point is that both researcher and participants co-create meaning within the specific context of DV interventions, and articulate salient information from the interviews. This constructivist perspective is highly subjective, and positions both researcher and participants as integral to the building and representation of meaning within a knowledge-seeking context. Relationships thus play a dual role in that they shape a created knowledge and impart important norms and values that guide the entire process (Brant Castellano, 2004; McGregor, 2004). However, this was an area in my research processes that could have been improved; this weakness resulted from insufficient time with the participants and also their time availability and interest on a longer-term basis.

The communities are located in different parts of Canada (east, west and central) and each set of ED/ DV survivor belongs to a different cultural group. Because I envision that

material from the interviews will be used for training content within the First Nations, I emphasize the following (Ball, 2004):

Education and training programs that offer pan-Aboriginal curriculum content in an effort to be culturally sensitive are flawed because they fail to appreciate the heterogeneity of over 605 different First Nations in Canada, each with their own particular history, language dialect, culture, and social organization. (p. 458)

The point is essential that in formulating training and awareness material, consistency with each First Nation's values and traditions are considered, and ways to enhance cultural and community identity are integrated therein. First Nations educators and trainers link improvement of training outcomes to the constant reinforcement of Aboriginal identity, regeneration of cultural expression, and emphasis on culturally unique values and practices (Ball & Simpkins, 2004; Baydala et al., 2009; Milward, 2008; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Spence, White & Maxim, 2007). Such approaches veer away from the pan-Indian mentality portrayed in most Eurocentric educational literature.

The setting

Access to the women's shelters for interview purposes was readily provided in light of my on-going relationships with the shelter EDs. I procured a formal letter from each ED to confirm access. Interviews took place in a private interview room, although the EDs provided their own offices for our questionnaire-based exchange. I had originally planned for a second session with the participants, but this was not practical for several reasons. This session would have been after I transcribed the interview tapes and the participants asked to confirm the accuracy of the hardcopies, as only the approved version is used for data analysis. First, I was unable to transcribe the tapes before I left the communities since only one interview fell within

the anticipated 90-minute duration. Most were two hours, and one was even 3 hours long. I was unable to stay in the community for the transcribing of two lengthy interviews from the ED and the CP. Further, for various reasons, no CP would have been able to come back to the shelter for this latter (approximately) 30-minute approval process.

To accommodate this core process, I later transcribed the tapes and sent the results via “Registered Mail” to the CP for her perusal, editing and approval. I also enclosed a self-addressed pre-paid “Registered Mail” envelope for receiving the results. This was to ensure confidentiality of the information since only the participant and I would ever see the transcriptions or hear the tapes, unless she gave specific permission for this. For the EDs, the interview-approving process was conducted through e-mail correspondence since their interviews were not about their own experiences, but of what they perceived in their client body.

No participant wished to be involved in data analysis although several signed the portion of the “Consent Form” for having the study’s summary findings forwarded to them.

The interviews (data collection)

The foundational concept underlying data collection is *respecting the informants*. The success of entire studies is predicated on this basic philosophy (Boyer, 1993; Wesley-Esquimaux, 2004). Interviewing was one-on-one in a setting approved by the ED with sufficient back-up counseling supports. According to the importance of relationship-building in Aboriginal research (Barker, 2006; Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005; Welchman Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002), I was always aware of the importance of infusing a sense of trust, safety and intimacy into the process.

Informed consent involves full information about risks, benefits and possible alternatives to the inquiry at hand. I had prepared two types of consent for my research: one from the

community and the other from the interview participant. As it was, however, the “Communal Consent Agreement” which would have been signed by the First Nation authority, such as the Chief, Elder and/or Health Authority (See Appendices B and C, pgs. 334 and 337, respectively), was not required. In all three communities, the ED had the authority to approve research within the shelter she was administering. The fact of not needing communal consent was articulated by the ED before the beginning of taped interviews. On-going communication with the ED prior to my arrival in the community ensured that she was aware of my logistical needs as a researcher in the area of consent.

As well, I had previously sent the EDs copies of the two questionnaires: one that they would answer, and the other for the CP (See Appendices D and E, pgs. 340 and 344, respectively). They were also sent copies of other documents they specifically requested to help prepare for the interviews. I was aware of the possibility of altering the precise questions in later interviews because of what would emerge from the earlier ones. This strategizing is consistent with the cyclical patterns of Aboriginal epistemology and knowledge production, and corresponds with general good practice of always improving questionnaires and other research instruments. Altering the questionnaires in later interviews was not necessary, however.

The semi-structured interview consisted of demographic and open-ended questions to allow for more of a conversation than a formal process. It also allowed for “going off-topic”, although I used probes to guide the direction of conversational flow and for clarification when necessary. This type of interview provided the means by which valuable data could not otherwise emerge, and also more closely conforms to cyclical thought as opposed to linear thinking.

Prior to interviewing the community participants (CPs), I introduced myself and my background as a First Nation person, and professionally, including what led me to work in the

area of DV in Aboriginal communities. Then, the CP and I discussed the “Consent Form” in detail. Afterwards, I informed her about confidentiality and confirmed that participation was strictly voluntary and that she could stop the interview at any time if she wished. I also confirmed that the research would flow from her own beliefs and interpretations of her experiences, and that there are no “right or wrong” responses. I reiterated the fact of confidentiality of the interview, that I respected her privacy, that identifiers and names would not appear on any completed document and that she could choose a pseudonym. Participants did not question the confidentiality and sharing of the research data in any greater detail than that within the “Consent Form”. None voiced any particular threat they might encounter from being interviewed, nor that any possible breeches in trust and privacy existed. Finally, I invited the CP to ask anything she wanted about the research, or about myself.

As interviewers, we must be prepared to take only what is given to us, and not coerce or interrogate; the participant may not be prepared emotionally to discuss certain aspects of an already sensitive part of her life. We must respect that space. One does not ask questions out of curiosity; the interview is not about satisfying an interviewer’s curiosity, but about producing knowledge. It is not, however, impolite to clarify a point in relation to specific questions if the responses are unclear. In my research interviews, when a participant freely revealed very difficult details of her experiences, I would listen intently. I had previously prepared for myself a listing of “Overall Principles” for interviewing which was comprised of the following points:

- To avoid the appearance of intimidation, sit at or below the participant's level.
- Communicate in a way that lets the CP know that DV is far from uncommon in all groups of people, and that it has serious health and life consequences for all those involved.

- Communicate directly and compassionately; help build trust by focusing on the CP and avoid distraction by anything else; do not give even the appearance of being distracted.
- Do not express shock or surprise by answers, even when you feel shock and surprise.
- Affirm your belief that violence against women is a crime. Assure confidentiality of information being discussed.
- Offer support in an emphatic, non-judgmental and non-paternalistic way that is respectful of (not condescending towards) the CP.

With the ED meetings, although structured by the questionnaire, the interviews unfolded much more informally. There were two reasons for this: we were well acquainted with one another from previous work, and the questionnaire was directed at her observations of her clients, not about herself. As well, we had had supper or coffee the evening prior to the interviews to discuss the interview and other areas of mutual interest.

Risks

Because of the very nature of my study, there were risks involved in my research interviews. Indeed, Fontes, (2004) states that, “VAW [Violence Against Women] fits clearly within the realm of sensitive topics research . . . as a topic that may pose a substantial threat to those involved in the research” (p. 142). The most obvious one is dealing with the emotional, psychological and spiritual topography that is always associated with DV. CPs’ rememberings about DV can be traumatic and even though many clinicians and counsellors operate on the premise that discussing painful experiences is cathartic and helpful, a significant risk is unexpected distress from contemplating past victimization. As a researcher, I had to be cognizant of ensuring support for participants who could be disturbed by memories or flashbacks of difficult situations, possibly triggered by an interview question. I would have to be ready with

assistance for such situations. Because the nature of DV is a violation of personal physical boundaries within intimate relationships, it is important not to replicate violations of trust during research. Also, there are physical risks – these might be individual reactions related to psychological or emotional recollections. There may also be legal or social repercussions, since there is a risk of further DV directed at CPs because of their participation in this research; this risk, though, was nominal since none of the CPs were living with abusive spouses – indeed, a criterion for the research was that a CP was living DV-free at the time of the interview. The communities in which the interviewees live are small, and "everyone knows everyone else's business" and my research may have been known within the community of abused women, as well as the identities of those who participated. Considering the general marginalization of women's shelters in on-reserve communities, however, the overall population of the community may have had little knowledge or particular focus on the research.

The "lens" or paradigm through which the interviews took place was *resilience*, a positive framing of issues, and a concentration of thinking by the CP about how and why she moved from DV into healing and health. By focusing on resilience and protective behaviours, participants focused on their own individual traits, and opportunities they had taken advantage of to move towards positive lifestyles. Framing the interviews from a resilience perspective is non-threatening, and conducive for encouraging former victims to share their experiences with those involved in anti-DV teaching and learning. They were given an opportunity to focus on what they did *right*.

The shelter's counsellor was close by and readily available if an interviewee were to become distressed, or if she specifically requested help. The three EDs and shelter counsellors all had ready access to mental and physical health care professionals for further assistance, as

needed. Mitigating the risks also involved CPs being carefully selected – they are known by the EDs to be living DV-free lives, for example. One of the questions in the questionnaire confirms that CPs are not living in DV circumstances; they also sign the “Consent Form” which includes a statement that they wish to share their understandings of resilience and how it propelled them to live DV-free. Although there was a risk that Elders would not be able to understand the more technical aspects of the interview, such as the “Consent Form”, this was not an issue because no one among the CPs was an Elder, and all were proficient in the English language.

3.2.6 Data analysis

At the time of strategizing my data analysis processes, I had planned, at least, to review the transcripts with each interviewee to identify common themes for categorization into specific themes. These could have included: strong families, dealing with residential school experiences, education and awareness, cultural practices and strong Aboriginal identity. Overall, I had hoped to:

- discuss the research issues with the participants;
- provide opportunity for on-going input using developing text;
- participate with the interviewees in the analysis phase;
- discuss themes/ categories with participants in light of the theory and emerging issues;
- identify aspects of the study that warrant further investigation or new direction; and,
- record interviewees’ learning experiences in this study.

These, however, were both ambitious and impractical, an area of incommensurability between my ideals and reality. First and foremost, the CPs were all already overworked and overextended with their jobs, family and community obligations. To consider their input into the time-consuming details of data analysis was problematic; further, no participant expressed any

particular desire to be included in any process beyond the interview itself, although some were interested in receiving the completed summary findings. Perhaps they did not see themselves as compatible for this area of research. My data analysis plans for participant inclusion were therefore idealized and fell far short of what I had envisioned as “inclusivity”.

As well, my studies are, by university standards, relegated as a sole activity, not a communal one; this just happened to correspond with the lack of input from the participants other than the actual interviews. I therefore worked solely in the data analysis phase. Unfortunately, I had no back-up plans for reconciling the university standard at this stage, had the interviewees wanted to become involved in data analysis. Finding methodologies for true – not just “lip service” – inclusivity with First Nations’ participants in data analysis is actually an area that needs much more effort from both research institutions and the community leadership, and particularly from educational industrial complexes that aim for more diverse enrollment and participation.

I therefore had to re-design my data analysis plans after the interviews. According to Herda (1999), data analysis is “a creative and imaginative act” (p. 98), and I believe my analysis acts fit into this description. My approach followed the sequence suggested by Herda: transcribing taped interviews; approving of transcriptions by the participants; developing themes and validating them with quotes from the transcripts; and, using observational data from my own journal as a researcher. Basically, it consisted of three interrelated phases. The first was reviewing the approved transcriptions to identify the ideas, concerns and processes that were common among participants. For example, mothers expressed anxiety and a need for life change when they perceived abusive behaviour directed at them by their sons; they had become cognizant of intergenerational abuse behaviours being generated from within their very

households. There are many more such common themes that emerged and are discussed later. Next, I re-reviewed the interview results to verify the categories and determine if there were wider categories or themes that I could use that were very specific to the main research questions. A final review, the last step, was to review the results a third time to distinguish more specific themes or commonalities that would provide definition to those already articulated. The last two steps broadened and narrowed the scope of review, respectively.

3.2.7 Ethical considerations

My first task in this area was to receive approval from the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board (REB). The policy of the rigor of review of any application being proportionate to the risks of potential harm to the interviewees placed my study at high risk. Contributing factors were the subject matter itself and the social and political realities of women on First Nations' reserves. My greatest ethical obligation was ensuring that participants were not at further risk because of their participation, and that their input and identity were kept in strictest confidence. All text would be composed without identifiers regarding the individual or community. As well, a provision within the "Informed Consent Form" articulated the right of the shelter ED to examine the final draft of documentation to ensure the removal of all identifying information.

Another ethical obligation was conforming to communal consent since the research was scheduled for on-reserve locations. I also had to consider the view by Aboriginal people of rights and obligations being collective, contrary to Western societies which are increasingly individualistic. This could have become complicated since some Chiefs and Councils have no interest in dealing with DV in their communities; such a situation would have likely meant having to conduct my research in another First Nation, or strategizing other ways to research in

that particular community. Further, although the REB states that communal consent does not annul or revoke the obligation to the individual, there would have been no way to regulate this on-reserve since universities, like provinces, do not have jurisdiction on reserves. As it was, however, the EDs were in a position to authorize my research within their shelters by way of internal protocols relating to their place within local health authorities or band administration.

In my view, many formal ethics principles show limitations and are mainly written for the benefit of researchers and bodies that represent researchers. This observation parallels a statement by Bradbury-Jones and Alcock (2010), “. . . research governance and professional guidance only go so far in promoting ethical research practice” (p. 192). As well, several other research ethics professionals concur with this perception (Champagne & Goldberg, 2005; Santos, 2008; Wallwork, 2008; Wendland, 2008; Whitt, 1999). To counter or negotiate one-sidedness and other weaknesses in research ethics boards, I believe that First Nations at the community, Tribal Council or regional level, must articulate their own research needs and guidelines regarding the behaviour and outcomes they expect from researchers, and to act as gatekeepers of potential and on-going research. Such a formalized process would help heal the rift between the type and areas of research that are needed and desired by First Nations and outside institutions’ redundancies, inconsistencies and self-serving desires. Another major ethical responsibility I consider essential is that Aboriginal narrative, intellectual, cultural and philosophical responses to imposed European patriarchy be reflected in all finalized research texts since language reflects our values and priorities. Also, research must employ Indigenous methodologies in areas concerning the First Peoples. Certainly, a renewed ethical and moral imagination is needed to level off the disparaging aspects of research, and to make it more ethical and digestible for Aboriginal participants and entire communities.

In the area of research, Aboriginal voices are much stronger than they ever have been; Aboriginal individuals and groups have learned many hard lessons from past research exploitation by institutions and individuals. A major responsibility of on-reserve leadership in relation to keeping up a momentum of involvement must be advocacy for policies that regulate funding decisions relative to research projects and their progression. As the Blue Quills First Nations College Research Ethics Policy states (2009), “The academy has come to our lands, and now it is time to teach the academy how to be in our lands” (p. 1). Leadership must also be forceful in obtaining community benefits or exchanges from non-reserve institutions regarding research processes and outcomes. While enacting policies, ordinances or ethics codes will not stop unscrupulous and self-serving researchers, they can certainly make their inroads much more difficult. Simply trusting on the goodwill of researchers is grossly insufficient and extremely naïve.

4. Findings & Discussion

4.1 Community, shelter & client profiles¹³

4.1.1 Community & shelter profiles

Mukkwuh First Nation: Family Wellness Centre

Mukkwuh First Nation has a population of 1,000; the women's shelter opened for clients in 1992. The provincial *Women & Children's Wellness Directive* and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), specifically the *Project Haven* program, partnered to fund the *Mukkwuh Women's Shelter Program*. There are seven full-time and three part-time employees at the shelter. Its Board of Directors is comprised of the elected chiefs of the tribal council with which this First Nation is associated, and also includes a representative of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). The shelter has six family units with twenty beds and five cribs. Operational funding is from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and goes directly to the *Family Wellness Centre*; Mukkwuh's Chief and Council are not involved in the funding arrangements. The shelter, on a yearly average, services 655 in-house and outreach clients who come from all over the Tribal Council's catchment area. Brenda is the Executive Director (ED) of the women's shelter in this community.

Niipbin First Nation: Niipbin Family Healing Centre

The *Niipbin Family Healing Centre* is located in the Niipbin First Nation which has a population of 2,200. The shelter opened in 1998. Its need was realized after a young woman from the community was raped and murdered by her partner near the present location of the shelter. CMHC's *Project Haven* program funded the building. There are ten full-time and six part-time or casual workers. All members on the Board of Directors are volunteers and include a

¹³The names of all communities, shelters, community participants and Executive Directors are pseudonyms.

male and female Elder. The shelter has six bedrooms, with a total occupancy of eighteen. Operational funding from INAC goes directly to the Band administration. The main provincial health program contributes to the shelter's capital expenses. One of the shelter's innovative programs includes helping clients become self-sustaining by planting, caring for and harvesting gardens and natural berries and herbs in the region. The shelter serves an average of twelve women a week, and their children. Rosa is the ED of the *Niipbin Family Healing Centre* in this First Nation.

Akimaak Lake First Nation: I'Kweh Healing Centre

The *I'Kweh Healing Centre* is located in the Akimaak Lake First Nation which has a population of about 1,700. The Nation is a six-hour drive from the province's capital. After an initiative by Health Canada in 1988 to address the high rates of Aboriginal family violence, the Chief and Council submitted a proposal to develop a CMHC *Project Haven* shelter. The building that houses the *I'Kweh Healing Centre* was completed in late 1992, and was open to clients in March 1993. There are presently eight full-time and four part-time workers. The Board of Directors consists of three members and two portfolio holders that sit on the Band Council; the shelter is co-managed with the Band. It has eight bedrooms with a total of twenty-eight beds and three family rooms. Operational funding comes from INAC and flows through the Chief and Council administration. Other, smaller grants are obtained for specific items and/or services and programs. The shelter serves an average of eleven families a month. Nancey is the ED at the *I'Kweh Healing Centre*.

4.1.2 Shelter client profiles

Shelter records show that most clients are in the 20- to 30-year age bracket and are status Indians, although the number of non-status women seeking shelter services is increasing. A few

are non-Aboriginal but have relationships with status Indian men on or close to the main reserves. All EDs emphasize that the shelter does not turn away any woman in need of their services, whether Aboriginal or not. Most clients have 3 or 4 children and some have several more; very few women have no children at all. They are either married or in marriage-type relationships. Their usual level of education is part or all of high-school but rarely anything beyond that. Most shelter clients are unemployed and stay at home with the children. Some have part-time jobs from which they would be unable to support themselves and their children.

At Mukkwuh First Nation, many women who had spent much of their lives in the nearby provincial capital are returning to their home reserves to reclaim and re-identify with their Aboriginal heritage. "A lot of women who left earlier in their lives had become involved in criminal activities are now reaching back to their communities. We have women who are involved in the sex trade, and more and more struggling with mental health and addictions. They are looking for home," said Brenda. She further observes that all the clientele are part of trans-generational trauma. She explains this in terms of considering the women in the family, and the family in the community and the community in the greater nation, and the many kinds of assaults and stresses that have been downloaded onto them. Primarily, from the greater context of historical trauma is the *Indian Act*, the residential school system, the "60's Scoop",¹⁴ a

¹⁴The "60's Scoop" is a general term used to denote a period in Canadian history, during the 1960s, 70s and into the 1980s, when the Children's Aid Society actively removed Aboriginal children from their families and communities. The consent and fact of the removals were often agented without input from parents. The children were placed either in foster care or adopted out into white Canadian and American families where many suffered unimaginable trauma (Blackstock, 2009a; Fournier & Crey, 1997; Sinclair, Phillips & Bala, 1991). Regarding this federal policy, Judge Kimmelman (1985, 272-273) stated in the ensuing judicial inquiry, "The road to hell was paved with good intentions and the child-welfare system was the paving contractor."

disconnectedness with the rest of society and the oppression of centralization. Brenda sees shelter clients emerging from this assault of intergenerational colonial activity. For many of these women, ghettoization and marginalization are everyday realities which are further complicated by experiences of violence and abuse, mostly from very young ages. One common life outcome is that most women have multiple partners as they seek stable personal identities and struggle to know themselves as healthy and special individuals.

In the shelter that Rosa administers, only about half the clients are from the community itself and the remainder are from outside reserves who are in relationships with Niipbin First Nation's men. Being unmarried outsiders with band membership in other reserves adds another layer of powerlessness for this client group; their own families and main support networks are elsewhere. Even after perhaps many years of living on their partners' reserve, these clients are not entirely accepted as equal reserve members because of INAC band affiliation regulations, and even though children are most likely registered with their fathers in band membership listings. Such jurisdictional divisions continue to contribute to family disunity and incohesiveness.

Most clients at the *I'Kweh Healing Centre* are band-members of the Akimaak Lake First Nation. Commonly, their parents are residential school survivors, and have been negatively affected by the degradation of traditional social structures. Many clients attended public schools in larger urban centers, but this was not ideal for instilling desire for education either. They suffered from culture shock and struggled through new forms of interpersonal communication, different paces and styles of learning, and various social environments that vastly differed from those on the reserve. The educational system, rather than working to accommodate them, often simply ignored them and left them shuffling without any guidance at all. From being

overwhelmed by too much to deal with, many did not finish secondary schooling. This community is characterized by several strong Christian religions of which most shelter clients are part.

4.2 Research themes

While many themes emerged from the interviews, only those relating specifically to the research questions will be discussed. Through an iterative process of data gathering and analysis, the following themes were identified: meanings and manifestations of resilience; the interrelationships of resilience with culture, spirituality, identity and healing; where resilience comes from; and, resilience, spiritual health and healing. This section separates the responses of the Executive Directors (EDs) from those of the domestic violence (DV) survivors (community participants, or CPs).

4.2.1 Executive Directors

4.2.1.1 Meanings & manifestations of resilience

Brenda, ED of the *Family Wellness Centre*, views participation in counselling and other support sessions offered at the shelter as a manifestation of resilience in her clients. Once they take part in sessions, clients see themselves in a much more positive light, and this, Brenda observes, is empowering and stimulates a commitment to more realistic thoughts and workable plans for the future. Clients begin to see the contributions they make to their homes, and contrary to what their partners say, they are worthy and valuable individuals. They show resilience by staying away from abuse once they are away from the abusive partner; conversely, however, the opposite may also be a trait of resilience. Even women leaving the shelter to return to their partners to “make it work” demonstrate resilience because the choice is a conscious decision, reflective of hope and new ways of looking at a persistent and overwhelming problem. Whether or not the outcome reaches the desired result is irrelevant in the context of resilience because, at some level, the fact itself of making the decision demonstrates resilience. Brenda concludes that anything that helps a client feel better about herself promotes resilience; this could include

activities such as taking time and effort to get proper exercise and nutrition, getting medical help, and participating in stress-relieving practices and cultural activities that uphold the worthiness of each and every person. Willful blindness and unquestioning acceptance is an opposite of resilience.

Many clients lose their children to provincial child protection agencies. Brenda noted that most cases of Aboriginal child apprehension are strongly linked to DV in the children's homes. She observes that women expressing both the desire and making the conscious efforts to get their children back from child welfare and "willing to do whatever it takes" is resilience. The decisions themselves may or not be conjoined to definite plans; the interval between the decision and the action is most likely the time that a woman spends in the shelter seeking solutions and support for the choices she will make.

Formulating personal visions for the future is also, according to Brenda, a vital aspect of resilience. Clients are able to glimpse into their desired futures at the shelter because there is no name-calling, nobody swears at or hits them and there is freedom to talk in safety and experience daily life without abuse. Brenda notes that her clients open up when they see their children's improved behaviour simply from living in a non-violent and structured environment. Because of the strong tie that most women have with their children, staff discussions that include the children tend to open their eyes about the devastating reality of their home lives. Resilience is the realization of the violence at home, and the trauma women and children are absorbing on a daily basis. At the shelter, clients see another life—one without violence, they experience the personal freedom to develop personally, and the power to create their own destiny.

Brenda speaks of an example of a woman who "drifts from one abusive relationship to another," and has a child or two from those relationships. She is resilient, Brenda states, and this

is demonstrated in her ability to leave. There is sometimes a perpetuated cycle with women who choose to be part of lives they do not particularly like because the sense of being needed is so strong. Abusive men have very strong needs to dominate and be in control; women who consciously enter an abusive relationship see themselves as rescuing a person in peril. So while that woman may always have that need, it could also be one of her strengths as well. Her consciousness, awareness and insight about her own gravitation towards men who are so destructively needy is something that she is thoroughly developing. When she comes to the shelter for safety, it means that she has recognized her need to be in a safe place. That incredible strength of knowing the differences among imaginary, exaggerated or real threats is her resilience. She has an intuitive and learned sense of assessing her own danger; she is an active agent in her own protective behavior. It does not matter how often this woman might get into other abusive relationships in her life; she has the capability and the resilience to move on. It is a pattern for her, and patterns can be re-shaped, even though it is likely that this person will move on with violent men for most or all her life. People, in order to survive DV, experience a numbness – so there's a numbness that happens that women do not like, nor want, but for that time, it is their way of ensuring survival.

Rosa states that dealing with a constant bombardment of racism is resilience. She described a situation where a client went to find an apartment for herself and her children; at one place, her efforts yielded loud racist insults from the prospective landlord. After some personal devastation and intense thought at the hard words spoken against her, this woman concluded that the problem of racism belonged, not to herself, but to the landlord. She consciously made the decision that there is no shame or guilt in her own identity as an Anishinaapbe person. Instead, she chose to concentrate on doing everything she could to become a healthier woman, a better

mother and strong contributor to her community. The ED identified these thoughts, decisions and conclusions as resilience.

Rosa sees resilience in her clients as they confront the meaning of the violence they face at home. This might mean that a client will walk out, go to the shelter and eventually find her own living arrangements. It might mean going back to her home with new ways of dealing with DV and her abusive spouse. Resilience is her clients' finding their own voices to determine that they will no longer be violated; voicing fosters self-direction. It means recognizing the pattern of abuse in their own intimate partner relationships, and finding healthy ways of dealing with it. Resilience is a recognition of the behavioural signs of abusive men and knowing how these behaviours fit into the cycle of DV. It means that, even if abusive men have been all a woman has ever known, she will come to recognize her own communication methods and nuances that attract abusive men, and learn how to communicate effectively in non-violent situations and with non-violent men. Resilience in a client is her decision and will ("the backbone") to determine a way of well-being, peace and contentment in her life, including in her intimate relationships, and working towards achieving those goals.

Nancey's definition of resilience was brief and thorough. These are her words: Resilience is the strength of spirit to recover from adversity. When we experience disappointment, loss, or tragedy, we find the hope and courage to carry on. Humor lightens the load when it seems too heavy. We overcome obstacles by tapping into a deep well of faith and endurance. At times of loss, we come together for comfort. We grieve and then move on. We create new memories. We discern the learning that can come from hardship. We don't cower in the face of challenge. We engage fully in the dance of life.

As well, Nancey perceived a client's reaching out and accepting support as resilience. She observed that asking for help was always preceded by a client's recognition that DV problems were overwhelming her, and the realization that it is strength to seek support and empathy, not weakness and failure. Clients' resilience was further exhibited by a direction of decision-making that promotes safe, stable and healthy environments for themselves and their children. Nancey's view was that clients' understandings of themselves as not perfect, but yet forgiving of themselves for their mistakes, and also acknowledging that there are life problems that cannot be solved by a single person, are epiphanies that continually strengthen their resilience.

4.2.1.2 Interrelationships: Resilience, culture, spirituality & identity

Brenda sees the spiritual connectedness of her clients in terms of their relationships with the Creator and other humans. It includes their ability to participate in ceremonies, whether Christian, traditional or combinations of both, and seek out knowledge that enriches their spiritual selves. It is also part of an active connection to the land, animals and birds in the clans of their families. Spirituality is closely tied to preserving the environment because stewardship of the natural world is the one strong tie that humans have to Creation and to Creator. This tie nourishes and enhances resilience in the people who are self-aware, aware of the importance of land-human relationships and recognize how these vital concepts apply to everyday life, and in the growth of the spirit within themselves. Many women who initially arrive at the *Family Wellness Centre* talk about their spirit being crushed by abuse, poverty, neglect and isolation. Brenda finds it significant that some clients recognize this, and observes that they realize a need to get back in touch with their spirituality, and that there are hurts to be discussed and healed. They come to the shelter to find this type of support and understanding. Staff encourage women

to take the journey needed to formulate their cultural identity in spite of an antithesis of the way their lives have been unfolding with DV working against them. Most clients, once they have had time to overcome the primary trauma from the violence that brought them to the shelter, want to work at improving their spiritual state.

Rosa spoke about how the loss of culture from imposed religion and residential schooling still affects the clients whose parents were part of that school system. She said, "I feel that a lot of families really need a strong Native identity because in residential schools, the labels of being 'dirty Indian' and 'stupid Indian' and whatever else, has stuck with a lot of our people and it's hard trying to erase those so they can be proud of who they are instead of dealing with what those labels mean. This didn't happen not only in residential schools, but in public schools, too". She observes that deep cultural ties that include spiritual learning and resilience are integral to each other.

Spirituality, Rosa believes, is very important to her clients because in their struggles with DV, they request ceremonies that involve cleansing with sage, smudging with sweetgrass and praying for strength. All workshops and seminars in the shelter begin and end with at least one of these activities which signify a spiritual cleansing from the fear and harm of DV. Fear hinders spiritual growth, and many clients suffer from different fears, such as fear of being alone. Some women would rather continue being abused than face their fears of isolation and being rejected. The load of finding the deep-seated root causes of excessive and unrealistic fears can be just too great to bear. They may have become used to having abusive spouses in their lives even though they do not like the treatment they receive. Even though both are negative, they make a choice about what they feel they can live with, and what they cannot. These types of decisions do not help spirituality, nor do they help formulate cultural identity because both are based on fear. The

counselors to which Rosa refers her clients try to help them see this, but the shelter statistics reveal that women can leave their home because of DV up to 17 times before they feel spiritually strong enough to leave for good. Often, this decision is more difficult because it involves children and the advice of Elders and the church leaders who encourage family unity in spite of all else. Christianity often philosophizes that the more individuals suffer in the physical life, the greater their rewards are in heaven (the afterlife).¹⁵ But a spiritually clean home involves the cleansing and healing of the violator, too – not only the victims.

Since Nancey's community is a home to several churches, most community members belong to one of these. She states that talk of Native spiritual traditions is often met with negativity because of the predominantly Christian nature of the community. Many shelter clients do not fully understand their Native spiritual roots but when they receive counseling, they begin to realize the imbalance in the spiritual part of themselves. Nancey sees that the chaos of DV in their everyday home lives prevents spiritual growth but also that it cannot possibly be a priority for women living in those circumstances. Their world is a frightening place and the potential for using the unique gifts given by the Creator to each woman cannot be fulfilled because of the paralyzing uncertainty and fear that consistently plagues DV victims. When women are at the shelter for even several days, however, they are able to calm down enough to realize the neglected areas of themselves, such as their spiritual needs. The shelter staff encourages those of all denominations to be more accepting of one another and to work at understanding and living

¹⁵One example is Romans 8:16-18: We are heirs of God if we suffer with Jesus. The sufferings of this life are unworthy to even be compared with the future glory awaiting us. Another is Matthew 5:10-12: Rejoice and be glad when you are persecuted, because you are suffering as God's people always have. And great is your reward in heaven.

out the concepts of caring and empathy. While acknowledging the differences in spiritual beliefs, people can be hopeful about their own and others' life journeys. It is common, though, for church-goers to view those of traditional Native ways as "bad" and in a strong negative light.

Even though most clients are oriented into Christianity, the shelter's healing programs are based on the Seven Teachings which are traditional to the Aboriginal thought in this area. Nancey states that program leaders are clear when they deliver their teachings that the content and principles are based on traditional Native teachings, and not on Christianity. She articulates the meaning she uses for "traditional spirituality": when people choose to hold on to the spirituality that is germane to their culture while consciously rejecting or avoiding the surrounding dominant religion(s). Once clients start learning about these teachings, many articulate their views that they are very helpful. Nancey heard one client say, "It was like experiencing 'coming home', these teachings were there inside, you know. I felt it was there inside of me, it was just woken up – I woke it up, it was lying there dormant for all these years." When shelter staff-members take clients to community functions that include traditional spiritual activities, the expectation is that clients participate only as much as they feel comfortable, and no pressure is put on them to be further involved. Some may simply sit and watch, while others may sing along or help with serving at feasts.

4.2.1.3 Where resilience comes from

To Brenda, resilience is an innate characteristic of all people that can be developed within the right environments. She is a strong believer in the importance of the first year of life for making healthy attachments which become foundational to resilience. She gives the example of a child's primary caregiver who could be a grandmother, mother, aunt or older sister; even in a very chaotic home situation, a healthy attachment between the baby and primary caregiver can

be formed. Resilience and the quality of future relationships are based on that formative time of child development. Even if the child suffers abuse and continues to live in similarly chaotic circumstances, the earlier attachment has infused a sense of security and safety in ways that will never leave that child. Resilience, however, is shaped and re-patterned both by environment and the people in life who are anchors of support and provide some form of role modeling. For that child, resilience is often generated in the form of an incredible strength that enables them to move forward in life in spite of all types of violence and abuse. Learning to meet basic needs and finding other opportunities to learn is also a part of resilience. Brenda believes, however, that the factors that support child resilience can be eroded and eventually stripped away; she sees the main threat of this is constant and enduring exposure to the various outcomes of historical and intergenerational trauma. These include alcoholism, substance abuse, unstable employment, lack of personal security and DV.

Rosa believes that substance abuse problems must first be addressed so that clients can effectively respond to counselors and Elders who work with them on DV and its related issues. Because of the relevance of culture in resilience within Native populations, shelter clients are encouraged to participate in traditional activities. Remembrances sometimes come back from those in times past and Rosa discusses one woman's account: "You know it was like Christmas when I came back from treatment; it was just like a *déjà vu*. I remember my great-grandma saying this, telling me what she was taught and was brought to her by those older generations before her. But you know, you sort of forget when you go off on your own and do things that harm you, and don't practice the old ways, so it's like re-learning all the values of our ancestors." Rosa states that one role of Elders is to help facilitate the process of communal memory to the younger generations that suffer abuse and are violated. She adds that, "The ancestors have a role

in this and they communicate with us; there are so many oral stories and a lot of them didn't really make sense when we heard them, and in this ceremony, they bring back this information. In one instance, we heard someone talking and I was observing the group that was a part of it and they starting talking about information from that gathering and from the treatment centre. We were talking about it, remembering what our ancestors did – just by talking about it.” Rosa is clear in her view that when clients effectively deal with substance abuse and work at addressing DV problems, resilience, which has been dormant and untapped, is given a way out of all “the bad stuff that’s been masked” to give the women strength to overcome and move forward in their personal lives.

Rosa also believes that resilience can be learned, and is not entirely inherent in terms of culture and spirituality. Learning resilience comes with a healing from trauma that can be initiated by treatment counseling. One has to remember the painful things of the past, however. Sometimes people need help in remembering these traumatic occurrences. If an individual has been hurt and still in pain, she has to cope with the hurt before it will be released; otherwise it will keep causing pain and spiritual injury. Many simply make a choice, however subconscious, to forget—but the mind and body cannot forget. It may take many years to remember, but that is key to confronting the ills from, for example, residential schools or having been raised by alcoholic parents. It takes constant effort, daily. Clients need on-going support because they start remembering, even on an everyday basis. They are taught how to examine issues, place them appropriately, and then how to release them. “It’s clearing out of clutter that accumulates from all those years of abuse. I’m talking about remembering because in order to deal with it, you have to remember it. This is the connection,” Rosa says. In the case of severe harm that brings

death, a headstone feast or other cultural commemoration ceremony can help individuals heal and move on in their lives.

Nancey discusses local Native words that intertwine to comprise the English concept of resilience: *oonchjinehh* (“do the right thing and it will not come back to you”), *taapwehh* (“telling the whole truth”) and *keewhhen* (“it will go back to the Creator who will look after it”). Some at the *I’Kweh Healing Centre* say that resilience is learned and can be nurtured while others say it is always within each person. Others believe it is parts of both. All agree that resilience is internal and involves the recognition and capability of individuals to face their fears, whether these are mild concerns, serious worries or matters of survival. It is related to individuals’ cherished values and both the tangible and intangible aspects of their interpretations of life’s meanings. Nancey explains that resilience is a knot of self-acknowledgements and abilities that enable one to survive and progress in times of turmoil and trauma. It includes a sense of hopefulness that Nancey glimpses in all her clients, and this, she believes is the basis for their coping with DV. She stresses that staff at the shelter cannot create resilience for anyone else, and that they can only help clients initiate thought and awareness about resilience in their own home environments. Only a client can actualize plans to address DV in their own lives.

Counsellors encourage women to tell their stories because of the value of vocalization: clients put incidents into a certain progression of events and are prioritizing their own needs, whether they realize it or not. In speaking aloud, the understanding of experiences often increases to deeper levels such as seeing DV through the eyes of their children, the extent of the manipulation of their partners and the impacts of these dynamics on the outer community. Talking Circles within the shelter facilitate a sharing of experiences from which many women derive a camaraderie that lessens a common sense of isolation and stigmatization from DV. Such

sharing is traditional among Aboriginal women, too: regular gatherings among only women were commonplace in older societies (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2005; Dion Stout, Kipling & Stout, 2001). In the safe environment of the shelter, trust and confidentiality are fostered and allow women to draw strength from sharing their truths, a process that enhances resilience. As women give voice, they become empowered to recognize their uniqueness as individuals and to begin articulating their own personal life goals.

Nancey believes that the answer to each client's DV situation is within her own self, but that often a woman lacks this understanding. Because almost all shelter residents have been violated over many years, they cannot identify the Creator-given strengths and gifts which would facilitate these solutions. Counselling sessions help direct women towards uncovering the areas in which they excel, their values and their goals, and to recognize the assets on which to build lives free of DV. They are encouraged to think things through and create a map for their own personal growth; these mental activities build self-esteem and confidence and whittle away at self-perceptions that reinforce the conceptualizations of "being a victim". Nancey's observation is that, "[a]nything that can help people know their strengths, what they like and what they do not like—builds resilience." Because drug and alcohol abuse masks resilience, shelter counselling emphasizes education about the harm of this type of self-abuse, and the personal power and growth that is derived from being drug- and alcohol-free.

4.2.1.4 Resilience, spiritual health & healing

All the EDs connected spiritual health and healing with resilience. In this context, resilience was seen as the importance clients placed on their relationships with the Creator and the spirit world even though they admitted their neglect and inattentiveness in this area because of the destructiveness of DV in their lives. Almost exclusively, clients were seeking aspects of

the old knowledges and ways that could be integrated into coping with the everyday trauma of DV or for the solution of leaving DV for good. Even for those practicing Christianity, shelter counseling and teachings were from the perspective of traditional Native spirituality which includes beliefs that the physical world and life are governed and guided by a spirit world. No client, Christian or not, was seen as rejecting these teachings. All EDs noted that one of the strongest values of traditional teachings is the reinforcement of self-worth and worthiness as an individual human from the vantage of being Aboriginal, and a core emphasis on recovering positive Aboriginal identities. Healing is about the re-creation or recovery of the self from long-term abuse and for deriving wellness and health.

One ED was especially articulate in her cognizance of the understanding that spirituality and healing involve first the recognition that past trauma, inner conflict and struggles between self and others cannot be hidden away indefinitely, nor effectively buried by alcohol and substance use, or through denial. Resilience is the ingredient that enables an individual to trust the Creator sufficiently to connect with the often-painful process that allows healing to take place through remembering, recalling and dealing with the trauma or conflict, and then letting spirit take it away so it can no longer bring harm. Rosa said that, “[o]n a personal level, my husband is a survivor of residential school, and when we went to treatment, it opened some doors, and it took 7 years for him to remember and to unload a lot of this garbage. It took him 7 years before it got to the point of remembering stuff that happened in residential school. That’s the way I see it with our clients; it takes work, you have to work at it, you constantly work.....” Rosa clarified that her reference to constant work involves the seeing, making and taking of opportunities, however small and seemingly insignificant, to learn ways of enriching one’s own life. She sees

this search and curiosity as a facet of resilience; to her, “the small things make up the big things” in life.

The EDs saw the need for clients to prioritize consciously their anxieties; to help organize these, they are taught to contemplate the answers to questions such as, *What is most likely to happen? What is least likely to happen?* Clients are also encouraged to identify the ways or areas in their lives over which they exercise some control, and to think of creative ways of expanding, however slightly, that control while not putting themselves in further jeopardy for violence. They are taught to concentrate on pleasant outcomes, and mobilize their spiritual beliefs to dispel the fear in their everyday home lives. Some counselors provide journals for clients to help them map their thoughts, feelings, dreams and goals; these are personal and help women organize the foundation of their futures. Healing involves the active and conscious learning from one’s past, whether experiences were “good” or “bad”; EDs encourage such instruction from the shelter’s counselors. All EDs concurred that the actual dealing with issues of DV are based on action derived from spiritually-founded principles.

4.2.2 DV survivors: Community participants

4.2.2.1 Jayna of Mukkwuh First Nation

Profile

Jayna is employed by Mukkwah First Nation where she holds membership and is also part of the Band Council. She is single with three children; one of her sons passed away in his early 20s. Jayna has a degree in Social Work from the nearby university and is on the cusp of completing her graduate degree. She did not attend residential school. Jayna was not raised on her reserve, but came to her home reserve when Bill C-31 of the *Indian Act* was ratified in 1985. She is a strong Catholic even though she “struggles sometimes with the institution of the

Catholic church” and believes that “at the end of the day, the Creator of our people is the same as God in the Catholic church, and when we talk about our traditional beliefs, we are talking about the same person.” Jayna’s life as a DV victim was with her partner on the Mukkwah First Nation; she had left him well before he passed away from alcoholic-related injuries. She said that she had always been attracted to “rough, tough guys”— the drinkers, the partiers—but that she had done a complete turnaround when she finally made the decision to deal once and for all with the DV in her life.

Meanings and manifestations of resilience

Jayna begins by saying that caring and love for clients in the workplace is a manifestation of resilience. Prayer at meetings is a common way of showing respect for the Creator, the source of resilience; she sees it as cultural learning because it reinforces respect and reverence for Those we cannot see with human eyes. For herself while she was living in DV, she experienced “hands off” from neighbours and other community members, and was almost entirely on her own in coping with the violence against her. Jayna recalls that, “[n]o one ever called the police to help me; I had neighbours that were there and watching the abuse, and no one came to help. The police, at the time, would just go in and talk to him, because they were the tribal police, and they were his friends and buddies.” Seeing this forced her to call on her own internal resources of fortitude and intrepidity to help herself and her children; her resilience was the faith, strength and determination to work at redirecting and reconstructing her life. She is thankful that, on a physical level at that time, she was already employed and could count on a reliable source of income that helped make the final break from her partner. All these factors came into play at the right time for her, and she expresses thankfulness to the Creator for being able to recognize this alignment and move onwards with it. She is also very thankful that the women’s shelter was

there for her to facilitate a rechanneling of her attitude and motivation towards more healthy living. In particular, she had always been attracted to “the tough ones that would pound people’s faces . . . So I really had to ‘up the standards’ a lot in who I was seeing.” Deciding to do this, and actually make this change, she sees, are acts of faith and resilience.

People, whether at work or within the family or community, need to take an active role in advocating when they see anyone in an abusive relationship or a victim of DV, rather than doing nothing, Jayna states. Such action can initiate and nurture the resilience of a victim, and from the advocate’s position, her own resilience is enhanced by extending herself in this way. For Jayna, she says there were several who should have called the Children’s Aid Society because it was obvious that she was, for many years, unable and probably unwilling to extricate herself out of the DV in her life, and her children were very young; provincial legislation had already been in place when she was in the worst of her violent relationship. Her children were more than simply witnesses—because any violence suffered by their mother, as with all children and mothers, causes them suffering as well. She muses that perhaps because of already being a social worker that others assumed she would know how to access the social agencies that could help her address DV in her life. Nonetheless, Jayna feels that whomever is living in DV should not be exempt from help, empathy and support—regardless of their job or position in life.

Jayna cautions about extending help, however. It must not be intrusive, and those in positions to help should understand the complexities of making change, such as it being unsettling and terrifying, even when changes lead to positive and healthier lifestyles. Change may carry the threat of taking away something that is very valuable and cherished—which, in the case of DV, it actually does, since many women want to stay with their partners and just want the violence to stop. Because of the lack of infrastructure for men to deal with their own control and

violence issues, getting out of DV often means a separation from that partner which was true in Jayna's case. Regarding DV victims in the workplace, Jayna states that, "[p]eople aren't addressing it, there are workers in this office who live in DV in the worst way on a regular basis . . . but I don't know how you do it—I don't know how we can change people's thinking other than maybe by advocating all the time and advising anyone to call if you think someone is hurt, and if children are hurting." Jayna identifies responding to DV victims' needs as a manifestation of resilience.

DV victims show resilience by being active in their own situations: involving the law, going to transition houses, getting support from wherever they are able, and coming to understand and believe that violence is always wrong. One can also show resilience by viewing DV, not from the perspective of unrelated and unpredictable outbursts, but of distinct and definite cycles, and realizing those cycles in one's own situation. Resilience is seeing that abusers need to be accountable for their own behaviours, and that DV is wrong and works against achieving the personal fulfillment of both the perpetrator and victim. Much of this education, Jayna knows, takes place in transition houses, and also, ". . . you learn the skills on how to be safe and prepare a safety plan, how to keep a circle of friends around because when in DV, you lose your friends sometimes because they don't understand why you stay with someone who's hurting you. And you can lose your family's support, too." Keeping up familial and friendship ties shows the resilience of DV victims.

Jayna's last point about manifestations of resilience is: "I see that getting up the next day, getting your kids off to school, going to work, and doing the normal functioning things that you have to do is being resilient. It is also being able to communicate what's going on to your children at whatever level and age they are, and reassuring them that they're OK, Mommy's OK,

we're going to be OK. And that we've moved because, we don't have a choice right now, but we still have to go to school, we still have to do what we need to, and try to keep things as normal as possible. This is what you do after DV—getting on with living and always seeking new ways of putting life back together,” and these according to each individual's discernments. Jayna also anticipated her children's anxieties and fearfulness, and put them in counseling as soon as she could to help them deal with resulting trauma. The children needed to know why the kindness of their father seemed to disappear whenever there were drugs and alcohol around. She said that it took about 4 or 5 times of being thrown out of the house with the children before, “I finally got it, and knew that I wasn't going back because I kept falling into that trap of believing ‘it won't happen again, I didn't mean it, I love you.’ That was just alcohol talking, and I got to recognize that.” These realizations and recognitions are all a part of resilience because they have a tendency to spur the victim into decisive and lasting action.

Interrelationships: Resilience, culture, spirituality & identity

Jayna speaks of the impacts of European contact, such as the residential school system and the imposition of Christian religions that attempted to eradicate the Native spiritual traditions in her area, and in fact, all areas. She knows that the Elders teach that everything, even peace, has spirit that human beings can call on when they are in personal need. She says that, “The spirits of forgiveness and peace are alive, and if we don't acknowledge and use them, they go away. The Roman Catholic church talks about reconciliation and you only have to do that on certain occasions, but as our ancestors taught us over the generations, the spirit of forgiveness is always there, so we offer tobacco, even on a daily basis. Learning a lot of the importance of our traditions, the way things were done and still should be done means a lot, and should involve everyone.”

The historical place of women in the family unit is something that Jayna discusses. “I think historically our people went through all this, and that a lot of women endured a lot of pain and beatings. This means there are many adults now that are victims that grew up in violent homes, and their parents before them, and so on. They all still stay married or in those relationships.” Jayna’s mother, however, was never violated, and her husband, much older than she was, was very kind and treated her well; he died when Jayna was 5 years old. This harmony between her parents meant that her mother never understood her daughter’s gravitations towards abusive men and tolerance for violent behavior in her long-term relationship; her mother’s capacity for help and empathy in Jayna’s DV situation was limited.

Jayna discusses the internalized racism in the community, and was able to see it because she was around 30 years old when she moved to the reserve. Her observation is that, “I didn’t understand that people were so oppressed that they couldn’t see internalized oppression on a daily basis. Whether it was monetary or personal success, love from someone, dating and loving each other—I’ve watched people in the community destroy that. It’s internalized oppression; it’s what happens when people are forced not to succeed and when choices are taken away from them by being so powerfully oppressed. When you’ve beaten somebody down, they can’t get up. On the reserve, when your family is on welfare, especially if you’re a single woman, you don’t get any help and you’re looked down on.” Most women, too, are uneducated and suffer from poverty and are subject to the patriarchy of the Band. A social division results between those who have more and those who need more. An intangible but very real separation creeps into the communal thinking that creates aversion, contempt, intolerance and fear of those who are least able to deal with these negative attitudes about themselves. Consequently, a community that is truly inclusive, nurturing and empathetic becomes impossible unless this mentality is replaced by

something more positive and compassionate. Many women come to believe they deserve or are “meant to” be in the marginal position they find themselves, Jayna observes.

Jayna’s community is small, and because marital assault is so common, “it’s really hard for women to realize that being hit is wrong, and that it’s against the law. Even the constable in the community is doing the same thing to his family. That all started when the government decided to take control, the culture of the people was changed, and everyone was affected—even those who knew DV is not right, but it’s taking some a long time to live this out and find better ways of dealing with problems at home.” The issue of identity as Aboriginal women is a huge one, she believes, and involves respectful discourse about life experiences, the extent and outcomes of intrusiveness by governments in everyday life, and how these have culminated in what is in the population today: disunity, lack of harmony and “plenty of DV”. The question of identity is directly related to the spiritual and cultural discontinuity in all First Nations, and in every person of Native heritage. Because of the collective experiences arising from the *Indian Act*, Aboriginal identity is deeply integrated into the internalization of colonial subjugation. The people still suffer from being separated from the land and sacred sites, traditional spirituality—“our families, tribes and our resilience have suffered. We are all affected, although the most impact is probably to women,” Jayna explains. Women have been dislocated and alienated from their ancestral birthrights to the land and the community by law and policy, she believes, and the problems that result are “immense and multifaceted and must be addressed if we are ever to rise up again as strong nations.” She believes that the association of identity to positive and uplifted positions of the community’s women has to be re-established so the whole Nation can begin to function in a healthy way that reflects the true but hidden resilience and beauty of the people.

Where resilience comes from

To Jayna, working in the social services area of the Mukkwuh First Nation, resilience in the workplace is fostered by employees discussing the spirituality of life and its meanings. Such discourse keeps staff strengthened in their work with clients, all of whom have experienced tragedy and trauma. Resilience, Jayna says, comes from the caring and love people have for one another, and that these traits come from the Creator; this is why it is so important for individuals to establish and maintain relationships with Creation and the Creator. “I think we all have resilience but that you need support to nurture it all the time,” she states. As far as specifically women in DV, Jayna understands their needing a lot of support—for not just one, two or three months, but for many years to get over it and recover, and achieve balance as a human being. She observes that, at any second “. . . you can go back to that person, because if they say the right thing, and your heart is soft, you know you can be right back there. It takes a lot of work to get out of that situation and you need a lot of support to keep doing what you know is right for you.”

Jayna is thankful for having resilience and for those in her life who help nurture and support that resilience. She is clear that it was not only her efforts that helped her find her place in life but that other resilient people contributed to her inner strength. She states that no one can change any other person, but that with knowing a person, others can help to open her eyes about the issues of violence in her home life and these may be all types of violence, not just physical. People are “just afraid to change because they are afraid of the unknowns such as not having a place to live”, she says. In turn, she seeks to offer her strength to others to help them, just as she was helped when times were hard and life very difficult. Many women are forgotten and, in fact, blamed by Elders, family and other community members when they are in DV situations; they need special prayers and help because while many women remain in DV homes, they do not

choose to be assaulted and violated. Those with resilience have a role in helping such women deal with this serious and devastating issue in their lives.

Jayna believes that resilience is a part of each individual being. Sometimes resilience may emerge with life circumstances such as from the recognition of being a victim and no longer wanting to remain a victim. “To see DV as the way it must have been meant to unfold for me”, Jayna says, insults the victim because of the implication from this that women deserve what happens to them and that DV is unavoidable in their lives. Such thinking can also lead to the view of God/ Creator as a being who predestines suffering for certain women. She also notes that, often, the legacy of oppression and subjugation that Aboriginal people carry from residential schools is carried on down generationally, and results in non-nurturing and “distant” mothers. Jayna observes that, “When a mother is not nurturing, the kids are always looking for people to nurture them, to hug them and hold them and love them. And that’s where I think I found myself in a situation—I equated personal touch with love, hugs with love, sex with love, and they really don’t go together sometimes.” She traces the “distant mothering” aspects in her own family: “My mother grew up with no mother, because her mother died at when she was 4. Then, she went to residential school from ages 6 to 16 and no one ever hugged her or loved her; no one ever taught her how to be a mother. But, she’s a great grandmother, she’s been the best grandmother in the world because she is able to love and hug and nurture her grandchildren where she couldn’t with me and my sister.” She believes that Aboriginal women have to deal with these types of legacy spin-offs, and that the process of doing this fosters a person’s natural resilience. It may take certain traumas to realize that each person has to take care of the self—mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally—because this is where and how resilience flourishes.

Resilience, spiritual health & healing

The health centre in Jayna's community addresses more than the physical component of health. However, she feels that its public education component must further promote the honouring and respecting of women and children. As the largest group of DV victims, they suffer from the impact of physical, emotional and mental trauma. She explains that violence breaks down the spirit and when the spirit is broken, the concept of even wanting to be healed becomes very difficult to fathom. Those whose spirit is broken into a million pieces makes them feel extremely unworthy of anything, even for change that eliminates violence or the fear of violence in everyday life. Everything inside that makes up a person is also broken. Shelter staff and others working with DV victims have to help each individual woman rebuild her spirit and Jayna experienced this when she went to the shelter. It is very difficult to start the healing for mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being because it has to begin with getting the spirit back into a state where individuals feel well and worthy about themselves. This takes a lot of time and effort and does not come easily, Jayna says.

Healing the spirit that has been brainwashed, Jayna observes, ". . . takes a lot of years of de-programming that person's thinking. It is very hard to be de-programmed from the view of deserving to be violated." For herself, she was in a traumatic relationship for 5 years, but this is very brief compared to the many clients who have been traumatized for decades, "We're talking about a whole life, a lifetime, of abuse." While she knows the journey to wellness is lengthy and full of contradictions and confusion, support, empathy and caring go a long way to enhance the seeds of resilience that are hidden to some degree in all DV victims.

To Jayna, spiritual health means not being afraid, and able to communicate her wants, needs and desires without any fear at all. Wellness and spiritual strength means coming to realize

the big and little things that each woman can do to help herself and her family. It is overcoming crippling fears and debilitating helplessness. “Being well to me means that I am physically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally well – as a victim of DV and living in trauma, I was not well in any of those areas at all,” Jayna reflects. Her sense of power and control over her life was furthered by considering, “If I helped to make DV happen to me, then along the same lines, I can do something to help make it not happen to me. Maybe all I can do is simply not be there to receive it anymore.” Jayna, as a Christian, remembers the Biblical tenet about loving our neighbours and that, as a part of us, when they suffer, we suffer. Spiritual resourcefulness helps translate that pain into concrete activity that extends to help relieve the suffering of those who are still DV victims.

4.2.2.2 Lucy of Niipbin First Nation

Profile

Lucy is married, but had been separated from her abusive husband for several years at the time of the interview. She has 3 of her 4 children living with her; one in adolescence passed away in an automobile accident. Lucy has an undergraduate degree in social work and is hoping to find time to finish the Master’s level which she started at the time she left her husband. She is very much involved in the cultural activities of her First Nation and is employed by the band’s administration in the area of education. She enjoys working with youth in career enhancement, encouraging students to continue on in school, and making cultural activities come alive for them. Her spiritual beliefs are very strong, and she feels well-connected to the spirit world and the universe. She expresses a desire to enroll in more formal studies about the religions and spirituality of other societies in the world.

Meanings & manifestations of resilience

For Lucy, resilience is seen in DV victims when they attend treatment centre programs and access self-help in any way, even if it is by simply reading a book on identity or self-evaluation, as she did. Specifically, she mentions the *Adventures of a Lifetime Program* which is therapy that helps trauma victims, including DV survivors, understand themselves and presents tools for re-framing the mind and body in a way that makes sense to the individual in her own particular circumstance. As well, she sees resilience as deliberate, active and ongoing involvement in making healthy choices in one's life. Those who work towards healthy lifestyles, such as eating according to good nutritional principles and getting adequate exercise are demonstrating resilience, because resilience thrives in strong structures such as a healthy physical body. It means going to bed on time, eliminating violent TV programs and any negative energy in the household, instilling love and purpose in every-day life, and re-creating meaning that fosters wholesomeness in everyone living in the household.

For those specifically living in DV, Lucy sees resilience as realizing the need for changing one's lifestyle so that violence of any kind is no longer accommodated, and creatively re-structuring the family into a healthy one, first from within the person who wishes to make the change. Then, "it has a snowball effect," she says, "for example, in my family, nobody wanted to admit that they had problems or that it was dysfunctional to stay up all hours of the night drinking and then go to bed, or go out binge drinking for 3 or 4 days. They were trying to hide it, but in my late 20s, I went to a treatment centre, and everyone was saying, 'Why are you going for treatment? You don't need treatment,' because I wasn't drinking at the time. But I went to get more help for myself anyway because I really felt I needed it, and to start creating healthful generations. After awhile, members of my family started going for treatment because they really did know that they needed to work on themselves." This, she says is an example of resilient

behavior—seeing what works for others, evaluating it and then participating if it is seen as positive to the self. In DV, victims first have to recognize the need for changes they alone can make because, whether they want to admit it or not, they make up a phase in the cycle of violence if in no other way, than simply by being there. Lucy says that she had gone from “one unhealthy relationship to another” but that eventually, she began to wonder why, even while constantly working to make herself better, unhealthy relationships were all that seemed to come her way. “Then I would analyze my own relationships and try to create positive ones, but I had to leave because I almost died when I was strangled by my boyfriend and I didn’t want my daughter to witness this and all the other violent things that happened to me.” In leaving abusive relationships, Lucy knows that someone else will probably replace her, as in a “musical chairs” scenario—the perpetrator will find someone else over whom he will establish and maintain power and control: “but at least I won’t be that person anymore”, she says.

Lucy says that another way she showed resilience was by sticking up for herself even though asserting her agency challenged her spouse’s authority and control over her; it therefore did not work in her immediate favour. She became aware, however, that her knowledge of the dynamics of her resistance to her spouse’s control was being cemented in her as *truth* about their relationship and that she could no longer think of it as a loving and good relationship with just a few flaws. Other resilient behaviours that Lucy discusses were to “show values in my home, lead a healthy lifestyle, not let my children see the violence and alcohol in our lives, create a healthy environment as much as I could for the children by taking them on outings, showing them the outside world and guiding them through life the best I could. I work at bringing out their strengths and their own virtues, creating value in everything that is meaningful for them. Also, I look towards the future and do as much goal-setting as I can.” These are the thoughts and actions

that Lucy identifies as resilience that comes from within her, and that visualizing the next generations as becoming stronger and more culturally and spiritually strengthened is one way that resilience is fostered in her as a mother and community member.

Interrelationships: Resilience, culture, spirituality & identity

Lucy strongly values the cultural activities of her Nation and participates as much as she can; she describes these values “as way of giving us an identity and way-of-life, and important to keep us alive and healthy.” She sees potlatching, one of her Nation’s main traditional social occasions, as vital to self-expression and spiritual growth. The songs, dances, feasts and gift-giving are a way of celebrating the return of spirits to their home, the land of the people; Lucy feels it is one significant way of remaining connected to the spirit world, to spiritual health and healing. She values her employment because it nurtures her resilience and imparts added spiritual growth as she teaches youth in the community about traditional ways-of-life and the importance of being educated wholistically. She derives personal encouragement from being a strong role model for her children and students, and speaks about the importance of role modeling since the social fabric of her Nation has deteriorated from the time of European contact, mainly from the impacts of residential schooling. Students, who later became parents, were not exposed to cultural ways of parenting and had had only had the nuns, priests and other clergy to emulate when the time came to bring up their own children. Cultural stress and chaos resulted, and Lucy sees these as one of the causes of DV in her own life, and in her community. She sees many women, particularly those in DV situations as she was, have low self-esteem and self-concepts that are mainly negative and these she notes are strongly associated with and could originate from being exposed to constant trauma.

Suffering from culture shock when she moved into the larger urban centre for further education caused Lucy to become more of a victim, and susceptible to DV. “It made it easier to be the victim. Looking at my own value system and seeing the parties and the drunkenness and dysfunction that had been going on in my life, it all stems from childhood and those were the stepping stones to where I was going.” Because her mother had talked, in an idealized way, about the importance of family and a permanent loving relationship with a husband, Lucy married early. However, she was separated a year later because of violent assaults against her. “I was trying to work at having this great family with a person who turned out to be not all that loving and kind. I never found it... it seems like my whole life was searching for this miracle to transform my life to make it happy and fulfilling. Like Cinderella from the white culture. This whole thinking made me such a victim and it was confusing to figure it all out.” Her own cultural teachings, Lucy says, do not look to magical thinking to find the meanings of life and how to establish stable home relationships. She recalls that, “It took many counseling sessions to tame my life down to see past that, and DV was definitely challenging my spirit from growing and being free, and my sense of myself as a strong and able Native woman.”

Where resilience comes from

Lucy believes that resilience comes from within the mind, from spiritual sources and this is why a relationship with the spirit world and the Creator are vitally important. A person’s mind is always seeking ways to improve life for self, family and those she/he loves. This is closely related to being curious about life itself – and one’s values, likes, dislikes, personal and professional goals and long-term visions. In her own life, “My father encouraged me to follow my dreams, and so did my mother. With my mother, she’d say ‘Don’t drink like I do, there’s a better way and you’re young and can work on yourself.’ It was kind of contradictory with her.”

Resilience to overcome and work towards independence were engrained in Lucy's earlier life teachings from both her parents, even though she barely passed high-school because of alcoholism in her own teenage years. From her childhood and in the subsequent years growing up, "It was my father telling me that I could do whatever I wanted and to do something with myself, and then my mother telling me that I was able to be independent, and that I should work towards independence. These became my goals." Later, in college, Lucy felt the same teachings and principles were guiding her, even though she was still plagued by alcoholism and achieved only passing grades. She kept remembering what her mother had told her, "Don't be stuck without a way of supporting yourself, you should always be able to support yourself." In the years she was living in DV, she was sufficiently goal-oriented to know that she did not need anybody else to help her meet her daily livelihood needs, and could continue to struggle on until she finished her undergraduate degree. This increased the resilience she already knew she had.

Resilience, spiritual health and healing

Lucy sees the confusion she felt regarding DV as resulting from false and unrealistic expectations about the nature of marital relationships, and also her unquestioning view and assumption that only she had to do all the work of making the relationship function. She perceived this to be her role as a woman, and was sure that if she fulfilled it adequately, she would have been living the home life she envisioned, rather than in DV where she found herself. As she began to evaluate her life, she saw the difficulties in having positive pride in her Native identity as a woman when all she was ever exposed to was derogatory stereotypes that had become normalized in both the broader society and in her community. As well, dealing with racism when she did not understand that "racism is a cornerstone everywhere in the country" took its toll on her self-esteem, feelings of self-worth and her strong need for independence and

personal freedom. Healing and spiritual health only began when she understood, many years later, that she was also internalizing trauma from being exposed to racial discrimination and not knowing how to deal with it.

Lucy talks about the stress of having to deculturalize the life she was used to when she moved to a larger city to pursue post-secondary education, and how her Aboriginal identity, as a very young woman, suffered. She was forced, simply by living in non-Native society, to integrate into and identify with the different dominant culture; along with this came the general sense that she was subtly devaluing and losing her own heritage. It was a matter of survival to have to do this, she said, and only in-depth counseling eventually helped her recognize the role that her alcohol abuse was playing in the long-term unresolved grief, social disruption and loss she was feeling for her own community's ways and traditions that she was used to. There are not enough grieving workshops in her community, she feels, for the significant extent of losses that people in her community continue to experience—these include losses from suicide and accidents, loss of families and loved spouses because of DV, outside adoptions of children, and misplaced and erroneous conceptions about love, marriage and building families. The emotional disorder brought about by not having the capability or means to address constructively these types of trauma, she believes, results in mental instability and impaired identity development. Lucy's belief is that resilience and all dormant positive traits that lie beneath the less-than-ideal surface of everyday life in many Aboriginal individuals can be helped along, initiated and nurtured by making appropriate changes at the community level. These changes, she cautions, can often be unsettling and uncomfortable even when they work towards life's betterment because change counters our need for predictability and comprises a departure from the familiar

into the unknown. Lucy says that to comfort herself as she made life changes, she had read in one of her courses that change is inevitable anyway, so “just join in and make it work for you.”

4.2.2.3 Martha of Akimaak First Nation

Profile

Martha is the single parent of one young man, and the grandmother of his two children; she is employed within the social services area of the Akimmaak First Nation administration. She did not complete high-school but after leaving an abusive relationship in the nearby large urban centre, graduated with a certificate in counseling for Aboriginal people. Although only one of her parents is Native, Martha is a registered Indian and finds it important that her son and grandchildren know both areas of their heritage. A devoted Christian, she tends not to participate in her Nation’s traditional activities, except when she takes clients from her department to the community’s traditional events. She notes, however, that the ways of thinking between Native and non-Native people are very different, and that she much prefers interacting in her job with Native agencies. Specifically, she observes that “in our First Nation community, people are more welcoming and more family-oriented whereas out there—some people are not very friendly, or they’re very stand-offish or just very business-like.” When she left her abusive partner fifteen years previously, she came back to her home reserve where she presently resides.

Meanings & manifestations of resilience

To Martha, resilience and success are closely tied, and “success is trying something, even though you may fail; it’s trying to do something and making the effort.” Being healthy and having wellness are parts of resilience and means finding out how to be happy and staying away from abusive and violent physical environments. This helps one “just be yourself, and comfortable with who you are, and able to enjoy life where you’re at. You’re not in a DV

situation, nor abusing alcohol or drugs.” Resilience is getting through DV and seeking help, as Martha did when she called one of her sisters who told her that there was a shelter in their home community. Instead of leaving her apartment in the city and moving somewhere across the country, Martha considered her options in terms of safety, and decided on her reserve’s shelter. Accessing the counselors and participating in their sessions, along with their support and encouragement, nurtured Martha’s own resilience. She is thankful that the shelter was there “because I had nowhere to go even though I had family in the community, but it’s pretty hard to just move in with another family so they gave me that time to stay there and really helped me a lot.”

Martha believes that if someone is showing resilience in life, it means living a healthy lifestyle, showing positive traits in their own life, such as being drug-, alcohol-, smoke-, violence- and abuse-free. They would leave DV and if they fail in anything, they get up and try again. They would be living a positive lifestyle even though there’s no perfect person, but they are trying to live that positive lifestyle for themselves. DV victims have to consider their lives, take programs and get educated about how destructive DV is in their lives in order to start to see that they don’t have to live like that, that they don’t deserve to be violated. They have to change what they expect and their behaviours to correspond to what they do expect. This is what I see for those that got out of that situation and I wish that somewhere we learned this other than in the shelters.

Martha views the recognition of how DV can end, such as in death, as resilience; other outcomes she identified are disturbed children, unsettled and disconnected mothers and dysfunctional communities.

Interrelationships: Resilience, culture, spirituality & identity

Martha's spiritual beliefs are very important to her sense of being connected to the Christian church she attends. She adheres to biblical inerrancy and feels that the church is an appropriate and non-stigmatizing place for spiritual growth and empowerment. Empathy and support from other church adherents is another way that Martha identifies as a positive outcome on her life. "I can always call up someone who can give me something to read and think about, and we can talk about it together," she says of DV issues that still crop up. In her life in DV, however, she realized that she no longer could "live like that anymore, I knew that there's a better way of life, that violence is not a normal part to life. So as I look for how to become educated about DV, and signed up for counseling, it became clearer that violence in a relationship is not normal, and not good. It was better for me and my child to leave." Martha notes that many women who are DV victims in the community do not utilize the shelter because they feel they have little choice about what happens to them at home, and that they also feel shame for a situation that had seemed so promising at the beginning. She says that, "Living in a small community, everyone knows what goes on pretty well in every household." She sees this inhibition and sense of powerlessness as constricting to spiritual growth and a strong self-identity. Also, she notes that when someone has to leave the home, it is usually the man who is allowed to stay especially if the woman is a non-band member; added to this stress is a severe shortage of housing on-reserve, so many women return to their partners before too long.

Where resilience comes from

Martha stated that, "resilience comes from deep down within myself, from deep down within each person, and as you learn more new things and become more educated and have more awareness, resilience comes out more." She sees other promoting factors of resilience as being

positive relationships with all one's family, friends, peers at work, and with those in the community; good communication skills to discuss needs and concerns; a healthy self-esteem; and, strong problem-solving abilities. She mentioned an incident when she was around 10 years old that spoke to her resilience: she had broken her leg and because of problems with its healing, was in a wheelchair and had to re-learn walking. She made up her mind that she was going to walk again, and knew she had the determination to do so. She knew that she was "going to get out of this chair – and regardless of what happens, I'm going to walk." While Martha is not sure if she learned resilience, she knows that she had a good example from her father who "could bounce back, he was determined; he didn't let failure get him down, so maybe I learned that from him. I'm not too sure where it came from – or, maybe it was in me all the time." She concludes that as she started to follow her religious beliefs, resilience increased within her, and fostered the determination she needs to follow the rules of healthy living.

Resilience, spiritual health & healing

Martha notes that as humans are also of the spirit, the calming of the entire being is needed for an individual to be at peace with self and others. Some ways of accomplishing this, she states, is by keeping a distance from those who create anxiety, and withdrawing from everyone who is violent, abusive and causes trauma. Resilience involves the ability to address DV in a way that is honourable in the church, and that reflects some type of realistic assessment of the entire situation. This type of thinking brings out resilience factors which work towards good spiritual health and healing. Not all these decisions and perspectives can be made by oneself, and it is not a fault or weakness to get help from those who are positioned and knowledgeable about the ordeals of DV, and other devastations experienced in life. Living in a spiritually-positive environment means regularly attending church services and constantly

guarding against the influences of such feelings as vengeance against those who are violent and cause harm.

Martha strongly believes that the Elders should be involved in the work towards spiritual health, and in healing. “We have a lot of good Elders in our community who lead a good life and they have a lot to share and teach the young people and are well-respected,” she said. Many Elders, she observes, have tolerated DV in their lives, but did not have the support that she had through the shelter because shelters were built fairly recently on reserves. “The police, too, did not become involved because back then, the idea was that whatever went on between a man and his wife was their business—the message heard was, ‘Listen to your husband’. At least now the women and children have somewhere to go and back then they had nowhere to go. The police would just tell them, ‘Well, just listen to your husband’ and I’ve heard women tell stories of Elders who would simply caution women ‘not to make their husbands angry’ and all this does is blame the victims,” she said. Healing will not happen if victims are being blamed, she believes. Healing through the church involves teaching children the right values and instruction about being accountable for their actions, and not blaming anyone else for what they do. The shared Christian beliefs of genuine caring and watching out for each other, and the sense of everyone working towards the same biblical goals is something that Martha values as personal spiritual growth.

4.3 Discussion

All participants in this research, both Executive Directors of women's shelters and community participants, articulated various but closely-related conceptualizations of resilience. Richly-textured narrations of their first-hand observations and experiences revealed representations of resilience that were strongly influenced by Aboriginal cultural traditions of which spirituality, well-being and healing were integral. I feel that the courage of the community participants in particular, since they were speaking introspectively of deeply distressing times in their lives, was expressed in their recollections of the chain of events that brought voice to their interpretations of resilience. Their words gave them truth to release the constrictions that can often harbour defeating self-perceptions such as self-blame, guilt and a sense of inadequacy and unworthiness—all of which are inroads that can lead to DV situations. Their words, emerging from internal truth, have the opportunity to flourish in other locations for they were articulating not other people's thoughts or using outside thought processes, but uniquely their own; many of their conclusions were influenced by distant memories of which they were only vaguely conscious and unable at the time to bring to surface. But they nonetheless knew these ancient callings and recognized them at specific and relevant times in their experiences as they extricated themselves from DV situations.

4.3.1 Resilience

All but one whom I interviewed either directly stated or strongly inferred that resilience is culturally-based within the spiritual grounding of a Nation's traditions. Martha, a community participant with strong Christian beliefs, tends to avoid her Nation's cultural activities. While she and her son and grandchildren live on her mother's traditional territories, Martha specifically mentioned that she ensures her own progeny is familiar with the ways and culture of her non-

Native father whom she greatly respects. This detail infers that Martha accepts only a clear choice for her own expression of spirituality (*i.e.*, Christian or traditional Native, but not elements of both). This may be Western dualism at work in that binary oppositions can limit conceptualization beyond the prescribed restrictive boundaries of those binaries. Dichotomies exist between Western and Aboriginal culture far beyond spirituality and religion, but these were not within the parameters of my research. Another participant, however, who also identified as a devout Christian stated that she felt resilience was fostered by a strong relationship with the spirit world—a non-material realm where Aboriginal cosmology and biblical principle are integrated, a place where the Creator of Indigenous belief and God of Christianity is synonymous. I conclude, from my research and own beliefs, that Christianity in itself does not prohibit the belief that Native spirituality sources and grounds resilience and truth—it is the individual interpretation and application of religion by each Christian.

Both CPs and EDs are examples of those with powerful capacities for resilience. Some survived DV and are leading healthy lives and some also work tirelessly at fostering the resilience of others. My research is a snapshot, a tiny glimpse into the resilience of all those, who as LaFrance, Bodor and Bastien (2008) describe “. . . Indigenous people have for millennia had a very different cosmology and epistemology that, in spite of a recent history of colonization and oppression, continues to permeate their total being” (p. 290). Many communities live in poverty where women experience discrimination based on sex, social exclusion and political exploitation. They also continually endure the manifestations of dominant society’s racism which, as Stoler (1997) observes, “. . . is internal to the biopolitical state, woven into the web of the social body, threaded through its fabric” (p. 59). In spite of these adversities, most Aboriginal communities and individuals persistently endeavour to revive traditional cultural activities for

they understand the well-being and psychosocial health resulting from the old ways of their Nations. Others find themselves in no position because of impoverishment and lack of resources and capacity but to recognize and give them places of honour in historical and contemporary representations.

All Indigenous cultural traditions and activities (*eg.*, language, tribal and clan systems, music, festivals, feasts, celebrations and spiritual rituals) are associated with well-being and the journeys leading to harmonious and balanced lives. Many shared values and belief systems among the Nations are identified by HeavyRunner and Sebastian Morris (1997) as “spirituality, childrearing/ extended family, veneration of age/wisdom/tradition, respect for nature, generosity and sharing, cooperation/group harmony, autonomy/ respect for others, composure/patience, relativity of time and non-verbal communication” (¶3). The first of these, spirituality, is inextricable from resilience, the cultural strength of the Nations being grounded in traditional expression which makes up collective resilience. In my study, Nancey, an ED, talked about the teachings on spirituality in her shelter’s programming. All are based on the “Seven Sacred Laws” which are important traditions that honour spirituality in everyday life, as in pre-contact times. These teachings work to strengthen clients’ awareness of the importance of having a connection to the land and nature in a way that acknowledges and esteems both themselves and the Creator. They help clients change their ways and styles of thinking so they can grasp newer ways of looking at the world and re-interpret the chronology of events that eventually brought them to the shelter. Older self-defeating behavior patterns are examined in the context of Native spirituality with the goal of learning more constructive behaviours that build self-esteem and self-confidence. All the CPs I interviewed talked about the powerful role that cognitive processing played in leading them into DV situations, and how they eventually recognized the need to make

changes to those processes in order to survive DV, leave home, and stay away from future DV situations. They identified the set of thinking and behavior change as resilience and also as an enhancement of their resilience; they articulated in different ways that resilience is not just reactive, it is proactive and guards for the future.

Children, among the CPs of my study, were vitally important; wanting much improved lives for their children was the main reason for finally leaving violent spouses. In her own situation, Jayna helped prepare her children by taking them to counselling and openly communicating with them about their father's trauma-inducing behavior when he was drinking, which was contradictory to his kindness and caring attitude at other times. She spoke of talking to them in ways appropriate to their ages, and working to instil hope in their lives, in spite of the DV they had been witnessing. From a broader community perspective, she stated that because many children face immense obstacles in the child welfare system, "[t]here is talk in our community about children and that they need to know about resilience because it will help them survive in all those homes." Martha left her partner because she realized that she and her child "deserved something better" than a violent home life. She believes that children should have a safe place to develop and thrive, and that Elders teaching resilience to youth is extremely important. Lucy emphasized the importance of being a role model to youth, and stated that she derived self-esteem from reaching out to guide youth in their educational endeavours. She is cognizant of the harm DV causes children; it was recognizing some of these effects in her own children that triggered the major lifestyle change of leaving her partner. All EDs discussed how important children were to their clients and how they sought better lives for them, a representation of the future generations. While clients tolerated assault on their own bodies, many could not tolerate their own children being violated. The importance of children in the

lives of the women, DV survivors, EDs and shelter clients, cannot be underestimated; this sense of responsibility for upcoming generations is a continuation of the old ways in which women were responsible for the early socialization of children.

Dion Stout and Kipling (2003) clearly state the historic relationship between cultural grounding that began at birth, and resilience: “Culture and resilience intersect and help shape traditions, beliefs and human relationships. Traditional Aboriginal societies have placed great emphasis on fostering resilience for children and youth . . . ” (p. v). One way that some Nations promoted personal and cultural resilience in children was in naming traditions; names communicated an affirmation about the social structure of the tribe, parents and extended family (Angell, 2000). Names in all Indigenous societies were important in individual identity formation, particularly within the parameters of an egalitarian interdependent collective. Families were instrumental in contributing to the formation of each child’s self-concept; traditional names were often the combination of an animal or other wildlife and a characteristic, such as strength, exemplary oratory or sharp hunting skills, that parents cultivated within that child (Vickers, 1983). These empowering expectations, however, were nurtured and supported not only by parents, but also by the whole society; community members worked at helping children and youth live up to their names. A strong and definite self-concept is inclusive of such identity formation, the importance of which Angell (2000) iterates:

According to Cooley, self-concept is a reflection of the responses we receive from significant others beginning with our families. In a process referred to as the "looking-glass self", the formation of our self-concept is tied to how we imagine we are perceived by others and how we in turn come to understand their assessment of us. It is an active and creative transaction wherein we selectively engage and are engaged by others in

bolstering and enhancing our development of an independent self (Felson, 1981; Franks & Gecas, 1992). (section on *Culture as Resilience*)

This type of naming is not in use today because “. . . an oppressive colonial experience has often cut off Aboriginal parents from such cultural moorings” (Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003, p. v). The naming example is only one of many specific cultural traditions among the First Nations that had always nurtured the resilience of children, from birth to adulthood. Although the words “protective factors” were never used by my research interviewees, most nevertheless saw the old ways and particularly, the principles of the old ways, in this light, and expressed a desire to return to them, albeit in contemporary settings. There is general recognition that Aboriginal cultures integrated activities and traditions that ensured their survival as a people, and the knowledge to live in spiritual harmony and well-being within their environments.

4.3.2 Men in my interviews

While I did not ask participants about perpetrators, they mentioned men in several key contexts. Nancey spoke about the lack of financial and human resources for rehabilitating abusive men and encouraging lasting change that leads to non-violent behavior. Regarding the criminal justice system which is often the only established response to perpetrators, she said that, “They have to educate that man about his behaviour and that he’s got to change it to be more kind and caring toward his family.” Many questions remain as to what is appropriate for Aboriginal justice models for addressing DV, culturally and from a gender perspective. The EDs, all working towards the common goal of ending violence against women, recognize the gendered nature of DV even though their role in crisis shelters is dealing with the after-effects, rather than long-term preventions that address the causes, of DV. They expressed thinking that parallels Cameron’s observation (2006) that “current western RJ [restorative justice] and Aboriginal

justice models are male-centred and culturally inappropriate. Historically, Aboriginal women had a substantial cultural role in laws, legal orders and justice practices; western RJ models such as judicially convened sentencing circles ignore this, despite their claiming to be ‘traditional’” (p.54). Because First Nations’ traditions have always varied considerably across the country, the interpretation of “traditional” is not homogenous, nor is their contextualized implementation; these, though, would establish and uphold a respectful stature of Aboriginal women in the community. All EDs articulated the need for appropriate cultural expression in restoring men to their own positions of respect, honour and esteem, but that that infrastructure and the types of programming and services to help generate this are simply not available. None of the EDs visualized restorative paths that excluded culture and Aboriginal identity as a primary and underpinning aspect.

The theme of working with perpetrators was common among those I interviewed. Rosa said that, “DV will keep escalating unless the man is willing to change . . . *Health and Wellness* here has sent some of these men to treatment, but a lot just leave because they’re so insecure and have their own issues . . . they accuse counselors and so it isn’t very helpful; he doesn’t want to see that it’s not her [his spouse’s], but that it’s his issues, and that it’s usually guilt and other enabling behaviours on his part that’s causing all his insecurity. We need to know how to deal more effectively with the violator.” Rosa was, in fact, talking about the limited effectiveness of reactive therapy, when what is clearly needed is proactive and more ambitious work with perpetrators. Katz (2006), although not speaking specifically about Aboriginal populations, sees the need for a

far-reaching cultural revolution . . . about changing the sexual norms in male culture, from the elementary school playground to the common room in retirement

communities—and every locker room, pool hall, and boardroom in between . . . we need to dream big and act boldly. . . we will need the help of a lot more men—at all levels of power and influence. . . consider that in spite of the misogyny and sexist brutality all around us, millions of non-violent men today fail to see gender violence as their issue. ‘I’m a good guy,’ they will say. ‘This isn’t my problem.’” (p. 8)

Another ED spoke about the common view of shelters being “for women’s home problems” and that, because of this, DV continues to be relegated into a “melting pot of all kinds of women’s issues”. This categorization is not conducive for furthering the contributions of non-violent men who can work in partnership with shelter EDs and others in violence prevention. Nancey observed that until men recognize and adapt to ways of thinking that lead them to take responsibility for their excessive use of power and violent tantrums, DV is given opportunity to thrive. Such teachings need not be negative, but inspire hope and create opportunities for discourse on prevailing understandings of what entails masculinity in the dominant society (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Kilmartin & Allison, 2007). Native communities, as a whole, must also receive education regarding the history of how these have percolated into newer Native leadership models and ways-of-thinking, and why they remain so pervasive to this day. Instructing this type of history is not an easy task, and indeed, Stanley (2006) describes a challenge in history education: “to provide all of us with a sense of how the spaces we inhabit have been constructed by people who have gone before” (p. 47).

At a grassroots level, Jayna said that, “Love is very strong and powerful and it keeps you there but it’s also love when you talk to your partner, and you want them to change their behaviour. It’s not them you don’t love, it’s their behaviour and you need that to be changed. It’s all part of communicating and being honest about what is actually going on. If it’s violence, you

have to call it violence. And be honest about it, don't hold secrets. It's very hard to do, it's not easy." Jayna stated that the burden of this type of communication should not fall on individual women, but that this ideology should be common within the community and specifically articulated by leadership, so that when a woman speaks, she is supported by the principles of the wider community. This is one way that a community can support the resilience of women in DV situations.

Lucy spoke about DV contributing to the view that all men are abusive, and that this does not work in favour of men because far from all are abusers. Non-abusive men are needed for furthering anti-violence efforts, such as to educate youth, especially boys, about what constitutes strong and loving male leadership, and as role models. They can take part in counseling sessions that are non-judgmental and avoid self-righteous overtones, and also help women lobby for specific changes and additional resources. Men can take leadership and spearhead the building of women's shelters. For example, Shawn Irving¹⁶ described how the *Wapitiyi Family Healing Lodge* started. In 1989, during one of few unemployed periods in his life, he responded to a job posting from the band administration to conduct a needs assessment for drug and alcohol programs in the community. As he delivered the survey, particularly in the adult outreach area, he spoke with women who talked about abusive spouses, DV, and sexual abuse involving prominent community members. They spoke of having to remain in their homes as there was no other available option for them. For Shawn, making decisions and continuing on with his work became increasingly difficult because of the prospect of possibly losing his job for becoming so close to those being violated. One woman who weighed no more than 100 pounds had a broken nose and black eyes; she was still at home because of her 4 or 5 children, and it was 40 below

¹⁶The names of the individual and shelter are pseudonyms.

outside. This particular situation moved Shawn so much that it forced him to ponder the possibilities and opportunities that could lead to a women's shelter within the community. At the same time, a bureaucrat acquaintance who was also the type to "kind of break the rules" advised him about funding sources, particularly the specifics of strategizing in terms of fiscal year-end (FYE) funding. Arrangements were made to build a foundation of a predetermined size with the intention of accessing last-minute funding to complete the entire building. Several days prior to FYE, Shawn received a call from his acquaintance who advised him of the collapse of a previous building commitment; \$240,000 was thus available if he could meet some very rigid specifications—which he was able to do. On April 1 of that year, the shelter, beyond its foundation, was under construction. In the meantime, Shawn was able to arrange for training for 12 women to administer and manage the shelter. Their training was complete by the time the shelter opened its doors and all 12 were employed. The next step was to establish a Board of Directors that included the nearby First Nations and the town's Friendship Centre. In spite of the Nation's leadership which had continually questioned the need for a shelter, partly because of denial of DV in the community, and the reticence and threat from some strong male community members, the shelter came into existence, and 25 years later, it is still a well-functioning agency on the reserve. In ways such as this, the help and direction of men with clear vision and creative thinking can bring results that will, in the long term, help women and children living in DV.

While women are certainly able and capable of bringing about much-needed change and are also visionary and creative, unfortunately it is still men who are often in the most advantageous positions to exert effort and access power in the form of financial and other resources within the prevailing systemic infrastructures. Men's privileges in most contemporary

societies allow them to liaise and broker power on “men-to-men” bases and can yield very good results with much less effort than it might take women to achieve the same outcomes.

4.3.3 Community participants’ experiences in education

All the community participants in my research viewed education as being a very important aspect of women’s lives, including their own. Of the three, two had undergraduate degrees and both articulated a need to find the time to complete the graduate degrees they had started. One CP, who did not complete high-school in her teen years, earned her diploma as an adult. While none of the women attended residential schools, many in their communities had, and all spoke of the long-term negative impacts this had on themselves and their families.

Several other themes arose from the interviews:

- the importance of enjoying elementary and high-school – the CPs who viewed their public and high-school years as enjoyable or initiating curiosity went on to attend university;
- the realization of educational success as a source of self-esteem and self-confidence;
- the interrelationship between education and women’s self-reliance and independence as a factor in surviving DV;
- the need to perpetuate educational achievement by encouraging one’s children and other youth in the community; and,
- the need for cultural inclusion in education and how this enhances school attendance for Aboriginal children and youth.

The shelter EDs stated that their clients tended to be under-educated in comparison with other Canadian women. My research group was therefore not representative of the “average Aboriginal shelter client” in that two of the three women interviewed already had undergraduate

degrees when they were resident in a women's shelter. Another salient observation herein is that those with a good education are still susceptible to DV in their spousal relationships.

Jayna

As her First Nation's traditional territories include parts of what is now the United States, Jayna attended public school in one of the nearby states. She enjoyed her early schooling and one particular aspect was therapeutic for her as a victim of child sexual abuse: "I was active in school, there was lots of physical activity, being physically active, being in sports, really helped me deal with the emotional pain in my very early life." Further, Jayna found acceptance among her school peers, and stated that "[w]hen I was in school, you had all this positive affirmation of being an Indian." She later observed, however, that such positive attitudes were probably the result of idealized versions of Aboriginal people.

Later in Jayna's life, the ratification in 1985 of Bill C-31 of the *Indian Act* which attempted to remove sex discrimination from registration regulations, facilitated her university education and she began her degree after her son was born. She saw her education as extremely valuable for meeting her strong sense of independence, need for self-reliance and for control over her own life. While she was in the women's shelter, she credits her education to being able to move forward: "I had a job, and I had an education so I wasn't as badly off as some, but most of the women are not educated, don't have enough money and they are really under the patriarchal system." Her statement also confirms her belief that patriarchy is causal of DV, and that education and awareness of the interdynamics between patriarchy and DV are exceedingly helpful in being motivated towards achieving independence. She recognized financial dependence on an abusive partner as playing a major role in on-going DV.

Jayna worked hard at passing on her sense of educational importance to her children. She demonstrated this when she spoke of the necessity of continuing normal daily school functions in the face of DV: “I transported my kids back and forth to school every day.” Rather than let her children stay home during times of extreme familial trauma, she ensured their regular school attendance. Jayna also learned from her education about the need to communicate with her children about DV, and that “[i]f you’d have a domestic dispute on Saturday or Sunday or whatever, on Monday, you get your kids to school, because really school is one of the safest places that kids can be.” She had also educated her children on recognizing violence in relationships, especially in the early stages, because

DV, I don’t think—just starts overnight, it’s every little bit that someone gets away with, they get away with putting you down in front of your friends, they get away with tapping you, punching you on the arm, hitting you, or pulling your hair, holding you against the wall. You know, it’s all wrong. It’s like a disease, I think, that progressively gets worse.

Jayna’s education led her to become cognizant of the destruction of DV and worked at educating her children to avoid relationships that could lead to DV in their own lives.

Regarding residential school education, Jayna noted how extensively harmful it was to students: “. . . we had to stay away from our spiritual part of us . . . and then the state imposing RC or Anglican, or whatever religion it was, it taught us not to find our own spirituality.” She referred to the post-WWII centralization in her area as part of “a Canada-wide rounding up of Native kids, they were done by the residential schools.” She saw the effect in her own life of her mother’s residential schooling and attributes her mother’s lack of nurturing capabilities from being taught “. . . to be a victim— you know, Mom never had any mother or father – she was not treated the best – she had children later, and my mother’s always been a really good mother, but

she's not a real good nurturer." Residential school also taught students to "put up with sexual and other violations and be silent about all of it". For men who violate their spouses, Jayna believes that programs, ". . . have to educate that man about his behaviour and that he's got to change that behaviour." She emphasizes that cultural traditions have to be a part of education so that "the way things were done and still should be done means a lot and should involve everyone."

From the vacuum in her own education, Jayna believes that education should be more than academic learning, and deal with those who are abused sexually, or by DV. It should involve student support:

You have to give students their own place in school life, and you have to get a little circle of people that they trust so that they can go to those people; and then slowly you build up a bigger network of support. If it's a little child you build a network for that person, maybe it includes a nurse or the doctor in the community that they trust, or the teacher or somebody.

At the end of our interview, Jayna stressed to me how vital she saw my own research into DV in Aboriginal communities:

And thank you for doing this work, it's a very interesting subject to do a dissertation on, and to bring this knowledge to people. It's going to be good work, and the next people who come along will know. It's important because sometimes you get forgotten – women that are involved [in DV] get forgotten – they're looked down upon . . .

Lucy

Lucy enjoyed school as a child but because of being a "full-blown alcoholic when I was a teenager," she "really wondered how I graduated because I was doing so poorly in school". She was ". . . almost a drop-out, I think I had mostly C minuses but maybe one B, I barely passed but

somehow managed it, and managed to get right into college right away.” She attributes strong motivation for “that initial goal in my mind that I had to do something with myself” and encouragement and prodding from both her parents that pulled her through to completion. Lucy continues:

Even through college, in my first year, it was like I still had a drinking problem and I went through two impaired driving charges by the time I was in my 20s and I still managed to get myself through school and get good grades just enough to pass.

Lucy struggled on with both college and a traumatic home life; her persistence eventually paid off. She was able to transfer her college credits into a Social Work undergraduate degree program. Her dedication to “the goal in my undergraduate degree as wanting to make a difference in First Nations education” kept her motivated. As she progressed, she

became stronger and I included wanting to make a difference in Special Needs . . . I’ve taught Special Needs, instructed in the Family Counseling Program where all my students were successful at finding jobs. I’ve also coordinated and instructed at the *Indigenous Teachers’ Education Program* through the university and included culture and traditions whenever I could, and helped my students do the same thing.

At the time of our interview, Lucy was several credits short of finishing her graduate degree in Social Work.

Lucy realized that, as a teacher, she is a role model for her students and this has become a strong part of her career. Her teaching keeps her learning, too: “I need to learn more about my culture, so I make my kids [students] keep practicing what they’re learning, I put as much activities from our Nation in what we do, we end up exploring our traditions and ways together.” This parallels her belief that involvement with students must be “bringing traditional culture

alive” because it means “a great deal to pass on our stories, culture and songs, and provide a good safe place where young people can express their feelings.” Educating for internal cultural expression is very important to Lucy; it has been a source of strength and resilience for her.

Lucy credits her education with helping her “work on resolving the trauma that happened to me because of DV . . . I was helped a lot by being in my programs in the university and it kept me focused when things were so bad at home.” Lucy’s educational experiences taught her how to “bring out my strengths, know my feelings, find my values that were only vague and not connected before, and I learned how to look forward to a future I wanted and how to set up goals.” She realized from the beginning of her college years that she needed a boost in her self-esteem, and that as she progressed in her educational goals, she felt increasingly better about herself. She said:

It took a lot of commitment and courage to go from just wanting to go to university to really being in the classroom doing all that reading and work . . . I had to get over being so afraid of failing especially when I started, but then I just kept going and being scared didn’t mean so much anymore.

Lucy speaks of the detrimental effect of residential schooling on the community in terms of the extensive trauma healing programs that are needed: “. . . the residential schools survival training is funded by the *Aboriginal Healing Foundation* and the teacher of that is always busy, it is all geared to adults, mostly for those with parents who went to those schools.” In this statement, she links the problems of the younger generations to their parents’ enrolment in residential schools. She believes that the schools’ effects “still give off bad energy, and very damaging to the souls of everyone around here,” and attributes DV and other social dysfunctions to residential schools as an outcrop of colonialism.

Martha

Martha completed her high-school education as a young adult, after the birth of her son. She did not particularly enjoy public school but appreciated school life more when she saw the need to get her diploma after leaving her abusive home. From the counseling program in which she was enrolled, Martha came to understand the dynamics of DV, and what her place had been when she was living in abuse. She was able to see, in her own life, that DV was destroying her capacity for personal growth and that, in order to pursue well-being in her life, had to leave and support herself and her son. This awareness was reinforced during her stay in the community women's shelter. She observed that "the more education we have, the more awareness and new things we can learn, and we can all stand to learn more new things to make our lives better."

In relation to education on DV, she notes that for "the ones that got out, they got themselves some education and got into programs, and they started to see that they don't have to live being afraid and hurt all the time." For others living in DV, an effective educational strategy is to be "sharing your stories with others and trying to educate them about 'What is violence? What is abuse?' Try to get them at that point in life before it actually happens, before violent situations." Martha briefly spoke of social dysfunction in some community Elders as originating from residential schools: "[t]here are times we have to be careful about what the Elders say to us because their background sometimes includes having been abused themselves as children and young adults." She spoke about the need for healing for all those in the community who went to residential school as a "restoring of harmony that will help all of us become better people, living better lives."

4.3.4 Implications for education

From very early times, Aboriginal people had been skeptical of European-based educational systems because of their own views about the purpose of education. For example, in 1744, the chief of the Iroquois Confederacy, Red Jacket (Seneca), was offered the gift of having six of his sons educated at Williamsburg, a highly-prestigious educational facility in the EuroAmerican society. His response, from Carroll (Ed., 1997) was:

We are convinc'd, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily But you, who are wise, must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will not therefore take it amiss if our Ideas of this kind of Education happened not to be the same as yours We have had some Experience of it Several of our Young People were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, nor kill an Enemy, spoke our Language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors nor Counsellors, they were totally good for nothing We are, however, not the less oblig'd by your kind Offer, who' we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take care of their Education; instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them. (p. 240)

This passage shows that the Chief's educational ideals reflect resilience, specifically in reference to graduates who could not "bear either Cold or Hunger". Their cultural knowledge was also lacking since they "spoke our Language imperfectly", and language is imperative in the formation of self-identity (Corbiere, 2000; Norris, 2006). As well, these graduates were unable to meet their basic livelihood needs from the land. Education, from an historic Native perspective,

was meant to equip individuals with the strategies to live well within one's cultural heritage, and to show respect to those with different conceptions of life (Stairs, 1995). Over the years, this view has not changed as the First Nations continue to advocate for educational offerings that complement, represent and magnify their own traditional values and activities, including language learning; this view was an overriding theme in those I interviewed.

In my research study, all interviewees had strong thoughts about their communities' need for education in the area of resilience, specifically in relation to DV since it was contradictory to well-being and living well. They recognized violence in the home as originating in colonialism and not as a part of their own Nations' cultures. The most salient need expressed was for early interventions that included awareness of the cycles of violence and strategies that enhance everyday familial communication. Two main reasons for this educational need were discussed: to combat the disruption caused by DV to normal child development (*eg.*, Lucy: "children witnessing DV causes them to not be functioning as well as if they didn't see this") and to stop the intergenerational aspect of DV (*eg.*, Rosa: "Now this client has got two children, and she sees that how he treats her is being passed down to her children; like the youngest girl is 3 and she still can't talk; and she really sees how he treats her, how he intimidates even the children."). Specifically identified were anti-bullying programs and effective, respectful person-to-person interaction teachings from early childhood in nursery school and kindergarten that include parents so program goals can be integrated into communication among family members within the home. As well, on-going healthy relationships, sexual assault prevention and dating anti-violence programs for adolescent and teenage boys and girls were identified, and these would be ideal "because they say there's a lot happening, and I'm just hearing from our school that dating violence is happening even in the lower grades, so they're starting even younger now," according

to Lucy. One ED articulated the need for more community ceremonies and events to celebrate women in their role as important contributors and role models; support for male youth and men in terms of healthy male imaging would also lead to men's place in inconspicuously but powerfully helping to end violence against girls and women. These might include, as Brenda explains, "creating constructive outlets in terms of recreation, sports and hobbies—that's a very important place to start—but it would have to go on to gender violence prevention everywhere in formal education." For young girls, Lucy sees a need for courses and programs that help with improving self-image, self-esteem and functioning well in non-idealized, realistic relationships with both the same and opposite sexes.

Another area of educational need was discussed by several women: the community, particularly leadership, should be well-versed about the *status quo* of unresolved MRP issues, how they are a source of hardship to women and children, and also how DV is perpetrated because the issues are easy to ignore. Rosa observed that, "Many times, and that's a reason why women go back to abuse, is because it's their home, they've contributed a lot to it, and in many cases, in terms of actually building it, and in cleaning it, keeping it maintained, and that's a part of their personal identity and it's their home." A closely-related need is for learning how First Nations' membership codes can be reconstituted to achieve fairness and equality that also nurtures the health and well-being of children and mothers caught in MRP and other housing disputes. Martha spoke positively about "the Chief and Council stepping in with MRP where I've had to call on them, and the man had to leave the home, so they're getting involved and working more in that area to help the younger generation." Some participants also felt that women should learn about cross-jurisdictional issues so they are knowledgeable about accessing services, regardless of their designation as provincial, federal, territorial or municipal. This

awareness training could include finding persons or agencies who help with advocacy, particularly in several key areas: emergency protection or no-contact orders, child custody and housing.

Gender, gender roles & gendered violence

Another important area of education that needs to be offered in addressing intergenerational DV in First Nations communities is gender—from cultural, historic, Western and contemporary perspectives. Brenda articulated that youth need to understand “the whole prevailing ideology that’s been generated through a patriarchal system, one that’s been superimposed on a culture where men and women had equal identities, equal responsibilities, were equal contributors to the decision-making of the tribe, the clan and community. They need to know about how the matriarchal system works and how conversion, spiritually—to Christianity which said that ‘your traditions and the way you are practicing your traditions are pagan and are associated with the devil’ has led to self-devaluation that’s still in there and . . . for understanding where you’ve come from and how to formulate your own cultural identity, and that’s the journey people need to take. That’s what we encourage them to do. . . all these will bring the resilience of individual people to the surface so they can start to function well, again.” Included in teachings that Brenda describes could be an examination of Aboriginal languages which reveal gender neutrality (Mayer, 2007a) and how learning language nests, such as *Te Kōhango Reo* in Aotearoa, can help meld the divisions in gender performance that negatively influence all contemporary Aboriginal societies. First-language learning is increasing among the First Nations, and among the three Nations represented in my interviews, all provided first-language instruction for children and youth. Gender-neutral language does not “perpetuate further violence by condemning Aboriginal manhood as the sole reason for our [women’s]

oppression” (Mayer, 2007a, p. 32). Maracle (2003) envisions the creation of “safe spaces for both genders to develop” (p. 77) and encourages educators to develop environments that foster open and respectful communication between males and females, places conducive for further understanding of gender and gender roles. Stein (1999), as well, emphasized the importance of teaching about gender violence in schools: “My research over the past two decades on peer-to-peer sexual harassment has confirmed that schools may well be the training grounds for DV through the practice of and permission for sexual harassment” (p. 212). She cautions that school, community and parental protocols must complement one another so that maximum effectiveness of anti-gender-violence policies is achieved.

The study of Western-based gender roles and the tracing of their journeys into Aboriginal cultural territory are important for youth to learn. Gender history can help them recognize and unlearn harmful gender stereotypes and also help reverse the production of gender that makes male privilege and power appear natural, rather than it being deliberately produced and structured. Anderson and Umberson (2001) observe that the accomplishment of gender is reproduced by, “. . . cultural beliefs about underlying and essential differences between women and men, and social structures that constitute and are constituted by these beliefs we focus on identifying ways in which the practice of DV helps men accomplish gender.” While such insights may be too intense for young children, they can still be involved in identifying gender prescriptions with which they are already familiar. Foundational curricula can be established in earlier schooling so they can sequentially develop and link to deeper gender awareness and understanding for later ages and grades. As well, the exploration of various specific Western-based expressions that ground the inferiority and subjugation of women in cultural norms can be informally queried at any time among students. For example, the expectation of women dating

and marrying those physically larger than themselves, and conversely, the expectation of men dating and marrying those smaller than themselves can be an interesting source of class discussion. The fact of many popular novels being themed by the coupling of a “tall handsome man” with a “delicate and beautiful young woman”, salient among tales of amorous misadventures of thwarted affections and convoluted happenings, is very appealing and popular with especially youthful readers—but the values, ideals and suggestive prods that emerge from these gendered portrayals should be seriously questioned. Skilled instructors can help students’ discourse to the realization that such idealized and patterned gender arrangements can readily enable DV.

A relevant way of teaching gender discrimination in Aboriginal communities is to study the legal categorizations of an “Indian” as defined in the *Indian Act*. Creative and imaginative teachers can help youth, male and female, locate themselves within federal legislation, and develop curriculum that is both interesting and personally involves students through a study of their placement in the Indian registry. From a broader perspective, such discussion can help students realize the violence of the *Indian Act* and also the resilience of the First Nations in withstanding the extermination efforts embedded therein. Specifically, Bill C-31 is a worthy area of study, particularly the history of its development by women who were actively opposed by band governments and national Native organizations because of internalized sexist discrimination against them.

All Aboriginal communities need strong leadership with a thorough understanding of the intricacies of gender that impact on self-government. Barker (2008) makes this clear:

Native sovereignty struggles are gendered; Native rights to sovereignty are not defined or exercised outside of a historical context of patriarchal colonialism; and, the structures and

impact of patriarchal colonialism are neither *post* nor *neo*: we live in them still. Recognizing that is the first step to developing an effective political strategy for decolonization and social justice for and by Native peoples. (p. 264)

The concept of Aboriginal self-government is difficult and complicated; it is generally viewed as the restoration to justice of the relationship between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal peoples. It involves a negotiation of Aboriginal identities as collectives to regain access to and control of political, economic and social resources within the society that marginalized them. Construction and reconstruction of Aboriginal identity are linked to cultural, political, social and economic contexts, but these are not homogenous across the country. Healing, including an introduction of some form of gender complementarity, becomes part of this process but focus and efforts must simultaneously concentrate on the foundational socio-economic dynamics that continually mediate the identity of all Aboriginal people.

While such insight into what is needed may appear to be impossible to achieve today, significant inroads are beginning with some in the younger generation in leadership positions. Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), for example, in giving a keynote address to a group of financial officers in March 2010 which I attended, referred many times to his grandmother who, while having passed from this world, is still with him in spirit and he, in turn, yet honours her with respect and love. He encourages those who listen to continue to acknowledge and esteem the ancestors and relatives who have left earthly bodies to be with Creation in another way.

Educating for resilience

Aboriginal people in all parts of the world, including Canada, have inherited the intergenerational impact of uncountable risk factors which occur at individual, familial,

communal and societal levels. Education is vitally important for the processes by which children, and indeed all Aboriginal students, can learn to increase resilience, take an active part in their societies, and make meaningful impact in addressing inherited risk factors. The Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (1996) observes that effective education “looks in two directions at the same time: to the future for which it must equip the student, and to the past whose treasures it must preserve and make accessible (Vol. 4, p. 237). This parallels the thoughts of Native educators today and over the centuries, that unless an education uses its past and heritage to provide teaching on how to survive the present and for upcoming generations, it is little better than dead (Saunders & Hill, 2007).

There are many thought-provoking narratives within the cultural traditions of each First Nation for teaching resilience to schoolchildren in a way that they can understand and find interesting. Elders are ideal in Native educational settings for discussing personal resilience because they are trusted by students, and trust is conducive to learning (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008). The lives of many Elders and leaders, as well, are rich with experiences from which the younger generations can learn, and emulate the places of resilient role models. For example, one prominent First Nations educator, Marie Battiste, (2008a), wrote about her observations within her own Nation as she was raised:

Few of my relatives went beyond elementary education. They were resilient nonetheless, creative, imaginative, and always having a good sense of humor, strong family relations, and also strong coping skills with overt and systemic racism evident in the towns, among schools, workplaces, and services in the towns. The townspeople held deeply engrained prejudices against Indians. By my parents’ encouragement and their own coping strategies for dealing with racism, they modeled, as was modeled to them, character,

honesty, creativity, perseverance, and resilience. These, then, became my tools as I continued through school. (p. 3)

Battiste, in this statement, articulates the traits associated with the resilience of her family; these and similar examples can be used by teachers and Elders in discussions on resilience.

In my research, the Elders and Elders' Councils were seen by all participants as vital to educational and training efforts that involve the youth, both girls and boys. Some see Elders as the link that heals the lack of synchrony between Native youth and most educational curricula. This is a serious concern because generally, unlike white students, as Aboriginal students progress in education, they increasingly feel less competent in school (Sack, Beiser, Phillips & Baker-Brown, 1993) and many simply leave the system as soon as they can in search of other areas that fulfill their needs for validation and belonging. Brenda expressed a thought that, "we need to look at the socio-economic factors which contribute to resilience, too", since young people look forward to independence. She explained that, "Rather than encouraging dependency, Elders and other community leaders would ideally promote economic resilience such as small business development, encouraging university education, college and trades applications—everything that works at increasing the community infrastructure to generate employment for everyone, but especially the youth before they enter into really self-destructive ways just to try to fit in somewhere." Elders can provide informal care, mentoring and specific teachings that can help bridge the rift caused by harmful attitudes that infiltrate from outside society (*eg.*, the effects of negative stereotyping, outright rejection, racism and discrimination) and cultivate the ability of coping successfully with these influences.

Elders can also be recruited to work with service providers in discussing issues of DV in the overall efforts to promote violence-free lifestyles. Brenda stated that, "What we urgently

need is more cohesive inter-agency activity and commitment to dealing with the issue of DV on a provincial level; these could be women and men from law enforcement, community or social services, justice personnel, professional and non-professional people from the black community, immigrant and Aboriginal women, Elders from many Nations, various transition houses, and homeless shelters.” This coalition-building would include a thorough discussion of where mandates overlap, areas of difference, identification of necessary compromise, and also potential conflicts so that what emerges is a continually-enhanced framework for policies regarding DV. Rather than going from “community-to-community-to-community and meeting with each service provider and talking about the information we all have, and ask ‘how do you think you can use us?’, it could all be done in a more effective way while still being close to the actual DV victim”, according to Brenda. Other EDs confirm the importance of linkages and key collaborations for educating community groups about DV and the restoring role of resilience teaching and modelling. Different agency coordinators in mental health, child welfare, justice and educational programming can identify where DV is responsible for the need of their services, and network with other agencies; such a strategy can collectively address DV. One ED stated that, “I really feel that the communities have an incredible diversity in strengths, I think we need to do a better job in harnessing that strength so that we can adequately respond to the needs of those people who are experiencing DV and teach about resilience and how to foster it in practical and strategic ways.” Another ED related her thought that the churches ought to become more involved in teaching about health in relationships. Instead, she sees that “some [churches] are not so ready to get involved with things, as I wish they would, and that they’d be more active in things within the community, even in the schools and that would give hope within the community, too, that all

areas will be active because we all have to work together, as we all have roles to be active in order to have a healthy community.”

Jayna, a CP, spoke of a need to educate the community about “zero tolerance for violence against women, children, Elders and people with disabilities—everybody, and on an everyday level.” Her most emphatic points regarding education were that “people need to know that they are held accountable for their behavior, and what ‘being accountable’ really means. Also, I mean educating people, educating both spouses—the woman in a transition house, and to educate that man about his behaviour and what it does to the individuals and broader community.” Nancey also discussed accountability in reference to perpetrators: “As I understand it, that was one of the ways it was a long time ago, that people had to be accountable for what they did.” Teaching about male violence against women can appropriately focus on the abusers’ descriptions of their relationships with partners, and be examined for their justifications, excuses, rationalizations and minimization of violence. Anderson and Umberson (2001) suggest that such narratives “are texts through which they attempt to deny responsibility for violence and to present nonviolent self-identities” (p. 359). Violence in the eyes of many perpetrators is narrated as a reasonable and much-overdue response to extreme provocation, a rare but momentary loss of self-control and that the violence inflicted was so minimal as to be entirely insignificant. An interrogation of batterers’ accounts can help women in DV situations understand the gender infrastructure that places men in positions whereby violent behaviour is demonstrative of his right to strong masculine authority. Women as DV victims need to know their social location and placement within this infrastructure, and that what is expected of them is to, first, be responding to men’s hegemonic representations of femininity and, secondly, submitting to men’s authority. Educating women about violence dynamics from the perspective of gender is very important so they can

challenge “the binary and hierarchical gender framework through their resistance to male violence” (Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p. 371) with the least possible harm to themselves and their children. This, too, is resilience, and education for resilience.

The “Next Seven Generations” concept of teaching is important in some Aboriginal traditions, such as among the Anishinaapbek. The foundation of this perspective is that we must appropriately teach today the content that will positively impact on the next seven generations. One CP is implementing this concept in her own life: “And I’ve educated my children on violence; I don’t want my daughter to be with someone that is violent. Part of being educated helps you to find other avenues of learning to deal with your feelings, your frustrations, your anger. So I’ve really kind of pushed my kids to be with people that have an education and be educated, because if you’re not educated, I think you resort to stuff like pushing people around, or bullying, or intimidating, and it’s those techniques that start the process of DV.” Nancey, an ED, also notes that “resilience and DV interventions are almost parallel to each other”. She believes that educating for future well-being in marriage relationships must go “beyond DV, there has to be something before that. DV doesn’t just happen when people get together in a relationship; violence has started beforehand. Like in bullying, there’s a lot of that. Having had my own child in the local school, the bullying is terrible. It’s even gone to a different level than the usual from what I remember – to be teased and stuff like that, now there is more access to different ways – now they have the cell-phones, the messaging – and on the computer when they’re all on-line. And I’ve seen pretty bad stuff being put on-line about other people, and that’s a form of bullying. I think they need to address that in school; I think schools should have a policy on bullying and how to deal with it because it seems to be pretty bad.” All interviewees,

whether they were CPs or EDs, wanted to see the schools becoming increasingly involved in various types of anti-DV teaching at the younger ages and grades.

Like the women I interviewed, I believe that moving towards educational provisions that encourage resilience in Aboriginal children and youth means recovering and rebuilding the cultural strengths of various Nations and groups. Their voices must be facilitated and integrated into offerings that are foundational to curriculum development with specific age-appropriate delivery (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2001), not as Western knowledge “add-ons”. Because Aboriginal and Western worldviews are so distinct that they cannot be melded or integrated without compromise to each, the positive identity formation of Aboriginal students can only be according to their cultural, linguistic, political and spiritual norms. This is surely a successful strategy for cultural education had empowered and generated the resilience, survival and thriving of Native peoples from times far back. Colonial imposition has assaulted Indigenous cultures through legislative and other means; trauma has become practically inescapable in the lives of those particularly vulnerable to the discriminations that stem from outer society—women and children. Only when cultural knowledge and activity becomes the established means for nurturing resilience and facilitating the voices of all Aboriginal people can youth become engaged in the educational services necessary for encouraging improved psychosocial and other outcomes for women, children and men.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Assumptions

The main assumption of most studies on DV, including mine, is that everyone wants to end DV. While this is undoubtedly the hope of victims, it is unlikely that perpetrators also share this view since, for them, DV serves its own purposes. Unquestionably, perpetrators are exercising power, control and domination for perhaps many different reasons but expending violence fulfills their perceived or unspoken needs. For this group, there is often little or no desire to curtail DV except possibly at superficial levels. When called to account for their behavior, they often cite stress, employment insecurity, alcohol and substance abuse or impulsivity. However, there are many facing the same adversities who do not resort to violence.

Some researchers, academics and health professionals view DV as collusion between batterers and societal prevalences because DV is confirmation, an outward sign of masculinity among society's many prevailing "norms" (Bancroft, 2002). Hearn, in a 1998 study, reached a corresponding conclusion: male perpetrators exert violence in intimate relationships because it is a "resource for demonstrating and showing a person is a man" (p. 37). Further, because perpetrators tend to construct their violence as a reasonable and justifiable response to insurmountable provocation or other similar-sounding explanations which are little more than elaborate denials, they are unlikely to change their behavior (Anderson & Umberson, 2001). Connell (2005) also observes that men who violate women ". . . are unlikely to think themselves deviant. On the contrary, they usually feel they are entirely justified, that they are exercising a right. They are authorized by an ideology of supremacy" (p. 83). In these ways, they are attempting to transfer the causes of their violent actions onto their spouses or partners and are simply conforming to what society expects of them as men; they have little will to change power

imbalances that favour their spouses. While these studies were conducted with non-Aboriginal groups, such patterns and dynamics of denial of the need for behavioral change are similar on-reserve and within Indigenous populations by way of Western gender practices being directed into and increasingly finding root in the fertile soil of contemporary Aboriginal life.

My assumption is also that the community participants see themselves as I have constructed them from their interviews. I am hopeful that my portrayals are much less detrimental than the injustices they have suffered, and assume that I am not an agent of harm in my research efforts and subsequent compositions. For example, I question whether or not I am further stereotyping DV victims into preconceived dominant-society impressions of Aboriginal women. As well, while I attempt to reframe DV from a strength-based construct, I am not entirely sure that what becomes salient, instead, is women's pathology. I am also conscious that my study may unwittingly contribute to the too-popular view that only women are DV victims, whereas they are also children and men. The fact that my research interviewees were all women may compound this perspective within DV discourses.

The Western means of knowledge-finding views survivor-centered epistemology as invalid unless it is filtered through the eyes and mind of an expert, or expert-in-training. When I write about women who continue to live in DV, am I obscuring and disparaging their best coping abilities and efforts, and do I paint from the "arrogant perception" – as described by Frye, 1983? Closely related to these assumptions is that I had formulated my questionnaires in terms of what I considered to be respectful if I were being thus interviewed – but is what I derived and delivered respectful to each and every interviewee according to her life places? I may never realize the truth of this self-query, but perhaps the best a researcher can do is to be aware, and

never take it as given, or granted that respect for soul and place was indeed accomplished to the satisfaction of every participant.

I believe that a common assumption is that those who are wronged by colonialism or other adverse power is “correct” or conduct themselves for the betterment of their families and community. In the context of the parameters of my study, Aboriginal male leadership must be questioned in terms of abusing spouses and children; too often, such behaviours are simply ignored, and even excused because of being “stressed by the job,” or “drunk,” or even that “he just ‘lost it’”. Leadership, if concerned with traditional culture—and there is much claim to this by most—must be held to the highest standards of proper behavior because leaders are role models by the very nature of their positions as leader or chief. There are many public instances of Native leaders found guilty by law and tradition of battery, sexual misconduct towards women or children, and other violent acts. Too often, these leaders are re-elected as if their actions had no consequence; such ways of governance marginalize victims into places of further neglect and denigration as human beings. These are decidedly not the ways of what Aboriginal people know as “traditional culture”, nor the ways of Creation.

One manifestation of patriarchy in the community is leadership that is consistently male, and members may see this as the natural way of governance. This perception denigrates the potential strength that stems from collective community involvement in leadership by women or groups of women. Male leadership should not be too arrogant or proud to acknowledge the role that resilient women, particularly those whose incredible internal strength have led them from DV, can play in providing guidance for violence and maltreatment interventions and other positions that nourish the community, including leadership itself. The place that these bearers of life who have the responsibility of sustaining the generations is a place of strength, not weakness.

5.2 Strengths & limitations

Strengths

The area of work I have chosen – the highly-stigmatized subject of domestic violence in Aboriginal communities – is, to me, the main strength of my research. All productive discourses on the forbidden serve to de-stigmatize, a necessary step towards appropriate action. Concomitantly opening the doors of history and uncovering the foreign governance and societal structures that ushered in DV is essential for understanding the issues sufficiently to formulate effective long-term interventions. My research, through a firm basis of reality as articulated by the EDs and CPs, furthers the connections between DV survival and resilience from an Aboriginal perspective. It provides valuable insight on building a strong foundation for developing expertise on fostering resilience in the face of rampant DV in Aboriginal communities.

I strongly emphasize the importance of understanding the effects of the imposition of Western epistemologies that operationalized a particular gender hierarchy and corresponding set of patriarchal power relations, and their consequences on Aboriginal populations. My research, a view from the inside, is conducive for meaningful information to improve programs and services aimed at supporting DV survivors, and relevant implications for shelter workers, health professionals and public policy makers. My thesis purports that everyone who has survived DV, which in my research were women, are ideally positioned for providing valuable and otherwise inaccessible guidance to both men and women living in DV, and for intervention programming.

My thesis is supported by a comprehensive interdisciplinary review of literature, itself a contribution to the advancement of knowledge. The review provides a thorough intellectual history of scholars delving into concepts that were necessary for my thesis; these include the

culture and nature of colonialism, the traumatic impact of colonization on Aboriginal populations, and the interpretations of resilience according to Aboriginal ways-of-knowing and from social sciences perspectives. Literature on resilience, specifically from the emerging field of cultural resilience, supports the argument that a return to the principles of traditional Aboriginal cultures can prompt the resilience of those living in DV and effect motivation into redesigning healthier home lives. A significant finding from the review is that DV, as an outcrop of colonialism, was borne from the enforced transformation of older established family and gender relations into patriarchal-driven practices that were imposed by the dictates of the *Indian Act*. My review also consisted of current literature on DV among Aboriginal populations in New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

I highlighted the necessity, in academic research, of creating trusting environments between interviewees and interviewers – an especially important component of research given the history of many woefully unsound methodologies in the context of Aboriginal populations. In my study, trust and respect encouraged the participants to articulate their inner resilience as they contemplated their move into healthier lifestyles. From my own stance as a researcher, significant insights into interviewee narrations were developed through an understanding of mutual trust and respect. Expressions of respect are culturally-situated and culturally-nuanced so researchers must be knowledgeable about these expressions among Aboriginal groups, particularly if researchers themselves are non-Aboriginal. I feel that educators must expound the principles of respect more profoundly in research processes, and help ensure that they are interwoven within all aspects of methodological practice.

Because I encountered mountainous barriers in commensurability between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal epistemology and ways-of-knowing, particularly in the area of research

approach and methodology, my only option was to identify those obstructions openly. Issues were especially apparent in the area of ethics because my efforts involved both a marginalized population and an extremely sensitive topic area. In methodology and approach preparation, I found many non-Aboriginal research experts uncomprehending of my questions, and floundered in attempting to provide guidance in what had always been deemed as non-issues. Rather than trying to fit my methods into established ethical research practice and describe them in a positive but perfunctory way, I declared my problems up front, and this is a strength of my work. Such openness helps address research problems for future instructors and researchers.

Universities, in funding quests for inclusive opportunities and community-engaged research, work in multifarious contexts but the established ways of integrating diverse knowledge systems still needs strengthening in the domains of Aboriginal epistemology. I was not alone in having encountered methodological difficulties, and describing them is key to reconciliation with ethics boards since universities are centres of knowledge production. I feel that including Aboriginal researchers and academics within research teams is entirely necessary because they increase the integrity of research ethics and knowledge systems.

My research processes included creative contemplations by which I could conduct interviews if, for example, the EDs were unable to procure permission for my research from the Chief and Council. I feel that researchers conducting work among vulnerable populations must be encouraged towards similar reflective, appropriate and skillful solutions; simultaneously taking into account the pragmatic realities of the logistics of that research is an absolute necessity for such thought. For example, if a Chief and Council do not approve of DV research, a researcher can invite participants to a safe room or facility outside the reserve – a place over which Chief and Council have no jurisdiction. Students can be encouraged to discuss with other

student researchers with similar high ethical research values on the possibilities of addressing difficult engagement issues, particularly when research ethics experts cannot provide such guidance. The importance of the safety of participants in high-risk research cannot be underestimated, and, in my study, the identities of the participants, shelters and communities were carefully disguised to ensure safety.

My inquiry demonstrates the advantage of having a thorough understanding of the historical context of a topic area. Such knowledge furthers the realistic portrayal of all people and events involved, and works at eroding common negative stereotyping. The historical presentation I derived will help educators, students and other readers in asking the right questions as they seek a balanced and nuanced narrative for their own and the education of others. My thesis also has a strong potential for advancing the educational disciplines for its contribution to knowledge production in anti-violence efforts and to further advocacy in addressing Canada's historic location in the contemporary high rates of DV in Aboriginal communities.

Limitations

The sample size of my study was very small. Cottrell and MacKenzie (2010) explain that “[i]n fact, ‘there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry’ (Patton, 1990, p. 184), but the researcher has to balance the need for appropriate data with the resources necessary to collect it” (p. 141). I was seeking detailed data from a smaller group in more informationally representative groups, rather than statistically representative. It was large enough that I was collecting data that could have overall become repetitive – this would have the point of redundancy, or saturation. While the input from both Executive Directors (EDs) and community participants (CPs) provide a rich database of high-quality information about resilience in the context of surviving DV, there

are only three of the 633 First Nations in Canada represented therein. I did, however, ensure that the three Nations were in completely separate parts of the country and that cultural traditions were not linked by language or tribal affiliation. The findings from all participants were consistent in spite of the cultural diversity of each interview set; this was not completely unexpected since there are numerous specific commonalities in the epistemologies of Indigenous Peoples worldwide. The findings of this research, I am certain, contribute to new knowledge with strong educational implications for Aboriginal agencies involved in anti-violence and, specifically, anti-DV activities.

There were no youth interviewed in my research because women tend to be more mature by the time they first recognize that violence in the home is unhealthy and damages the spirit and psyche, and also by the time they have strategized to address permanently their abusive spouses. Because educational offerings on healthy relationships in Aboriginal communities are sparse, it is reasonable to link “trial-and-error” life periods, some quite lengthy, with discovering the reality of the devastation of living in DV and the intricacies of its emergence from unhealthy relationships prior to cohabitation. Indeed, many women spend decades in abusive relationships as had the interviewees in my study, who were past their very youthful years. Concerning youth in on-reserve shelter ED positions, this is quite impractical in most shelters since clients tend to be in the older age brackets—although an upcoming demographic appears to be that the daughters of those using women’s shelters when they first opened are now utilizing the shelters themselves. This demographic may indicate that, in the future, younger women will become shelter EDs than those who are currently in those positions. It is also an implication that the cycle of violence is yet being repeated inter-generationally.

The sparseness of written thought on resilience interpretation by Aboriginal researchers and academics has been problematic for me. The conceptualizations of Western-conceived resilience, I believe, cannot simply be transported across the incommensurate terrain of Aboriginal epistemology as sometimes implied by various authors. Indigenous thought structures and processes, particularly among those still speaking their own languages or with First Nations languages as a first language, are too dichotomous for simply tailoring or blanketing preconceived Western notions onto Indigenous views of health and well-being. For example, I perceive resilience as a process rather than a state of being, although I have been unable to ascertain if other Aboriginal researchers view resilience in the same way.

Like Life itself, resilience can be enhanced, is supportable by Creation, and given by the Creator; resilience is listening to the ancestors who are always available for guidance and direction. Unhealthy lifestyles and partaking in destructive activities such as abusing drug and alcohol, DV (either as a victim or perpetrator), gender inequality, fearfulness or resistance to positive change, prevents us from hearing their voices. It takes knowledge, and time for Life processes to unfold themselves within individuals so that they can extricate themselves from the spiritual inhibitors to which they are bound and can indeed come to hear the words of Creation, and of the ancestors.

I also encountered problems with terminology used in DV literature. Several examples are salient. The word “victim” connotes a dominant or monolithic identity from which all subsequent and even past identities radiate; this contrasts with the reality of fluid identities throughout all individuals’ lifetimes. In my interviews, the victim persona can be salient despite the various subject positions that are achieved by participation or integration into numerous social and other realities. Another example, regarding children and DV, the word “witness” is

problematic because children are much more than “witnesses” of anything that takes place in their own homes. DV cannot be taking place all the time within a home, but the nuances and environment of DV always permeate the home—and children are part of this environment simply by their inhabiting home space. The word “exposure” is similarly difficult, and both terms also detract from the damage caused to children not only by DV, but also by the threat of DV. Also, some text implies that DV just “happens”, without the involvement of one’s active agency. The sentence, “. . . more than one in five couples in the United States experienced at least one episode of IPV over a 12- month period” (Field & Caetano, 2005, p. 464), clarifies my point. It implies by the words “experienced” and “episode” that IPV is passive and therefore unagented. Further, when a large peer group of academics and researchers present DV using this type of innocent-sounding terminology, the implication is that DV is benign, albeit something to eradicate—its extreme destructiveness, the extent of human suffering involved and the urgent need to address it are lost. Relating to men who abuse are the labels “perpetrator” or “abuser” or “batterer”; these terms imply that perpetrating, abusing and battering is static, and constant throughout men’s time and life cycles. This is a false construct for there are many men who respond to interventional therapy and recognize that their own aggressions have been harmful to those closest to them, and are therefore no longer perpetrators or abusers or batterers. Perhaps there being little literature on successful interventions for men has founded this false confirmation of the imagery of men who have departed from abusive behaviour.

Also, the words, “the study of Aboriginal peoples” or “the Aboriginal people I study” or similar phrases which are fairly common in academic writing, connote an anthropological perspective that “others” Aboriginal people. Further, such text reveals that imperializing eyes are still fixated on Aboriginal populations. The Indian Industry is, indeed, for many academics, the

last frontier. Writers would do well by substituting their own nationalities in place of the word “Aboriginal” to test how respectful their phrasing actually is.

As well, my observation is that when Aboriginal women disclose DV in their lives, whether it is for furthering knowledge to Canadian society about dealing with the devastation they experience or to narrate stories of resilience for their own reasons, they risk reinforcing a generic image of Aboriginal people being violent and abusive. Some DV victims are silent or hesitant because they are aware of the chance that they, their families and heritage may be further negatively stereotyped. Disclosure by victims and survivors, for all reasons, is a vital aspect of DV discourse, and identifying help-seeking behaviours by Aboriginal women at preliminary stages such as for health care is a much-needed area of research. Those reasons can be explored to help address the real and perceived barriers and challenges in disclosing DV. An unintended consequence of promoting discourses on DV paves the way for some to substantiate their view that violence is inherent in Aboriginal traditions and this point must be included in such discussion. Common erroneous assumptions enhance the danger of losing the colonial underpinnings of social and domestic violence, thereby permitting the growth of its very roots.

Finally, my study did not concentrate on DV interventions, except in passing; an extremely helpful study would be an exploration of the ways in which the relationship between resilience and DV interventions can be intertwined into educational offerings. It would involve examining the multi-dimensional nature of the determinants of DV but the scope of my own study was too small and specifically-focused to include this particular aspect of anti-DV efforts.

5.3 Final remarks

I wish to address historic portrayals of romantic primitivism—the many idyllic-sounding texts and accompanying aesthetic visuals of pre- and early-contact Aboriginal life. Such are

liberally sprinkled with nuances of benevolence and undeniable tones of harmony with nature. Some today might ponder if it was indeed possible for agreeable and peaceful partner and parental relationships to have been interwoven into the Aboriginal societies of that day. This is important in considering the causal areas of DV; readers may find DV in such scenarios impossible to visualize, and according to the ambiance emanating from the imagery, rightfully so. However, in light of the “natural man” or “noble savage” being a mythical creation of Eurocentric proportions, I am reminded of a comment by an Aboriginal professor who wondered, “Am I so colonized that I cannot imagine a society where couples lived in harmony with each other? Is it a sign of my personal colonization that I cannot see husbands and wives, parents and children living in peace, within a society that upheld gender complementarity and provided the infrastructure for continuous egalitarian relationships?” My thoughts are that, just as societies are structured in a way that support DV by suffusing ideologies that place patriarchal expression as “natural”, so is the possibility and fathomability of implementing mechanisms that denigrate DV, and squeeze it out of existence. Is it not possible that these societies knew themselves as human beings so well that they realized the possibility of its existence and prepared ahead to prevent it, and that these preventions became their traditions? One prevailing Aboriginal principle had been “the knowledge that survival of tribes depended on the interdependent relationship of its members” (Hukill, 2006, p. 246). Violent activity, particularly among individuals providing the basic building blocks of society, cannot sustain survival so administering violence was permitted only in certain specified circumstances (Bohn, 2003; Hughes, 2004; Smith, 2003; Weaver, 2009). Sioui (2008) states that sexual and other types of abuse “. . . is unknown among circular-thinking peoples of all races” (p. 140), and identifies Aboriginal peoples as circular thinkers. In spite of romantic primitivism, though, I believe it

entirely likely that many pre-and early-contact Aboriginal societies were free of DV and that what we see today in Aboriginal communities has resulted from the colonization, the usurpation of traditional gender practices.

I wish also to address the often-contentious issue of “Who is an Elder?” because it is a legitimate, but complex question. Martha, a CP in my research, spoke about a quandary she felt regarding Elders: that there were times to be careful of what Elders say when seeking their advice because many are residential school survivors and still dealing with the abuse they suffered, or they may be in denial about it. She noted that there are Elders who are questionable because they obviously do not live according to what they say:

. . . the Elders have to be living a positive lifestyle, too. Because when you try to teach someone – the first thing we do is look at their life, their lifestyle, and then we don’t take them seriously if it doesn’t match up with what they’re trying to teach – we just can’t take it serious.

Emma also spoke of the confusion caused because many in the younger generations are working to reclaim their cultures, and questions arise “. . . about traditional versus white religion . . . and Elders are always involved.” As well, Jayna stated, as we talked about my dissertation:

The Elders will get mad at you for that too, for sticking your head into it [the topic of DV], but then again, another Elder can say that, ‘the woman has to stay with that man because that’s who you chose to be with, that was your choice. But you don’t choose to get beaten up, you don’t choose to get kicked out of your own place, and Elders just don’t want to talk about that part.

Some view Elders as those who prove their worth by service to their communities, but different communities acknowledge Eldership in different ways. Qualities that are generally

associated with all Elders are: they teach by example, they use their life experiences as the basis of teachings, and are humble, respectable, respectful and patient. Each Elder usually has her/his area of specific expertise, such as cultural knowledge or medicine or relating to youth. The exchange of money for Elders' teachings is not according to most Nations' traditions and it is certain that one does not automatically become an Elder just by reaching a certain age. The concept of self-appointment, too, is not usually accepted as valid.

Resilience is a positive lens for viewing life issues, a constructive move from pathological analyses. While some protective factors which encourage resilience develop from childhood nurturing, other factors will always either support or hinder resilience. A common encumbrance is DV—often coupled with diverse social vicissitudes and health malfunctions which are detrimental to psychosocial well-being. For women living in DV, some factors can predict increased resilience and well-being. These include strong relationships with empathetic friends (mostly other women) and relatives who encourage personal strength regardless of a woman's ongoing home situation, programs or courses that teach self-acceptance and self-awareness, and re-claiming cultural identity through historical grounding and involvement in traditional practices from trusted Elders, leaders or mentors. These action-oriented strategies work at changing the perception of self and others in ways that exclude victimization and are intentionally pro-social; they develop the sense of a more empowered self and imply enhanced changes to personal identity. For example, all the participants of my study identified and described at least some of these strategies as ways they extricated themselves from abusive spouses and toxic home situations because of DV. They experienced epiphanies that led from positions as direct and sometimes passive receivers of injurious behavior to those of active re-creators and designers of futures they defined. The resilience of these women changed their

visions of themselves and their worlds; they re-placed themselves both within the home and outer community.

The DV survivors I interviewed stressed the importance of spiritual beliefs to their well-being and most revealed that re-establishing their cultural ways fostered a positive awareness of the value of themselves as Aboriginal individuals and unearthed an understanding of their tribal histories including the achievements of their ancestors. Spiritual fulfillment, an outcome of conscious internal seeking, encourages resilience; it is foundational to a positive, healthy self-image and a resource of ongoing strength. Clearly, for many, spirituality is an important dimension for total being and according to Aboriginal worldviews, a spiritual infrastructure provides meaning to life journeys and augments wholistic well-being.

*“My kids pulled me forward.
Just like when you see them pulling at their mother’s hand.
Well, they pull at our minds, as well.
Then, we all move forward.”*

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Appendices

Appendix A

Provincial/territorial women's shelters associations

<u>Province/ Territory</u>	<u>Name of Association</u>	<u>Acronym</u>
Alberta	Alberta Council of Women's Shelters	ACWS
British Columbia & Yukon	BC – Yukon Society of Transition Houses	BCYSTH
Manitoba	Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters	MAWS
New Brunswick	New Brunswick Coalition of Transition Houses	NBCTH
Newfoundland & Labrador	Transition House Association of Newfoundland & Labrador	THANL
Northwest Territories	-- <i>presently being formulated</i> --	
Nova Scotia	Transition House Association of Nova Scotia	THANS
Nunavut	National Inuit Women Shelter Association	NIWSA
Ontario	Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses	OAITH
Prince Edward Island	Prince Edward Island PEI Transition Houses Association	PEITHA
Quebec	Fédération de ressources d'hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté du Québec	
Saskatchewan	Provincial Association of Transition Houses & Services of Saskatchewan	PATHS

Appendix B Communal Consent Agreement

BETWEEN: Anita Olsen Harper

AND: _____

RE: *Research Study: Domestic Violence (DV) in Aboriginal
Communities: A Context for Resilience in Aboriginal
Epistemologies*

I, Anita Olsen Harper, propose to undertake the above research project in _____ (*Name of First Nation*), in accordance with CIHR Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People (2007), Section II—Ethical Principles of Aboriginal Health Research, pp. 17-27.

[These pages are attached to the back of this Agreement.]

_____ (*Name of Health Authority and/or First Nation*) gives Anita Olsen Harper permission to use any necessary resource files, with specific written request, of the _____ (*Name of Health Authority and/or First Nation*), and to receive assistance from members of _____ (*Name of Health Authority and/or First Nation*) in conducting this research.

The potential benefits of the study are:

- i. My research will articulate how, by emerging from domestic violence situations, community members can build resilience. Improving resilience at the individual, family or community level is a vitally important outcome that can also positively impact on the rates of juvenile delinquency, alcohol over-consumption and substance abuse.
- ii. Social services directors and others working at the Band and Tribal Council level are turning to new research for empirical support for interventions that will help reduce domestic violence in their communities. My research will contribute to this essential type of documentation.
- iii. Participants' input will help in understanding the ways by which women can be assisted in domestic violence situations. This

understanding, incorporated into educational and training offerings, can be foundational in primary and secondary anti-DV strategies and interventions.

The following terms are understood by _____ (*Name of Health Authority and/or First Nation*) and Anita Olsen Harper:

- i. all audio and/or audio/visual recordings, documented notes, transcripts, field notes and research findings gathered through the research will be stored in Professor Sharon Cook's office and conserved for a period of five (5) years. Dr. Cook, Thesis Supervisor for Anita Olsen Harper, acts as steward of the material; (contacts for Dr. Cook are: University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education, Lamoureux Hall, 145 Jean-Jacques Lussier, Ottawa ON K1N 6N5,
- ii. information garnered from a participant will be available for examination at any time by that particular participant;
- iii. participants may withdraw their participation at any time, including during an interview; if a participant withdraws, all documentation of her/his interview is destroyed;
- iv. a copy of all findings of the research will be given to the _____ (*Name of Health Authority, if applicable*) in draft form prior to publication, if publication is an option;
- v. to maintain the confidentiality protection of participating individuals, First Nations and/or Health Authorities, their names and other information (such as description, history, geographic location or cultural membership) which may specifically lead to their identification will not appear in any publication of findings; as necessary, the use of pseudonyms and other mechanisms will be employed to maintain their trust, privacy and anonymity;
- vi. the Executive Director (ED) of the women's shelter has the right to examine the final draft of documentation to ensure that identifying information has been removed;
- vii. any commentary approved by Anita Olsen Harper that the _____ (*Name of Health Authority and/or First Nation*) may wish to make on publication will be included in the published version; it is understood that the _____ (*Name of Health Authority and/or First Nation*) have/has a right to respond to any publications, including that arising from this research;
- viii. Anita Olsen Harper retains the right of copyright of all material published;
- ix. the researcher will supply the _____ (*Name of Health Authority*) with a copy of all reports and publications resulting from this research project;
- x. Anita Olsen Harper will provide the _____ (*Name of First Nation*) (if desired) with a copy of the findings of this research project;

- xi. an expected completion date for this research project will be specified; and
- xii. a copy of this *Communal Consent Agreement* will be given to the _____ (*Name of Health Authority and/or First Nation*) upon signing it.

If the _____ (*Name of Health Authority and/or First Nation*) have/has any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, the _____ (*Name of Health Authority and/or First Nation*) may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

ca

Agreed on this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

SIGNATURES:

_____ Anita Olsen Harper
 _____ *Name of First Nation*
 _____ *Name of Health Authority (if applicable)*
 _____ *Chief (if applicable)*
 _____ *Elder*

PLACE: _____

Appendix C**Informed Consent*****Research Study*****Domestic Violence (DV) in Aboriginal Communities:****A Context for *Resilience* in Aboriginal Epistemologies**

First Nation/ Community: _____

Date: _____

Dear _____:
(Name of Participant)

I am a University of Ottawa student working on my doctoral dissertation, “Domestic Violence (DV) in Aboriginal Communities: A Context for *Resilience* in Aboriginal Epistemologies”. I wish to explore your views on the specific aspects or factors of *resilience* in the context of your having survived domestic violence.

The purpose of this study is to identify the resilience factors in Aboriginal individuals and communities that help women, men and families move from unsafe and unhealthy home lives to those promoting wellness and good health by reducing DV risks and eliminating DV from their own lives.

The potential benefits of the study are:

- My research will articulate how, by emerging from domestic violence situations, community members can build resilience. Improving resilience at the individual, family or community level is a vitally important outcome that can also positively impact on the rates of juvenile delinquency, alcohol over-consumption and substance abuse.
- Social services directors and other working at the Band and Tribal Council level are turning to new research for empirical support for interventions that will help reduce domestic violence in their communities. My research will contribute to this essential type of documentation.
- Your participation will help in understanding the ways by which women can be assisted in domestic violence situations. This understanding, incorporated into educational and training

offerings, can be foundational in primary and secondary anti-DV strategies and interventions.

This is an oral interview of about 15 questions; in testing it several times, I found we finished in about 90 minutes. Some questions are personal and could bring up painful things from your past and I know that these memories could be upsetting to you. This is why we are meeting in the safety of _____ (*Name of Women's Shelter*) where _____ (*Name of Therapist or Counsellor*) is available to you during and after the actual interview.

Please do not worry about who will hear your taped interview or read the transcriptions. I am the only person, other than you, who will hear this interview or see the text of what I have transcribed – unless you give written permission to allow this. The Executive Director (ED) of the women's shelter has the right to examine the final draft of documentation to ensure that identifying information has been removed.

Also, please note that at any time you wish to withdraw from the study, even if it is during the actual interview, all your information will be destroyed and will be inaccessible to anyone or for any purpose.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. I will enter the information into an anonymous database program which will be stored in a locked cabinet at the office of my thesis supervisor, Dr. Sharon Cook, #387 Lamoureux Hall, 145 Jean-Jacques Lussier Street, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5. Your data will be conserved for 5 (five) years. Only with your signed consent will this information (without identifiers) be used to help design programs and services that better meet the needs of women, men and families in any Aboriginal community.

The *University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board* retains access to signed informed consent forms, and the results of this research will be published in my dissertation and possibly in subsequent journals or books. All the information you provide for this process will remain anonymous.

If you have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5841
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

Thank you. Meegwetch.

Anita Olsen Harper, Ph.D. Researcher
613. 248 - 8269

Name of Executive Director of Women's Shelter

Name of Therapist/ Counsellor

Domestic Violence (DV) in Aboriginal Communities:

A Context for *Resilience* in Aboriginal Epistemologies

CONSENT:

I, as a willing participant of this Research study, have either read this form, and/or had it read and explained to me, and have had all my questions satisfactorily answered. As well, I have received from Anita Olsen Harper a copy of this Consent Form.

By signing this form, I consent to taking part in this interview voluntarily.

Signature: _____

Optional:

I would like a copy of the summary of the study findings. For this purpose, my mailing address is:

Appendix D**Questionnaire*****For: Executive Directors (EDs)***

EDs will not be interviewed as if they are DV survivors. Rather, they are asked about how they see their clients at the women's shelter. They may generalize their responses, and justify them using examples, or describe why they think like they do about their clients. They may refer to only one client when they answer a question, or say that "some" seem to feel this way as opposed to another way. I also encourage EDs to state any trends they see emerging, or any specifics and/or significant information that they cannot generalize.

1. Please describe your clientele:
[Ensure that at least the following is answered.]
 - Demographic information (predominant age range):
 - 20 – 30
 - 31 – 40
 - 41 – 50
 - 51 – 60
 - 61+
 - Status or Non-Status?
 - Are they mostly:
 - married, or
 - in a marriage-type relationship, or
 - single?
 - Where do they normally live?
 - on-reserve?
Details – such as if this is their own community, or the spouse's, or other?
 - How long have they lived here?
 - How many children do they have?
 - ages?
 - Do they live with the clients?
2. Employment
 - Do they have paid employment?

- If so, where?
- Do they seem to like their jobs?
 - Is their pay/ wage sufficient for them/ their family?

3. Education

- What is their general level of education?
- Where did they go to school? (*Eg.*, residential schools, public school, college, *etc.*)
- Did/ do they talk about their school experiences? If so, in what terms?

4. Cultural Involvement

- For those whose traditions of their ancestors are important to them (they have some level of cultural involvement in their own First Nation traditions), why do you feel this is so?
 - Are you aware of how much they participate in their Nation's traditional activities?
If yes, please describe this by giving examples.
 - Do they talk about seeing a difference in the way of thinking and viewing Life between themselves as Aboriginal people and "mainstream Canadians"?
- How important are their spiritual beliefs to them?
 - Do they express feelings of spiritual connectedness?
Please explain your answer.
 - Do they discuss wanting to be more spiritually connected?
If so, in what terms?
- During their stay in the shelter, you are able to "pick up" on how they think of success. Please describe this.

Explain the term "resilience" to the EDs; include that it is not a term used in everyday context, how it came to be used in the sense that most know it, how the English language defines it, and some more popular meanings of the word, etc.

5. Please tell me (roughly) how many of your clients speak their own language?

- Do they ever speak of words and sayings in these languages that relate to the concepts of *resilience*?
- Are you aware of any traditional stories or principles about *resilience* in your client group? If so, please describe these.

6. Do your clients express being “healthy” or “having wellness” or “being well”?
- If so, where does DV seem to fit into their determination or thoughts in these areas?
 - Do they mention any role their community might have played in sustaining their health and well-being, both in earlier life and in helping them get through the challenges of DV?
 - If so, please describe this (*Eg.*, They may have taken part in support networks, or initiated specific supports for their own unique needs.)
 - Please explain the connection, if you think there is one, regarding their concepts of health/ well-being and their lives as DV survivors. Do they suggest that, as DV survivors, they are healthier than before? If so, to what do they attribute this?

Explain that “resilience” is a positive framing of DV interventions – that this lens does not take in the “dysfunctionality” or “negative tones” of much work in the area of anti-DV.

Do not ask about the EDs about the specifics of DV in their clients’ lives; these may arise from the discussions themselves. Instead, encourage the ED to concentrate on participants’ strengths, coping strategies and ability to care for themselves (and children, as applicable) – their resilience factors.

7. From your own views, how is *resilience* demonstrated within your client group? (What are resilience factors in your clientele, as you see it?). Please give examples.
- What do you see as being their strengths that can (and does) lead to being DV survivors? (What are the factors, processes and awarenesses that promoted *resilience* in their lives while they were your clients in the shelter?)
 - Of these, which do you see as having the most impact on the reasons why some clients are no longer DV victims?
 - Where do you think *resilience* comes from?
 - Do you feel that your clients have always had these strengths, or do you think that they [the strengths] were borne from their lives as DV victim?
 - Have your clients ever talked about *resilience* in their lives prior to being victimized by DV? Please describe these.
 - Do you think *resilience* is learned? Please explain your answer.
8. What resources in the community can your clients access to support *resilience*?

9. What do you see, or what have your clients expressed, as having hindered them from moving towards a life free from DV? (For those who have done so.)

In moving towards the end of the interview:

10. Is there anything else you wish to share that is related to *resilience* and the position your clients were in as DV victims?
11. Along the lines of *resilience* that you see in your clients' lives in the shelter, what are your own ideas about how to address DV?
12. If you think that resilience is something that can be learned, do you have any ideas of how *resilience* for both men and women (including youth and children) can be cultivated?
13. What would you like to see in educational or training curriculum/ material about DV victims and the transformational processes that you think would help others in similar situations?
 - Where in your community would you like to see these? (*Eg.*, social services programs, justice-related programming, high-school classes, pre-natal classes, *etc.*)
 - How can these be propelled, do you think?
 - Who do you think should be involved?
14. Is there anything else you wish to share that is related to *resilience* and DV interventions?

Appendix E**Questionnaire**

For: Community Participants (CPs)

1. Please tell me something about yourself:
[Ensure that at least the following is answered.]
 - Demographic information: Age range
 - 20 – 30
 - 31 – 40
 - 41 – 50
 - 51 – 60
 - 61+
 - Status or Non-Status?
 - Are you:
 - married, or
 - in a marriage-type relationship, or
 - single?
 - Where do you live?
 - on-reserve?
Details – such as if this is your own community, or your spouse's?
 - How long have you lived here?
 - How many children do you have?
 - ages?
 - Do they live with you?
2. Employment
 - Do you have paid employment?
 - If so, where?
 - Do you like your job? Is your pay/wage sufficient for you/ your family?
3. Education
 - What is your level of education?

- Where did you go to school? (public school, residential school, college, *etc.*)
- Did/ do you enjoy going to school?

4. Cultural Involvement

- Are the traditions of your ancestors [your heritage] important to you?
 - Why, or why not?
- Are you aware of your Nation's traditional activities?
 - Do you participate in them?
 - If yes, please describe them and what they mean to you.
- Do you see a difference in the way of thinking and viewing Life between people from your own First Nation (including yourself), and in "mainstream Canada"?
- How important are spiritual beliefs to you?
 - Do you feel spiritually connected?
 - Please explain your answer.
 - What do you think would make you feel more spiritually connected?
- To you, what is "success"?

Explain the term "resilience" to the participant; include that it is not a term used in everyday contexts, how it came to be used in the sense that most know it, how it is defined in English, and some more popular meanings of the word, etc.

5. Do you speak your own language?

- If yes, do you have words and sayings related to *resilience*?
- Are you aware of any traditional stories or principles about *resilience*? If so, please describe these.
- Please describe how you feel about your level of involvement in your own First Nation, culturally or otherwise.

6. I understand that one of your self-perceptions is as a survivor of DV.

- What does being "healthy" or "having wellness" or "being well" mean to you?
 - Where does DV fit into your determination or thoughts of "health"?

- Did your community play a part in sustaining your health and well-being, both in your earlier life and in helping you get through the challenges of DV?
 - If so, please describe this (*Eg.*, What support networks were available to you and how did you use them? What supports might you have initiated to meet your own unique needs?).
- Please explain the connection, if you think there is one, regarding your health/ well-being and your life as a DV survivor. (Do you think you are/were just as healthy in either circumstance?)

Explain that “resilience” is a positive framing of DV interventions – that this lens does not take in the “dysfunctionality” or “negative tones” of much work in the area of anti-DV.

7. What are some things that, in a general sense, you see as *resilience*?
8. For those people you know who have gotten out of DV situations, how do you think they showed *resilience*?

Do not ask about the specifics of the DV in the participant’s life; these will arise from the discussions themselves. Instead, concentrate on the participant’s strengths, coping strategies and ability to care for herself (and children, as applicable) – her resilience factors.

9. For yourself as a DV survivor, how have you shown *resilience*?
 - What do you see as your own strengths that brought you from being a DV victim to a DV survivor?
(What are the factors and processes that promoted resilience in your life while you were being victimized by DV?)
 - Of those things you identify, which had the most impact on the reasons why you are no longer a DV victim?
 - For you, what resources in the community supported *resilience*?
 - In the time you were being victimized, what hindered you from moving away from DV?
10. Where do you think *resilience* comes from?
 - Do you feel that you have always had *resilience*, or that it were borne from your life as a DV victim?
 - Can you think of another example(s) of *resilience* in your life prior to being victimized by DV? Please describe this.
 - Do you think that you learned *resilience*? Please explain your answer.

In moving towards the end of the interview:

11. Is there anything else you wish to share that is related to the position you were in as a DV victim?
12. Along the lines of *resilience* in your own life, what are your own ideas about how to address DV?
13. If you think that resilience is something that can be learned, do you have any ideas of how *resilience* for both men and women (including youth and children) can be cultivated?
14. What would you like to see in educational or training curriculum/ material about DV victims and transformational processes that you think would help others in these situations?
 - Where in your community would you like to see these? (*Eg.*, social services programs, justice-related programming, high-school classes, pre-natal classes, *etc.*)
 - How can these be propelled, do you think?
 - Who do you think should be involved?
15. Is there anything else you wish to share that is related to *resilience* and *DV* in your life?