

Fostering Fire:  
Cultural Mentorship for Aboriginal Girls in Foster Care on Vancouver Island

by

Katherine Ritchie  
Bachelor of Social Work, University of Victoria, 2011

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction

© Katherine Ritchie, 2014  
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

## **Supervisory Committee**

Fostering Fire:  
Cultural Mentorship for Aboriginal Girls in Foster Care on Vancouver Island

by

Katherine Ritchie  
Bachelor of Social Work, University of Victoria, 2011

### **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. Monica Prendergast, Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Onowa McIvor, Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Robina Thomas, Department of Social Work  
**Outside Member**

## **Abstract**

### **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. Monica Prendergast, Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Onowa McIvor, Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Robina Thomas, Department of Social Work  
**Outside Member**

Historically and currently, the federal and provincial or territorial governments of Canada have neglected to ensure that Aboriginal children in foster care receive genuine, Aboriginal-centered cultural support. This research project aims to address the lack of available cultural programming for Aboriginal girls in foster care. Through interviews and a review of current literature, knowledge about cultural programming is examined and components of a successful mentorship model for Aboriginal girls in foster care are identified. Five semi-structured interviews were carried out and analyzed through grounded theory, complemented with autobiographical reflections. The study concludes that there is an evident need for cultural continuity programming for Aboriginal girls in foster care on southern Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and that a mentorship framework is the best applicable model.

## Table of Contents

<b>Supervisory Committee.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Notes on my Writing Style.....	2
Thesis Trail.....	2
Weaving to re-member myself within culture.....	5
Self-location in Murky Waters .....	5
My creation story.....	5
Keep on swimming! .....	9
Embracing the vulnerable process.....	14
Literature.....	15
Cultural programming .....	15
Structural programming considerations .....	18
Private, Personal Politics.....	18
Introducing a History in Class.....	20
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Literature Review Process.....	23
Epistemology.....	25
Indigenous Knowledge.....	25
Aboriginal perspectives and colonization .....	28
Cultural heterogeneity.....	30
Diversity in Identity.....	32
Identity and attachment .....	33
Aboriginal womanhood.....	34
Traditionally urban.....	35
Mentorship Programming Frameworks.....	36
Values and formalities.....	36
Recruiting and retaining female Aboriginal mentors .....	38
Representation & Policy.....	42
Aboriginal child welfare.....	42
Conclusions .....	44
<b>Chapter 3: Methodologies.....</b>	<b>46</b>
Getting Personal .....	47
Lifology: Building a Fire.....	48
Indigenous Methodologies and an Urban Girl .....	49
Critical Theory.....	50
Semi-Structured Interviews .....	52
Theoretical grounds.....	52

Participant recruitment .....	53
Interview process .....	55
Recording conversations .....	56
Grounded Theory .....	57
Autobiography .....	60
Personal and political .....	63
Embracing the Process .....	64
Sampling design .....	64
Bias in plan of inquiry .....	65
Ethics .....	65
Personal preparations .....	66
University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board .....	66
<b>Chapter 4: Research Findings .....</b>	<b>68</b>
Discussion of Questions .....	68
Versions .....	68
Participant Responses .....	70
Question 1 .....	70
Question 2 .....	74
Question 3 .....	78
Question 4 .....	82
Analysis and Theory of Fostering Fire .....	87
People .....	89
Programming .....	91
Processing ideas .....	92
Potential Benefits and Solutions .....	94
Potential benefits .....	94
Recommended solutions .....	95
Recapping and Looking Forward .....	97
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>99</b>
Summary of Interviews and Literature .....	101
Cultural mentoring .....	101
Pilot light .....	102
Relationships made for movement .....	103
Weaving all our multifarious relations together .....	104
Blackberry roots versus the arbutus tree .....	105
Elephants of oppression in the room .....	106
Youth versus adult mentors .....	107
Recommendations .....	109
Strengths and Weaknesses .....	114
Conclusions and Future Considerations .....	114
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>132</b>
Appendix A: Written Consent Form .....	136
Appendix B: Verbal Consent Script .....	136
Appendix C: Script for Verbal Invitation to Participate .....	139

Appendix D: Interview Questions.....	140
Appendix E: UVic Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval.....	142
Appendix F: Ethics Approval Renewal.....	143

## List of Figures

Figure 1: BC MCFD PDF, “Comprehensive Plan of Care: Identity” .....	8
Figure 2: Painting, “Balance of My Potential Aboriginality” .....	11
Figure 3: Drum, “Journey to Identify My Rhythm” .....	12
Figure 4: Chart, “Figure 4: Grounded Theory: Fostering Fire” .....	85

## Acknowledgments

I acknowledge that my formal education for this project took place on Coast Salish Territory. It is truly a blessing to live on this beautiful land while working on this topic for the people.

I acknowledge all the participants that helped to inform this document with their knowledge and voice. You have helped to create place-based knowledge around cultural mentorship in an area of lacking documentation. Your collaboration made this thesis possible.

I thank my life partner Derick for supporting my physical and emotional challenges during my writing. From tendonitis and depression due to long bouts of typing, or tears from lack of confidence or certainty, your love and motivation kept me going when I felt lost in identity and process. I love you forever.

Jenna, my best friend, even in another province, your energy in supportive phone calls always helped me calm down when I was in despair over writing or juggling life circumstances during this work. Thank you for being a present and incredibly insightful listener, often hearing more than my words could express.

To Jo, my loving foster mother, thank you for sharing your heart and home with me. Your respect and inclusion of Mother Earth during my adolescence strongly nourished my spiritual connection to all living beings. Your honesty and forgiveness as a parent and mentor taught me much about healthy relationships. I hope this work offers you a snapshot of how much you have positively impacted my life, and the lives of the many other foster children you cared for.

I also thank many other family and friends who helped diffuse the task of supporting me to more than just one or two people: Ross, beloved brother, and Austyn, beloved sister, thank you for listening to my avant-garde rants whether they be at noon or midnight. Gage, Tanille, Jasmine, Sarah, Adrienne, Sandrina, Cheryl A., Bruce, Ashley, Crystal, Emma, Bre, Kaz, Deb G., Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, Dr. Charlotte Reading, thank you for listening, caring and loving me when I was less than pleasant, present or strong during this process. To the many others who have supported my uncertainties during this writing process, thank you.

To my supervisors, Dr. Onowa McIvor and Dr. Monica Prendergast, committee member, Dr. Robina Thomas, and external examiner Dr. Jeannine Carrière my immense gratitude in helping to guide me in navigating my complicated identity, and in revising this project. Successful completion would not have been possible without the hours of communicating and insightful feedback you have all provided over the years. Thank you.



## **Dedication**

This project was undertaken for all children and youth living in foster care in BC. Know that you are never alone, nor are your identity challenges unseen. You are valid and important.

I also dedicate this project to all those who support Aboriginal children and youth in foster care in BC. May this work enable some of the rights you endlessly fight for, on behalf of Aboriginal children and youth in foster care.

In solidarity, Katherine Ritchie

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“A fire that is only paper will soon burn out. To get a lasting fire going, the tinder must ignite the kindling, the smaller sticks chopped into thinner pieces. Once your small group of original enthusiasts is excited, how do you inspire more people to get involved? How do you keep the structure open enough for air- new ideas and insights- to get in?”*

*To burn for a long time, to heat a room or provide a center for council, a fire also needs some big logs. But throwing a big log on a fire too soon can crush it. At what point is your idea or group ready to expand to a larger base? What must already be inflamed to support a larger scale of work?” (Starhawk, 2004, p. 122).*

This research project addresses the lack of cultural programming for Aboriginal girls in foster care on southern Vancouver Island, BC, Canada. Through the voices of social workers, faculty, and sessional instructors who work with Aboriginal and foster care communities, and through my own autobiography, I identify specific recommended components of a mentorship model for Aboriginal girls living in foster care. When considering a mentorship model for Aboriginal girls in care, I agree with Fisher Cree Nation scholar, and Canadian Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledges and Social Work at the University of Manitoba, Michael Hart (2002) that Aboriginal cultural teachings must be learned, supported, and experienced in ways that show reverence for earlier and future generations, and are also pertinent to the Aboriginal people of today. Although my focus is on Aboriginal girls and not Aboriginal boys, the data from literature and participants was largely applicable to any gender, and the proposed mentoring model framework would certainly be appropriate for any gender.

Although my mother told me when I was seven years old that my biological father was of Anishnabe descent, I was not engaged with Aboriginal culture prior to entering a foster home at age twelve. My foster home was also non-Aboriginal, further intensifying my sense of cultural void.

According to my mother, my biological father lived with his grandmother on the Six Nations of the Grand River Indian Reserve in Ontario. She does not know my father's name, or anything else about him, and neither do I. Because of this, I do not claim to be Aboriginal. My relationship with my biological mother has been difficult, and as I share personal stories I have done my best to portray her in a respectful and loving light. I will always love her.

**Notes on my writing style.** Throughout this thesis, the Aboriginal technique of illustrating key points with natural metaphors is employed, but rest assured: although the image of a winding forest trail on the west coast with uprising roots along the path, bottomless puddles, giant redwoods, and a bench with a beautiful vista at the end overlooking the ocean might be offered, rather than simply stating “a trail in BC,” this thesis is not about the forest. These metaphors are part of my language in my daily life, and including them here allows me to incorporate my autobiographical approach more thoroughly.

Additionally, the terms Aboriginal, Indigenous, and First Nations merit some consideration, as they have legal implications and evoke varying reactions. I have elected to use the term Aboriginal to describe my personal connection to culture. ‘Aboriginal’ is used in the Canadian Constitution to identify Indian, Inuit, and Métis cultural groups (Kesler, 2009). The term First Nations is used when describing “legally recognized reserve communities” consisting of one or more specific First Nation bands, and I acknowledge that many Métis people are not included by the term First Nation, and that the term First Nations, or alternatively, First Peoples, is not used outside of Canada (Kesler, 2009, p. 3).

## **Thesis Trail**

This first chapter acquaints readers with the story of my time before and during foster care as it relates to my current sense of cultural dislocation. Dyll, Francis and Tomaselli (2008) convey that

human experience is far too complex for a conventional, one-size-fits-all approach to inquiry (p. 348). In order to validate numerous perspectives on how to develop a mentorship model that supports cultural continuity for Aboriginal girls in care, my approach must respect the “guts of our field experiences,” and not take pre-digested mainstream textbook methods at face value (Dyll et al., 2008).

Chapter two, the literature review, identifies existing scholarship to ground myself in the discipline of this study, determines current policies and practices for supporting cultural identity for Aboriginal girls in care, and determines the way forward for future research. Topics in the review include historical and current cultural programming initiatives in Canada and BC with First Nations involving financing, epistemologies around Indigenous Knowledge and perspectives, and structural considerations in mentorship programming.

Chapter three describes the methodological foundations for the study: a mixed-method qualitative approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews and autobiography. This design uses autobiography to reflect on my personal experience of living a non-Aboriginal lifestyle in both my first home and non-Aboriginal foster home, and to expand my understanding of Indigenous research processes juxtaposed to required institutional processes. The chapter also includes specific details on my idiosyncratic processes in navigating this topic, my use of grounded theory, data sampling methods, and the structure of my interviews.

Chapter four presents my findings, directly sharing the voices of the five participants who were interviewed due to their expertise on my topic. It tracks their responses by interview questions along with my analytical commentary. Links to literature, my own experience of being in care, and correlations among all responses frame the discussion. Interview questions focused on critical components and conditions in a mentorship program, potential value for individuals and

communities, and their suggestions regarding the sustainability and transferability of a cultural mentorship program on southern Vancouver Island.

Finally, chapter five reviews the purpose of this thesis, assesses limitations present in the study, and also explores links between current literature and interviewee responses. Core categories that emerged from the interview data were: People, Processing Ideas, and Programming; these are the pillars for my future recommendations in developing a cultural mentorship model. Strengths and weaknesses, along with future considerations and recommendations based on my research findings are shared. Everything is woven together forming a colourful tapestry of voice, knowledge, and purpose.

**Weaving to re-member myself within culture.** This thesis incorporates an autobiographical thread woven throughout. I am living a female experience of cultural dislocation and absent parents and inevitably bring this to the work. My experience may share qualities with Aboriginal survivors of foster care, and yet no literature exists on whether Aboriginal girls in care in BC *feel* culturally dislocated, and whether or not their foster parents support them to learn about their culture during their time in care. So, what do we know?

There is an evident lack of information around cultural support for Aboriginal children in BC, specifically on how many children have been receiving cultural support: no one appears to be monitoring this (Carrière, 2007). Turpel-Lafond (2014) found “there is no comprehensive monitoring and oversight of residential care in BC to help ensure child and youth safety” including holistic health that encompasses their individual bio/psycho/social/spiritual health needs (p. 44). This lack is surprising, given that McKinnon (2006), in a study of the data being collected on the progress and outcomes of children in care or at risk of being in care in British Columbia, found that “BC tends to be ahead of most other provinces in moving to data systems that are more client-centered” (p. 6).

Concerned voters, foster parents, and social service workers in BC need to ask, “If not me, then who? If not now, then when?” (Watson, 2014, n.p.).

Creating this thesis offers me a place and a voice to help those who are overrepresented in social work practice, yet underrepresented in the research and knowledge production practices guiding their care. Before exploring the literature and policy contradictions I want to connect with you, the reader, and be transparent with what I know about my identity and how it rightly informs this discussion. With my disconnection from culture beginning at conception, I will now share with you my creation story.

### **Self-location in Murky Waters**

As water is always in motion, shifting the strength of its presence through movement, so has Aboriginal culture been in my life. For me, the tides of cultural dislocation were neap prior to living in foster care. My mother claimed to not know my biological father’s identity, and until I was seven, she told me that my European step-dad was my biological father. With no one else in my family nor any close friends of Aboriginal heritage, I was not exposed to Aboriginal culture during my childhood. No ceremonies or lessons in protocol, no rites of passage or ways of knowing. The following stories help to illustrate how this lack of culture has always been unconsciously removed from my life...until the tide changed.

**My creation story.** “Hey girl! You can totally swim out to me; it’s not that far. Plenty of room on this old boat for one more! Come on, whatcha waiting for?” Boy was he ever handsome. You know, tall, dark, devastatingly charming. A tipsy and excited woman takes a running dive off the dock in Port Dalhousie, Ontario, aiming for a boat with her dream man on it. She swims up to the boat in the early evening, is welcomed aboard, and together these strangers enjoy a passionate night. The next morning they go their separate ways and never see each other again. A romantic, fun

memory for some man out there, perhaps. I'll never know. What parallels exist between this one-night-stand and others? Many, I'm sure. It's not all that unique really, besides the boat part— that's pretty cool.

Fast-forward eight years.

“What's his name?”

“I don't know, Katie.”

“What do you mean? Where does he live, can I call him?” She stares down at the table. Tears welling in her eyes but held back... she was good at hiding them, unless she was drinking. Looking back up to her confused seven-year-old only daughter she says, “I don't know what his name is. He told me he lived on the Six Nations Indian Reserve with his grandma. We were drunk, Katie, we only ever saw each other that one night. When I found out I was pregnant with you I went back trying to find him, but I never did. I'm sorry, Katie.” I didn't really understand how she could have forgotten his name, or perhaps I refused to believe my step-dad wasn't actually my biological father.

“Does he look like this? I'll draw him for you.” I ask the waitress working at the local pub we're eating at for a pen and paper. I draw a seven-year-old's version of a Native man's face, long hair on both sides, stoic. I can't remember if my mom or I actually cried, but I do remember what the picture I drew looked like. I've attached myself to it. This memory ends here.

My elementary school years and final years living in my mother's care were spent attending Catholic schools in East Vancouver. During this time I learned about poverty and Jesus Christ, both of which I learn later are experiences indirectly linked with my potential Aboriginal ancestry. I gratefully acknowledge that my mother was a highly spiritual person encouraging me to pray, connect with nature, and sing gibberish to the stars off the balcony; when she asked what I was doing I told her I was singing to God to save the world. I sang and sang until she put me in choir for a few

years. Both my mother and foster mother were attracted to the natural elements of Mother Earth and I like to imagine I get a lot of my spiritual essence from them, and perhaps my father—it would be a way of knowing him.

Fast-forward again to age twelve, when I voluntarily moved into foster care; leaving Squamish territory (East Vancouver) behind, I landed in Snaw'now'as territory (Parksville) in 2001. My mother moved to Qualicum Beach from East Vancouver with my little brother, and social workers told me that if I wanted to mend the relationship with my mother I had to follow her to southern Vancouver Island. With no foster homes available in Qualicum Beach I was placed into one in Parksville; this is the major reason I have chosen to focus my work on southern Vancouver Island. My move into foster care due to my dysfunctional relationship with my mother is a longer story for another time. However, I must highlight how frustrating it was as a 12 year old trying to explain to my social workers what I needed from them: “My mom told me that my dad is Anishnabe from Six Nations. Can you help me find him? Can I do anything? Can you please ask my mom if she remembers anything else? What do you mean there’s nothing you can do? What can I do?”

tears.

unaided silence.

...

Silence, it seems, is powerful in the best and worst of ways. “We’re sorry, Katie, but without a name there is nothing we can do.” Under “Specific needs” in my *Comprehensive Plan of Care: Identity*, it reads, “Kate would like to know more about birth father,” then for services to be provided, “Therapy provided to explore this and other issues” (Figure 1, p. 8). That was the end of it. I felt empty, like half of me was missing. I remained unaware of the Qualicum First Nation’s community resources in the very city where I was attending middle school, unaware I had options for cultural



support. For whatever reason, even though these resources existed, they were inaccessible to me. Playing the ‘blame game’ just gets me angry, I’ve played it for long enough. Instead now, I choose to act. *Enough* silence.

Figure 1: BC MCFD PDF, “*Comprehensive Plan of Care: Identity*”

**Comprehensive Plan of Care – Identity**

Based upon the information from the Identity assessment, identify the specific needs and services required to achieve the desired outcome. If this is a review, transfer the relevant desired outcomes that have not yet been achieved from the previous Comprehensive Plan of Care to this Comprehensive Plan of Care.

Specific needs	Desired outcome	Description of services to be provided based upon the child/youth's needs	Target date	Results of review <small>(i.e. Desired Outcomes /Achieved, Not achieved, Partially achieved)</small>
Would like to know more about birth father.	That Kate has all available knowledge about background.	Family therapy provided to explore this and other issues.	May 2001	

How many Aboriginal girls in care want to know about where they came from? Many, I’m sure. How many actually get the support? Who is monitoring this?

**Keep on swimming!** My loving foster family in Parksville made tremendous efforts to give me the brightest future imaginable. Not only was my foster mother a fantastic caregiver, she also believed in a nature-based spirituality which was woven into my daily life for the entire six

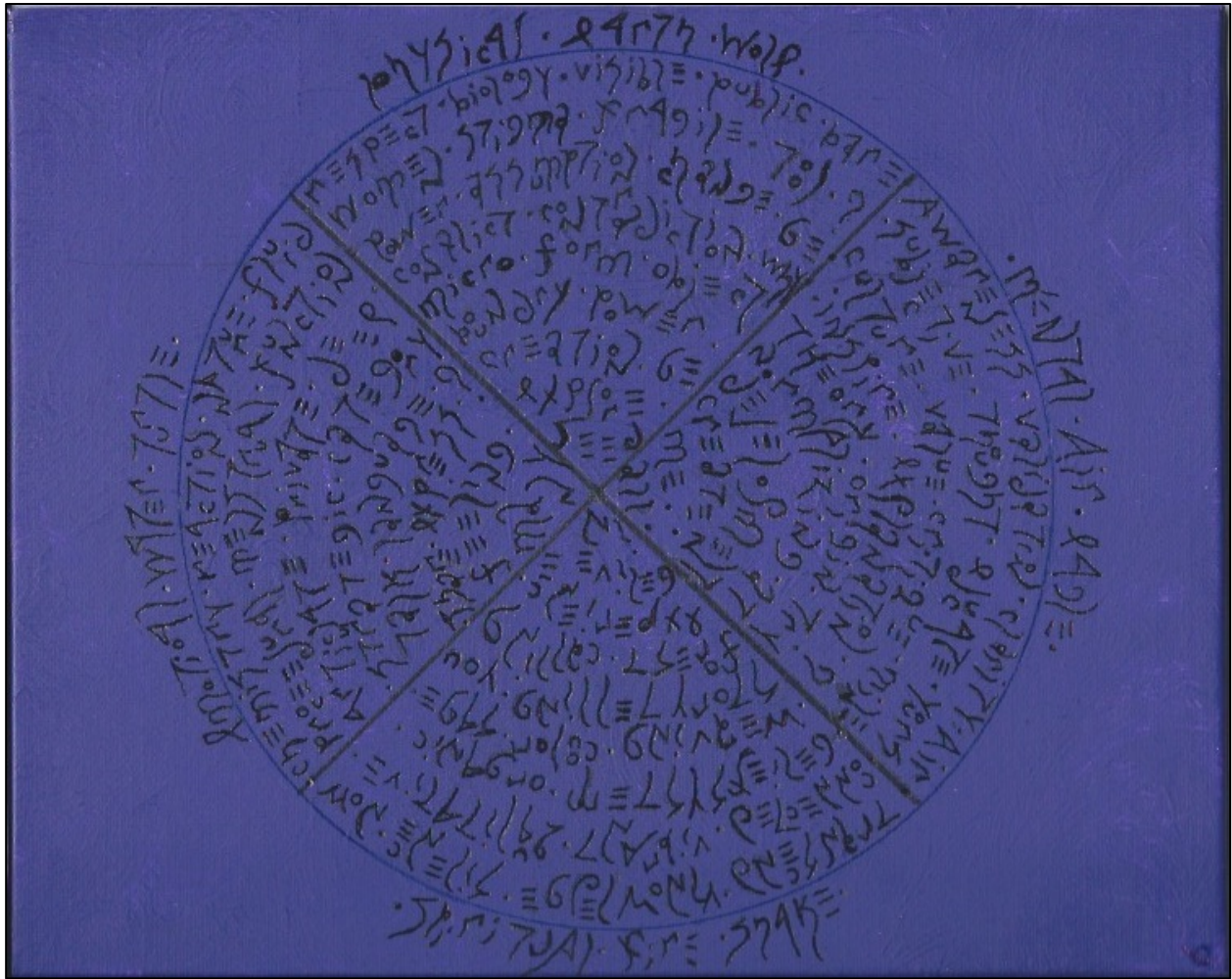
years I lived with her. I am grateful for that. This worldview fit nicely with my literal tree hugging nature; ever since I was young I could be caught hugging trees and thanking them for the air. With my birth mother planning on being a nun for most of her life, I've come to realize that religious and spiritual women played a large role in my life growing up. Has this influenced my femininity, spiritual essence and where I get my strength? I realize that my story is not generalizable to all Aboriginal girls in foster care, but this background is important to relay for both my reader and for myself.

Akin to traditional methods of knowledge transmission among many First Nation cultures, this research will fill gaps within the literature and practice, with voices and stories belonging to participants, and myself. Remembering my past and hearing about the present through interviews and literature, I pay attention to my feelings, assumptions, and thoughts. Listening to others during this research project has been an incredible learning experience and there are many lessons and ideas worth sharing. Many well-known Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal writers discuss the importance of self-location in order to do ethical research of benefit to Aboriginal populations (Kovach, 2010; Brown and Strega, 2005). My thesis would not be complete without including my self-location. It would feel not only irresponsible in this research, but also like I was missing out on an opportunity for self-exploration if I ignored this aspect.

From the story you read above you can see I am a “potentially Aboriginal person” who has never lived in a First Nations community, nor had exposure to Aboriginal cultural events as a child. I encountered few mentors who helped instil traditional values and pride in me. Most of the knowledge I gained about Aboriginal culture was from the media. How many Aboriginal children and youth in foster care reach desperately to connect, feeling that anything will do? That teenager in me silently screamed, “Give me a numbing agent, give me *anything* to feel connected! I want to know what I'm

missing.” I first experienced on-going support for cultural continuity through social work courses at the University of Victoria. In one of my undergraduate social work courses, for example, I painted a medicine wheel representing my potential Aboriginal womanhood, and called it *Balance of My Potential Aboriginality* (Figure 2). This painting is written in a graffiti script I developed during my youth, and it is intentionally difficult to read, a way to protect my private thoughts (a transcription is offered at Figure 2). At the same time, the First People’s House (FPH) on campus was under construction, lending power to the silent, seemingly isolated internal dialogue I was experiencing when I began at the University of Victoria. “The search for identity encouraged some to begin observing First Nation people for the first time in their life” (Carrière, 2007, p. 54).

Figure 2: Painting, “Balance of My Potential Aboriginality”



Left Quadrant: Emotional, Water, Turtle

Chemistry, reaction, nature, fluid, procedural, menstruation, function, articulate, private, deep, talk, language, share, express?, feeling, many.

Top Quadrant: Physical, Earth, Wolf

Respect, biology, visible, public, bare, women, stigma, fragile, tool?, conflict, contradiction, why, micro, form, object, creation, be, explore, seed.

Right Quadrant: Mental, Air, Eagle

Awareness, validation, clarity, air, subjective, thought, educate, yours, culture, value, critique, mine, inspire, explanation?, theory, origin, try, development, create, all.

Lower Quadrant: Spiritual, Fire, Snake

Transcend, knowledge, silence, now, connected, vibrant, qualitative, belief system, organic, weaving, colour, sage, storytelling, you, forest, calling, experience, believe, in.

In this building I attended my first pow-wow and bought my drum, and also attended a ‘drum painting workshop’ to paint it (Figure 3); reaching for any kind of culture through my personal comfort zone of painting, I named my drum *Journey to Identify My Rhythm*. This drum represents both my potential Aboriginality through use of colour and medicine wheel design, and also my Celtic roots stemming from my birth mother’s Latvian and Scottish heritage through the hand-painted labyrinth. The motto of the BSW Practicum Orientation was “Keep on Swimming,” and we were each given a rubber ducky labeled “University of Victoria School of Social Work.” My mom kept on swimming to that boat find my father, and so will I to find supports for others. Writing this thesis was me diving off the deep end.

Figure 3: Drum, “Journey to Identify My Rhythm”



**Embracing the vulnerable process.** Discussing my potential Aboriginal background by connecting memories about my identity with the stories of participants and the literature, acts as what Abolson & Willet (2005) call powerful resistors against the institutional oppression of Aboriginal culture within the academy. Honesty about who I am, what I know and why I care helps to validate my position within my research, so that others who are also interested in Aboriginal child welfare can potentially use my work to inform their practice. Abolson and Willet (2005) state, “if you want to do ethical research that accurately represents who it is for and who it represents, then you have to be positioned in it and connected to it” (p. 104).

Considering my position within this research has been important, but for me the healing properties that will come from it are yet to be seen. So far, stripping off my shell has been more uncomfortable than anything, yet through connecting my story with thousands of others and bringing attention to this *will* help in identity re-claiming journeys, and maybe assist in re-membering Aboriginal youth in care with their Aboriginal culture.

If Aboriginal girls in care are offered mentorship involving positive role modeling and the instilling of traditional Aboriginal values as children, perhaps they can better avoid culturally oppressing and isolating paths. As an example of identity displacement on multiple levels, I did not have Aboriginal mentors in my life until I left foster care and entered university. When asked what might have helped me when I was in care and searching for my cultural identity, I believe someone who “got me,” someone who had been there, someone who was just a bit ahead of me on his or her journey would have made a big difference. It would not have mattered what Nation they were from. Although as an adult, I now think an Elder would be good for culturally disconnected youth, another teen would potentially have been able to more so *meet me where I was at*. We need to remember how to meet these kids where they are at on their journeys.

My story of cultural dislocation and a fractured identity may share similarities to some of the approximately 4,880 Aboriginal children and youth living in foster care in BC, many of whom live in non-Aboriginal foster homes (Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents, 2014). I have found through this project and a review of literature dating back a decade that the presence of a mentor in the life of a young Aboriginal person growing up in foster care is found to contribute to overall health and positive identity development throughout his or her lifespan. All expert interviewees agreed, along with many scholars, that mentorship has numerous reciprocal benefits for the mentor, the mentee, and for society as a whole (Ahrens et al, 2008; DuBois & Rhodes, 2008). Various studies, such as *The mental health and well-being of Aboriginal children and youth: Guidance for new approaches and services* (BC, MCFD, 2004), and *Youth in foster care with adult mentors during adolescence have improved adult outcomes* (Ahrens, DuBois, Richardson et al., 2008) have shown that with a mentor's support, Aboriginal youth in foster care can develop healthy life skills and pride in their identity that may be carried throughout their lives.

This research project addresses the lack of available cultural programming for Aboriginal girls in foster care. Five interviews, supplemented with literature over the last decade, begin to identify which components should and could be integrated into a mentorship model for Aboriginal girls living in care in the Greater Victoria area. Aboriginal girls in care who are culturally dislocated should be the first to benefit from this work, whether through new programming options or through policy changes (Abolson and Willet, 2005). The following section offers some history on British Columbia's Aboriginal foster care situation, including cultural programming history and demographics, illuminating the importance of this thesis project.

## Literature

**Cultural programming.** First Nations social services in Canada were under the control and management of the federal Department of Indian Affairs until the 1940s. The Department's main purpose was to provide relief in the form of food rations and to "prepare young Indian children for assimilation and Christian citizenship" (Armitage, 2011, p. 113); essentially, it was a welfare resource for Aboriginal children who were not being taken care of 'well enough' from the perspective of Canadian government social workers (Armitage, 2003, p. 125). In 1951 the Indian Act was amended to allow provinces to negotiate with reserves regarding welfare, provincial health care, and education services (Armitage, 2003). As a result, each province created differing action plans, only some of which received federal funding, creating a provincial disparity in the "quantity and quality of child welfare programs available" to status Indians across Canada (Armitage, 2003, p. 126).

Between 1995-2001 there was a 71.5% increase in the number of on-reserve children with Indian status being placed in foster care (Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents, 2014). From 1997 to 2004, the number of Aboriginal Children and Youth in Care (CYiC) in BC increased from 2,901 to 4,375, while the number of non-Aboriginal CYiC dropped from 6,309 to 4,740 (Hughes, 2006). Data from the 2001 National Household Survey showed that of the approximately 30,000 children in care in Canada in 2011, 14,225 were aboriginal. Overall, four per cent of Aboriginal children were in care, compared to a scant 0.3 per cent of non-Aboriginal children, or 15,345 children (Woods, 2014, n.p.). The history and statistics show that even though the overall Aboriginal child population makes up a very small percentage of the total child population in BC, Aboriginal children have consistently made up the majority of the children in care in BC for over four decades.



Hearst (2012) attributes the anxious push to maintain cultural ties with Aboriginal children placed in non-Aboriginal foster homes to the history of Western politics, including the silencing of cultural importance on positive identity formation. Subsequently, the foster care system in Canada was founded with negative attention to cultural or ethnic differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal foster children. Accordingly, the incorporation of Aboriginal cultural maintenance was viewed as an add-on to the existing Western-centred system (Hearst, 2012). When Aboriginal children are removed from their family homes and placed into foster care with the government, it is generally recommended that the child be supported to remain in close contact with their extended family and community. And yet, there is currently no monitored and regulated plan that consistently ensures cultural continuity for the Aboriginal child will be supported during their time in foster care in BC, whether placed with Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal foster parents. All Aboriginal CYiC have general plans of care that may not always lead to actions that insure their cultural safety. A more personalized Cultural Plan of Care rather than a general one that does not address specific cultural needs could allow a mentoring option to fill it.

In British Columbia, social workers must develop a cultural plan aimed to preserve Aboriginal children's cultural identity when being adopted by a non-Aboriginal family. The policy does not apply to Aboriginal adoptive parents. While a child is in care of the Province, their First Nation, Inuit or Métis community is to be actively involved in a meaningful way in all areas of the child's life. Some information that is gathered to develop cultural plans are: the child's heritage, genealogy, language, traditional foods, spiritual practices, extended family and access to traditional teachings to ensure there is a continuity of the child's culture while in foster care... The main goal of the cultural plan was to boost Aboriginal children's positive sense of identity (Carrière, 2007, pp. 15, 16).

The BC First Nations Health Council and BC Provincially funded health authorities are aiming to allocate funds towards a more holistic approach which pays “more attention to the non-medical, cultural, and spiritual determinants of health” (BC Provincial Health Officer, 2009, p. 227). However, a review of the literature showed that most mentorship models for Aboriginal children focused on career and academic development rather than on healthy identity development, and rarely if ever were they designed for Aboriginal children and youth specifically in care (F.O.R.C.E. Society, 2014; Fostering Education, 2014; Foster Parent Support Services Society, 2014). Of the programs available in Greater Victoria for Aboriginal youth in care, Native Friendship Centers, and Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services—both serving *urban* Aboriginal populations—appear to be organizations that offer ongoing cultural identity supports for Aboriginal CYiC (Aboriginal Non-profits BC, 2012), but not in the form of a cultural mentoring program. Even the *Guide to Aboriginal organizations and services in BC* (2013), which includes over 1100 resources, only has one resource listed for foster parents, located in Vancouver, and no resources for Aboriginal children or youth in care in all of BC.

Outside of Greater Victoria, other large cities in BC have innovative programs for Aboriginal CYiC. The Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) of Vancouver is a non-for-profit society formed in 1988 to “address Native youth issues when growing numbers of young people began leaving reserves for the city... today 60% of the Native population lives in urban settings, and 60% of the overall Native population is under 25” (UNYA, 2014). UNYA operates Raven’s Lodge, a five-bed facility for female Aboriginal youth in the care of Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS), in addition to other cultural programs including sweats, language classes, traditional art and music classes, and other non-Aboriginal, youth-oriented activities. Their mandate revolves around the idea of “culture as therapy”, advocating that cultural programming for

Aboriginal CYiC nurtures their cultural identity leading to healthier outcomes, appropriate coping strategies, and healthier long-term relationships (UNYA, 2014).

A report issued by the Ministry of Child and Family Development in collaboration with the University of Victoria's Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network noted that non-Aboriginal foster parents in BC were frustrated with the lack of consistency for cultural planning for their Aboriginal foster children (Carrière, 2007). In addition, Carrière also found that although there were policies in place to promote cultural continuity for the kids in care, there were very few resources to support the policy, nor was there sufficient training for non-Aboriginal foster parents to support the cultural identity of their Aboriginal foster child (2007). Praxis is clearly lacking in this area; with Aboriginal children overrepresented in the foster care system in BC, cultural planning should be a top priority in their relationship with the MCFD (Carrière, 2010). Small steps are being taken, as the BC MCFD is currently implementing a “caregiver support network” whereby foster parents will be able to reach out to other foster parents who will make up a network of support (Turpel-Lafond, 2014).

**Structural programming considerations.** Upon talking with community members and reviewing the literature, it appears the challenge is not so much about gaining public support, but of ensuring program delivery is ethically sustained; with program developers aware of systemic challenges for overcoming structural racism (Battiste, 2008). Due to historical and ongoing colonial presence in mainstream social service provision, Aboriginal mentorship program developers must reflect critically on the current educational system in terms of epistemology, reciprocal benefits, and most importantly, how these processes are achieved in an ethically appropriate and sustainable manner (Battiste, 2008).

Programming frameworks for First Nation populations are overshadowed by historical assimilative abuse, which increases the need for Aboriginal peoples to directly control programming. The history of the Sixties Scoop always lingers in the margins: this alliterative, euphemistic term refers to a period of rapid Aboriginal child apprehension that still resonates today; in 1955 there were twenty-nine Aboriginal CYiC in BC, then in 1964 the number spiked to 1,446, and in 2013 there were 4,450 (Turpel-Lafond, 2013). These numbers state but do not capture the ripple effects of distrust many surviving family members from this time have towards the MCFD and other formal programming frameworks as a result.

### **Private, Personal Politics**

“Not another handout. There are so many programs and services available for those people, why would you waste your thesis time on them?” This was a comment about my topic that came from someone near the beginning of my research. I’ve heard this before and it aggravates my mind, my soul, and even gets to me on a physical level in my gut. How each of us gains, interprets and applies the knowledge we have about the world, and how we blend this with our belief systems is subjective, valid and carries varying levels of truth for each of us. As a critic and survivor of this ‘handout’ system myself, falling between the cultural cracks was my experience. It is a shame we need to argue for Aboriginal programs that support cultural continuity. Yes, there are numerous social service programs available to Aboriginal people. Yes, the majority of people uneducated on the topic of institutional racism and lateral violence concerning First Nations peoples in Canada may consider quantity over quality when it comes to service delivery. But these are ultimately excuses for ignorance. And yes, I believe this undertaking is worth my time.

I believe the only universal component in the saying ‘treat others how you want to be treated’ is that of respect. There is another version of this out-dated saying that I prefer. It was introduced to

me by Secada (1989) during my social work undergraduate studies at the University of Victoria and is the notion of Equity vs. Equality. I agree with that equity is a necessary component in our efforts to create a more just world, and that *unquantifiability* is a barrier in a world that overestimates the value of economics over community wellness. Quantity over quality is no good here.

I resist assimilation by choosing to disclose and embrace my fluid identity and encouraging others to do the same, rather than to live in silence or fear. Cultivating a positive attitude towards developing and maintaining identity has been (for me) about focusing on the positive things and people surrounding my identity, like extended family and spiritual connection to nature. Whether I was Aboriginal or not I would have these pieces in my life, so I have searched for commonalities between the values I grew up with in a non-Aboriginal environment with values I have learned are inherent in many Aboriginal communities (as in valuing extended family and earth-based spirituality). In this way, I ground the fluid identity of my past, present and future in who I have been, who I am, and who I will become. With a spiritual essence at the center of my identity I consciously reclaim new and old notions of my identity.

### **Introducing a History in Class**

“I apologize if this is a stupid question, but I grew up in the Maritimes and I’ve never heard of residential schools. Were they a big problem back then?” This question, posed by numerous students, researchers, professionals and children, is not uncommon; many people in Canada have little to no knowledge of the legacy of residential schools and consequent Residential School Syndrome. I look at my community college social work students in the square classroom they sit in; some eyebrows are raising and I can tell this is going to be a messy can of worms.

I sit on my desk; take a deep breath and say, “It’s not a stupid question at all. It’s an important one and I’m glad you asked it. This topic can be very heavy emotionally, so I would like people to

speak in turn and be very respectful as we navigate this. Would anyone in the class like to start this conversation off?" I take notice of a box of tissues in the corner of the classroom and I'm grateful they're there.

After about 15 seconds of silence a mature student raises her hand and says, "My mother went to residential schools, and I'd argue the negative effects have never ended. She was abused in every way you can imagine there, publically humiliated, not allowed to speak her language or participate in culture without being punished. It traumatized her and it haunts our entire family to this day."

"Thank you for sharing that. These are difficult and very important conversations for us to have as social service workers." The tissues are being passed around and used now.

Another student asks, "Isn't it true that tens of thousands of Aboriginal children were apprehended by the Canadian government during the Sixties Scoop and forcefully put into residential schools?"

"Yes it is," I say.

Another student has his iPad open and with his eyes glued to the screen declares, "It says here that in 1955, 1% of the children in foster care in BC were Aboriginal, then in 1964 it jumped to 34%, and now over half of all children in the BC foster care system are Aboriginal? It also says the current estimate for how many Aboriginal kids are in care is between 22,500 and 28,000! That's messed-up."

I acknowledge the statement with a slow head nod and say, "Yes. And the article written by Dolha you're reading is from back in 2011."

According to Hoey, Kozlowski, Lucus, and Sinha (2012), in 2011 BC had 22 Aboriginal child welfare agencies providing child welfare services, and eight additional Aboriginal child welfare agencies in the planning or starting stages of setting up. These 22 active agencies in BC provide

services to about 120 of the 200 bands in the province (Hoey et al., 2012). The first student who opened the conversation rightly asks, “But why are so many Aboriginal kids still in foster care?” Another damn good question.

Mr. iPad states, “So it says here that after all that, some Judge named Kimelman in the 80’s said, ‘With the closing of residential schools rather than providing resources on reserves to build economic security and providing services to support responsible parenting, society found it easier and cheaper to remove children from their homes and apparently fill the market demand for children in Canada and the U.S.’ (Dolha, 2009, n.p.) Whoa, so they were selling the kids off? How do we not know about this?”

Another quick student responds, “Well... think about who writes our high school curriculum and who runs the news... a bunch of white guys monitored by the government. Aboriginal affairs aren’t equally represented in the media and literature; I don’t think we’re supposed to hear much about it.” My students are so smart.

I assign further readings on this topic for the class, to look into what happened to the Aboriginal kids who ended up in foster care in BC. A student declares, “It’s good that we focus so much on personal bias and assumptions in this course. Alarie and Lévesque (n.d.) stated that in the 80’s, the Canadian Council on Social Development concluded the majority of child welfare agency staff were white middle-class people, who assumed that Aboriginal foster kids were better off in white-middle class families rather than low-income Aboriginal families. I grew up in poverty and I turned out fine, love doesn’t come from money.” Several students are nodding their heads in agreement.

“I grew up in poverty too, and I agree with you. The understated fact is that poverty arguably leads to neglect, which leads to most Aboriginal child and youth apprehensions” I say. These are

important conversations to bring into the classroom, the living room, and the family room. Adult students airing their thoughts on Aboriginal child welfare for the first time is a powerful thing to witness, and those wanting to be effective in work that is social should partake. I challenge you; whatever rooms you might be in, wherever the corridors may be for you that connect you with others... engage! On some level you have seen what is happening. Inquiry is more valuable than ignorance.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

*“At present, there is no articulated, overarching and comprehensive strategy for delivering Aboriginal child welfare services throughout the province to achieve responsive, effective, accessible, equitable and culturally appropriate services that meet the needs of Aboriginal children, youth and their families and desired health, well-being and social outcomes.*

*Nor has there been effective collaboration and coordination with other B.C. government ministries such as Health and Education to develop an integrated approach to addressing the needs of Aboriginal children, youth and their families” (Turpel-Lafond, 2013, p. 53).*

This literature review identifies existing scholarship to ground myself in the discipline of this study, determines current policies and practices for supporting cultural identity for Aboriginal girls in care, and determines the way forward for future research. Valid knowledge informing this thesis is from not only from literature, but also firsthand accounts of people working in the field of social work, education, Aboriginal scholarship, and Aboriginal guardianship. My personal bias will be explained, before outlining the logistical process for conducting this literature review, and the importance of the ideological opening section.

### **Literature Review Process**

This literature review examines policies that may be in breach of responsibility for the cultural support owed to Aboriginal children in foster care. Most of the information within the literature review is from Aboriginal writers and scholars who have worked in the field themselves, or are advocates for cultural continuity for Aboriginal foster children and have offered ideas on how we can realize this in praxis.

Evidence for this literature review was gathered mainly from peer-reviewed journals, Aboriginal databases, and articles published by Canadian Universities (including dissertations and conference proceedings), or Canadian governing bodies and organizations. It was conducted over a one-year period. Literature was selected based on most recent date of publication in a Western Canadian context, breadth of information offered, peer-revision and credibility of author in their respective fields, relevance to the topic of Aboriginal knowledge creation and transmission, and focus on the topic of Aboriginal mentorship programming in Canada. The literature review search included the following key words: Aboriginal foster care, Aboriginal mentorship, Aboriginal culture, Canadian foster care, Vancouver Island, Aboriginal resources, Aboriginal girls' health. Additional resources from academic journals, news reports, and books were used to explicate statistics and historical concepts.

Different perspectives and ways of knowing are the focus for the first section in this review, on epistemology. Making meaning from life's cultural experiences can leave huge impacts on how we understand future events and ourselves. Therefore, perspectives ranging from Western to Indigenous Knowledge are explored, to see how these ways of knowing could or should be incorporated into a mentorship model. The heart of mentorship is the passing down of knowledge and meaning; accordingly, the base from which the knowledge originated is of notable importance, and must be addressed first.

The next section, discussing Aboriginal culture, briefly outlines the different First Nations located on Vancouver Island and provides provincial information about territory as well. Aboriginal, female identity formation is the main focus of this section, leading into a discussion about urban multi-Nationhood and socio-cultural dislocation.

The following section, on mentorship programming frameworks, begins by considering examples of current successful Aboriginal youth programs, before describing challenges around how formal or informal mentorship programs should be. International and provincial policies concerning cultural support for Aboriginal children in foster care are examined. Best practices of recruiting and retaining Aboriginal female volunteers to act as mentors are also explored.

The final section, on representation, describes the traditional scenario of Aboriginal child welfare in First Nation communities. A historical context of Canadian child welfare practices is offered, reiterating that Aboriginal values must be at the centre of discussion.

Five pieces of pre-2000 literature have been included, because they were either foundational to this thesis focus or offered important historical information. Three international studies are also included that centre on Australia's best practices of working with Aboriginal communities. Australian and Canadian Aboriginal peoples have comparable colonial histories of assimilation and consequent pressure to change colonial-based policy (Armitage, 1995).

## **Epistemology**

This section explores what it means to know about, internalize, and apply Indigenous Knowledge as compared to some indoctrinated Western understandings. Aboriginal perspectives on knowledge acquisition and its application to mentoring frameworks are explored, followed by a focus on shifting away from Western pedagogy in Aboriginal mentoring of Aboriginal foster children.

**Indigenous Knowledge.** Indigenous Knowledge (IK) suggests that humans gain the most knowledge from symbolic literacy (dreams, introspection, and subjective understanding), rather than from surface-level human encounters. Since “Indigenous people’s epistemology is derived from the immediate ecology,” as described above, “Indigenous knowledge represents a complex and dynamic capacity of knowing, a knowledge that results from one’s ecological environment... and talents

necessary to survive and sustain themselves in that environment” (Battiste, 2008, p. 499). Indigenous Knowledge is derived from Indigenous peoples, and places Indigenous knowledge systems as the central component in research (Walker, 2001). IK has been dismissed by researchers in education for decades as either a threat to the mainstream “Euro/Americentrism and/or as a commodity to be exploited” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008, p. 135). IK can be understood as “constantly shared, making all things interrelated and collectively developed and constituted. There is no single author of Indigenous Knowledge and no single method for understanding its totality” (Battiste, 2008, p. 500); Battiste’s argument is potential support for urban Aboriginal mentorship, grounded in a multi-First Nation position.

Aboriginal children and youth in foster care who are dealing with segregation and marginalization due to systemic effects of colonization in their lives need to understand that if their IK is kept from them they are being further subjugated. “We have an obligation to each other,” (Ormiston, 2005, p. 5), and to our future generations of children who have already dealt with intergenerational injustices to bring these issues together on a collective level, both on the First Nations and Western agenda. Mentorship in cultural knowledge can directly address these urgent needs.

I understand IK epistemology to involve the process of creating and applying internalized knowledge, meaning that the knowledge itself carries a very subjective socio-cultural code. When considering this in relation to Aboriginal children living in foster care, we may wonder how their lived experiences (process of creating internalized IK), and sense of identity (application of internalized IK) manifest in social circles. Is there a middle ground between these two different understandings of how we gain and use knowledge, and if so, should such an interface be emphasized in an Aboriginal mentorship framework? So the question becomes, how can an

Aboriginal mentorship model affirm long-term, positive, cultural identity praxis among Aboriginal girls in care? We begin by looking at the topic through Indigenous perspectives.

My effort to understand and respect IK is not only a personal journey of learning, but also an attempt to question hegemonic and Western monopolies on research methodologies in academia. For instance, like Walker (2001), I found that all of my interview participants naturally introduced the idea of interconnections between all people, despite the fact that questions did not explicitly ask about it; some even used spiritual, rather than academic or intellectual, motivations to justify the importance of an urban mentorship model. Constructing this platform where Aboriginal scholars can research and grow according to Indigenous methodologies based in IK has the potential to support Indigenous self-sufficiency beyond academia and the Western dominated policy, programming, and production zone.

Kincheloe & Steinberg (2008) discuss educational benefits potentially gained from analyzing the importance of academic practices pertaining to “Indigenous/subjugated knowledges” (pp. 147-150). They identify three consequential benefits of Aboriginal social service programming led by Aboriginal peoples, which I have supplemented with relevant examples;

Indigenous Knowledge:

1. *Promotes rethinking our purposes as educators.* If Aboriginal children in foster care are alerted to the socio-political context around their Aboriginal identity they can ask informed questions, and consider new perspectives relevant to their subjective understanding of Aboriginality.
2. *Focuses attention on the ways knowledge is produced and legitimated.* Aboriginal children in the mainstream school system are being taught that the winners of political struggles have the best modes of producing knowledge and may therefore create the dominant knowledge; recognizing how IK can also be used/misused may help to demystify that status quo.

3. *Encourages the construction of just and inclusive academic spheres.* Appropriately equitable representations of cultural knowledge can be encouraged through multiple cultural spheres.

**Aboriginal Perspectives and Colonization.** Cree/Métis writer Anderson (2000) argues that the process of colonization is inherently violent and the cycle of intergenerational trauma began with placing Aboriginal children in abusive foster homes and residential schools, removed from healthy kinship relationships that may have otherwise supported cultural identity formation. This perspective is shared by many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars alike, who argue that Aboriginal perspectives that are more inclusive of community, culture, and family relations in the raising of Aboriginal children in foster care, are by their very nature more appropriate when applying foster care support to Aboriginal children in care (Blackstock, 2009; Carroll, Russell & Turpin, 2014). One of the most common responses to Western frameworks of Aboriginal child welfare is Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) (Blackstock, 2009). Oppression can be understood as limiting someone else's choices through coercion. AOP is a broad field. Regarding Aboriginal child welfare, AOP frameworks are intended to embrace diversity and empower the oppressed; however, there is not much evidence that AOP is an effective approach in Aboriginal child welfare (Blackstock, 2009). This may be due to the lack of a consistent definition, or because AOP is centred on the singular focus of anti-oppression, rather than promoting a broader, holistic support system of cultural continuity.

Hart (2002) argues that the agenda of colonization is based on two pillars, the first being a mono-centric perspective of asserting ideals, and the second is the "need to legitimize their dominion over Aboriginal peoples" (p. 25). Colonization has gone on for centuries with techniques such as the stripping of "Indian Status" and forced assimilation into mainstream Euro-centric education, job availability, and identity development. Over 150,000 Aboriginal children were stolen from their

homes in Canada between 1857 and 1996, forced to endure the Canadian Residential School System (AANDC, 2014). During this time language, culture, and family values were forbidden, undermined, and abused by authoritative figures aiming to assimilate the children into a foreign and juxtaposed mainstream ideology. The consistent disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal children and youth in foster care in BC can be separated from the history of violence and assimilation rooted in colonialism. Understandably, Aboriginal people in the aftermath of colonization may feel disempowered and detached from their ancestry, an intergenerational, cultural identity dislocation.

What is now being called the “Millennium Scoop” reflects the ongoing removal of Aboriginal children into foster care at present, with its name reminiscent of the Sixties Scoop (Sinclair, 2007, p. 67). Implications of colonization on Aboriginal girls in foster care include their understanding of Indigenous Knowledge as it applies to understandings around healthy sexuality, their traditional and modern roles as Aboriginal women in family and community, and competence in asserting themselves in vulnerable situations (Redfern, 2009).

Subsequently, Aboriginals today and youth in particular struggle to be who we are and live a modern life in western society... up-rootedness, disenfranchisement, and loneliness can lead to pain and anxiety that puts Aboriginals at risk of engaging in coping behaviours and activities that could ultimately harm us. When our youth turn to drugs and alcohol, or engage in indiscriminate sexual behaviours it is often an attempt to fill the void left by the loss of our connection to Spirit, community and traditions. (Redfern, 2009, 14-15)

“Cultural oppression” is paired with social practices that degrade Aboriginal peoples’ social systems, such as education, social welfare and cooperative education systems (Hart, 2002, p. 25). In my research, the process of hearing the perspectives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers who support Aboriginal girls in foster care and promote their cultural identity offers a perspective on how

best to proceed in supporting cultural identity maintenance. Retaining the integrity of this intention follows Kovach's (2009) suggestions to centre voice and representation in research, with social service workers and community members' voices positioned at the heart of my research.

“An abundance of research and documentation, including the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, have shown how children in residential schools lost their culture, family, identity, and language, and suffered abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, and spiritual)” (BC Provincial Health Officer, 2009, p. 224). As a result, “Colonization and cultural deprivation have created an environment that has negatively impacted social structures, personal psychology, and coping strategies of a majority of the Aboriginal population” (p. 224). These multigenerational experiences combined with losses associated with child apprehensions have added to inequalities in the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal population and are arguably linked to the detachment of cultural identity (Carrière, 2007).

**Cultural Heterogeneity.** Curriculum theorist Ted Aoki's (1984), *Toward curriculum inquiry in a new key*, considers how humans relate to the world as a product, versus how we might co-create meaning with the world. This perspective was one of the first Canadian curriculum studies texts that encouraged program designers to critically deconstruct how we have been educated, and to explore how we make meaning from and with education. Literature in curriculum studies also suggests that a broader holistic framework focused on human/world relationships is more beneficial to students (or mentees) rather than a separatist perspective, because it probes deeper into the existential meaning of what it means to be human living in and with this world (Aoki, 1984). I question the emphasis on self-efficacy and empowerment, particularly in academic or economic terms, as the central focus of mentorship, as I collaboratively seek to map out a culturally protective mentorship model framework. When investigating educational settings that support the identity of



young Aboriginal peoples, we should consider the intentions and assumptions inherent in the educational foundations, and move beyond surface-layers of intent.

The value of a mentorship program to support Aboriginal girls' cultural identity maintenance might be best understood if we appreciate their "personal stories" as more accurate accounts rather than a general "cultural story" (Saylor, 2003, p. 110). McCabe (2008) also emphasizes the importance of personal and collective storytelling in the healing process for Aboriginal people, suggesting the "inner dialogue" of storytellers conveys their subjective knowledge of mind, body, emotion, and spirit as it relates to themselves and the external world—a perspective on interconnection also shared by Aoki (1984). This becomes important when we think about the subjective understanding of identity maintenance for mentees, juxtaposed with external sociocultural and environmental influences. Our location and place link our "present with the past and our personal self with kinship groups" (Kovach, 2009, p. 61). Inner dialogue expressed through narrative storytelling between mentees and mentors may assist in removing obstructions that either party has that deter them from considering their own thoughts and emotions about identity.

Children may often have "heart knowledge" of their own lives, which involves emotionality, but not yet a fully developed intellectual understanding of what this intuitive, emotional intelligence is or where it came from. Self-identified Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe Lynn Gehl (2013b) refers to "head knowledge" as the critical understanding gained through lived experiences. We might consider heart knowledge as an intuitive, emotional intelligence that can be developed in children. Later in life, head knowledge is gained through applying critical thinking skills, and internalizing experiential knowledge, that allows for a bigger picture perspective. For some Aboriginal CYiC who are separated from their culture, especially those in abusive households or in families where emotions are not explained, acknowledged, or celebrated, it can be difficult to embody heart knowledge. For

example, children may feel joy or sorrow and not have a conscious understanding of what it means until they grow older when they can place the feelings into a sociocultural context. Mentorship can be of assistance with this. An individual who has experienced or understands this need to connect can address these displaced and mismanaged emotions about meaning, so the child's identity can be explored, re-placed and more mindfully managed. I believe it is possible to go on a holistic journey to learn about heart knowledge and bring it onto an intellectual platform to understand it more fully, thereby having both the head knowledge and the heart knowledge, identified by Gehl (2012) as a "Debwewin Journey."

### **Diversity in Identity**

In keeping with Mowatt and Young's (2006) guidelines on respecting diversity it is important to appreciate the wide range of distinct cultures here on Vancouver Island. The fifty-three First Nations on Vancouver Island are located in three distinct tribal regions: Coast and Straits Salish, from the southern tip of the island and up the eastern side to the mid-island; Nuu-chah-nulth, located along the western side of the island; and Kwakwaka'wakw, from the northern tip of the island and down the eastern side to the middle of the island.

There are some designated Aboriginal child welfare agencies on Vancouver Island that work only with on-reserve children, and others that work with children both on- and off-reserve. British Columbia is home to approximately two hundred First Nations, consisting of a third of all First Nations peoples in Canada, and thirty-four distinct Aboriginal languages (Carroll, Russell, Turpin, 2014). Attempting to find statistics on the number of Aboriginal children in foster care on Vancouver Island can only be estimated, with no consistently updated public database, and numbers constantly shifting.

**Identity and attachment.** Cultural identity is a nearly undisputed primary factor in the wellbeing of Aboriginal CYiC, and it is well documented that connection to one's culture as a child produces overall healthier outcomes later in adulthood (Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services, 2012; Davis, Hansmeyer, Minic, Prakash, Rangan, 2013; Province of British Columbia, 2013). Pioneering psychoanalyst John Bowlby's (1969) study *Attachment and loss* theorizes that detachment from the primary caregiver early in a child's life can cause emotional damage and identity confusion. This perspective was foundational in theories of attachment, and extremely relevant to the traditional Aboriginal practice of non-parental, extended family members taking leading roles in raising children within community. Traditionally, many community members and family are involved in the socialization and education of a child in the community; it was and still is considered a collective responsibility in many First Nation communities (Carrière, 2007; Little Bear, 2000). Since Western norms of a singular primary caregiver differ from Aboriginal norms of numerous primary caregivers, attachment theory is less applicable to Aboriginal child rearing practices (Brownlee, Castellan, Neckoway, 2007; Carrière, Richardson, 2009). The supportive role of the extended family in raising an Aboriginal child in care should also be acknowledged and integrated into cultural identity development (Hart, 2002). Distinction between identity developmental processes across differing cultures are not always considered though, which can lead to egocentrism and gaps in coherence in policy formation (Carroll, Russell, Turpin, 2013).

Despite this lack of formal resources, Hearst (2012) describes a phenomenon wherein children who have been placed in foster homes ascribing to different cultural norms than their own can still be drawn into the "elemental origin" of their Native culture (p. 49). This refers to a spiritual, intrinsic sense of connection inherent in Aboriginal cultures that arguably never leaves an Aboriginal child even in a non-Aboriginal home. I believe my academic pursuits, spiritual connection to natural

surroundings, and drive to support other culturally dislocated girls in foster care are examples of how it is possible to tap into this elemental origin. I do not want to generalize my experiences or say what I am gleaning from the literature applies to all Aboriginal girls in foster care; I acknowledge not all feel such a pull to their culture. However, if they do, they have the right to access knowledge, experience, and allies, just as much as anyone else seeking peaceful fulfillment in life.

**Aboriginal womanhood.** Personally defining Aboriginal womanhood requires girls to consider how ancestral traditions can fit into their modern lives in society (Anderson, 2000). This piece of their development is the part where they can begin to actively envision their modern Aboriginal female identities in-relation to mainstream society (Anderson, 2000). Female Aboriginal identity and participation in community “continues to be essential to our communities’ ongoing survival” (Carrière & Thomas, 2014, p. 118). Anderson believes this model of change is common for females in many Aboriginal communities, and founded on an Aboriginal understanding of how relationships help to shape us; I can certainly relate. The reason I chose to focus on girls rather than boys or any other gender in the spectrum is based on the fact that I have always identified as a female, so my natural empathy and sense of connection in this study is with girls. There are additional barriers for Aboriginal CYiC who identify along the gender spectrum, and likely unique ones for the boys that are beyond the scope of this study.

Catherine Martin, a source in Anderson’s (2000) work, and a Mi’kmaw from Nova Scotia, posits that removal of Aboriginal women from positions of political power was a methodical undoing of Aboriginal culture overall since it was not consistent with the patriarchal norms of the dominant culture. Mohawk midwife Katsi Cook, also describes how this cultural dismantling began to segregate women from one another, as they were re-placed into subservient roles, in effect disempowering Aboriginal women (Anderson, 2000). Carrière and Thomas (2014) write about the

specific targeting of Aboriginal women and girls by settler communities and colonial policies that sought to strip them of traditionally powerful roles within their communities. Aboriginal girls who reconnect with their culture in positive ways may prevent the intergenerational traumas that have plagued First Nationhood since the arrival of settlers in the Greater Victoria area in 1497. Through cultural mentorship, there is an opportunity to recall more traditionally matriarchal roles, and to re-define the significance of Aboriginal womanhood for Aboriginal CYiC in-relation to their communities juxtaposed with an urban, Western society (Anderson, 2000).

**Traditionally urban.** For Aboriginal girls living in foster care on or near their home territory with ease of access there is a lesser geographical barrier than for the Anishnabe girl living on Coast Salish territory. Displacement of Aboriginal foster children away from their home territory creates a barrier to connecting back to their original Aboriginal culture, unless there are mentors, plants, foods, and access to ceremonies. Michèle Audette, an Innu who lives in Montreal, shares the importance of the phrase “Je ne sans pas solide (I don’t feel grounded),” and describes her labour to nurture the relationship between the territory and her children, who had thus far been raised in an urban setting (Anderson, 2000, p. 182).

Undoubtedly, some Aboriginal girls in Greater Victoria are living this urban Aboriginal lifestyle. Consequently, songs, medicines, ceremonies may be mixed, shared and taught between different specific First Nation cultures, with or without caution to not appropriate customs for the sake of experiencing any kind of Aboriginal culture at all (Ormiston, 2010). There is no perfect scenario and the most realistic option to help nurture healthy cultural identity for the girls may involve respect of this urban, multi-Nation model, as adopted by the National Association of Friendship Centers in Canada (2012). As Suina (2000) articulates, “although we have different dances, different names for our tribes, and different songs, we have a strong interconnectedness” as

Aboriginal people on the earth (p. 97). Can this human link, this undeniable relation all humans have, be a platform for equitable programming reform to improve cultural contexts for Aboriginal girls in care?

## **Mentorship Programming Frameworks**

**Values and formalities.** Alberta's Future Leaders Program was used as a case study by Giles & Rose (2007) to explore Aboriginal youth and community development programs, through a review of recent literature and consultative processes in planning with and for Aboriginal peoples. A guiding framework for this mentoring program was Collins & Collins (2005), *Six C's* of positive youth development, attained through long-term, youth-adult relationships with opportunities for youth leadership and engagement: competence, confidence, connections, character, contribution, and caring. Competence refers to the confirmed ability of youth in mentee roles to be decisive concerning important life decisions around health and identity. Confidence can build from the ability to make a decision effectively, further instilling a sense of purpose and identity in Aboriginal youth, where this second "C" may have been lacking (Collins et al., 2004). The next "C" is connections, and relates to the networking capabilities and opportunities available to the youth mentee as they build up a solid support system. These connections foster the development of the youth's character, the fourth "C."

Collins et al. refer to character as "encouraging a sense of responsibility for oneself and others," which may be influenced by the existing values of a program or mentor (p. 58). Youth programs often have a set of guiding principles or values that purposefully intend to impact the youth's character in positive ways. For example, the Hiiye'yu Lelum Society's Youth Inclusion Project in Duncan, on southern Vancouver Island, aims to deter youth designated to be at high-risk for criminal behaviour by connecting them with enjoyable activities in their broader community. The Youth Department at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, aims to "provide supportive,

empowering, educational and culturally sensitive programming that promotes holistic wellness for Urban Aboriginal Youth” (Victoria Native Friendship Centre, 2014). These two Aboriginal youth programs on southern Vancouver Island present very different goals, objectives, and values to youth, with potential to contribute differently to youth development. Contribution is the fifth “C” and refers to what youth are giving back to their communities and others. Related to the traditional Aboriginal value of reciprocity, contributions by youth encourage visible, positive relationship development with and for others, completely tying into the final “C” of caring. Caring is central to any empowering Aboriginal youth-focused mentorship program. If mentors and mentees genuinely care about each other, their motivation is heightened to altruistically share, to positively grow with each other, and to maintain healthy relationships. This caring aspect can be lacking in agency cultures that are not meant to empower but rather aim to maintain status quo or provide non-holistic supports such as direct funding or food stamps.

Beyond the intimate microscope of mentor-mentee politics in mentoring frameworks, Aboriginal social service organizations “often have a dual responsibility to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments” and structures (Armitage, 2003, p. 116). We must remember that organizations are made up of people. Chantelle (2007) describes sources of support for Aboriginal peoples as either “institutional or intimate,” meaning support is either through a program or personal relationships, and that the overlap service providers have with these two roles can cause tension around what is expected of them and where multiple boundaries lay (p. 348).

Modernized personal, professional, and ethical boundaries of agency politics and the people who maintain them are dynamic and ever shifting, making it difficult to identify a baseline framework for Aboriginal mentoring guidelines. Consequently, splits can occur between Western, Aboriginal, and other subcultures that may struggle to formulate their own sustainable frameworks.

Caseworkers may also have different interpretations of what professional, personal and ethical guidelines are most appropriate for their clients (Davidson, 2005; Fine & Teram, 2009; Green, Gregory, & Mason, 2006; Osmo & Landau, 2006). Questions then arise concerning who will be involved in mentorship, why they are interested and how these complex frameworks might be understood and applied.

Not all potential mentors will be comfortable with a more formal (that is, dominant or normative) recruitment process. Indeed, the organic nature of cultural community support inherent in many Aboriginal cultures might prefer a less rigid sign-up and screening process, and would rather have informal face-to-face meetings with their mentees. Distinguishing between two types of volunteering, formal and informal, is becoming better documented (Mowatt and Young, 2006; Edwards, 2012). Formal volunteering is explained as being used to assist a community, and is supervised by a non-profit or community organization, whereas informal volunteering is usually non-supervised and unstructured (Mowatt and Young, 2006). Benefits of formal volunteering include economic benefits to organizations, and service allocation where no resources existed for informal volunteering (Edwards, 2012). Benefits of informal volunteering include the deconstruction of power imbalances between Aboriginal communities and organizations, and it allows more flexibility and freedom of choice for the volunteers since they are not limited by formal regulations (Edwards, 2012).

**Recruiting and retaining female Aboriginal mentors.** Many Aboriginal cultures believe in that volunteering is inherently a traditional activity passed down intergenerationally (Edwards, 2012). In contrast with Mowatt and Young's (2006) view that informal volunteering benefits community regardless of location, Edwards (2012) notes larger systemic barriers, such as



racism, and hierarchical titles that conflict with traditional Aboriginal values are more prevalent in formal volunteering in larger urban settings than in on-reserve communities.

Lois Little, Director of the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories (2005) identified key elements that organizations should aim to have if they wish to successfully recruit Aboriginal volunteers in general. These have been combined with other works to create my own *Best Practices Guideline for Aboriginal Volunteer Inclusion* which states that organizations require:

1. **Secure funding.** Funding allocation should be credible and transparent, with a branch dedicated to reimbursing costs associated with volunteering (ex: commuting) (Edwards, 2012).
2. **Secure benefits.** Honouring the Aboriginal value of reciprocity, there should be a means of giving back to volunteers. Benefits might include subsidizing travel or professional training.
3. **Credible profile.** Having a reputation of individual and collective social responsibility in the Aboriginal communities will help build relationships and engage potential Aboriginal volunteers (Bisanz, Cardinal, Costa, & Klinck, 2005; Edwards, 2012).
4. **Support and Encouragement.** Mentors and mentees alike must know they are not alone in the mentorship process, and that many others involved are there to assist whenever needed. Talking circles used to develop guidelines for each new cohort of volunteers may be an appropriate alternative to formal training courses (Edwards, 2012; Mowatt and Young, 2006).
5. **Representation.** Volunteer organizations should hire Aboriginal staff, educate non-Aboriginal staff and if necessary, hire a protocol liaison to assist with cross-cultural communications (Bennet, 2014; Edwards, 2011; Little, 2005).
6. **Promotion.** Networking amongst Aboriginal communities wanting to be involved, and guided by local Aboriginal communities (Edwards, 2012; Mowatt and Young, 2006).

Once volunteers have begun offering their time, retention and maintenance becomes the focus. Below I introduce, *Best Practices for Aboriginal Volunteer Retention*. Like the *Best Practices Guideline for Aboriginal Volunteer Inclusion*, this list is based on a review of the literature and personal bias that a mentorship model for Aboriginal girls in care should be a self-sustainable effort and based in Indigenous Knowledge. Brandy Mowatt and Jacqueline Young (2006) from the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW) have strongly informed this guide. For an organization to be retaining its Aboriginal volunteers, those volunteers require:

1. **Respect for diversity.** Stay open-minded and non-judgmental about differences amongst various Aboriginal cultures, treating everyone with esteem and respect. Create room for culturally appropriate mechanisms to deal with conflict (British Columbia, 2009; Edwards, 2012; Mowatt & Young, 2006).
2. **A comfortable environment.** Fostering a pleasurable work environment will lead to less tension, allowing people to feel more safe, and happy. Have events for your volunteers and mentees, and exciting upcoming opportunities for them to become involved with (Edwards, 2012; Mowatt & Young, 2006).
3. **Appreciation.** Letters of appreciation, birthday greetings, public mentions, and other notices of effort and gratitude are very helpful in making anyone want to continue doing the work their doing (Dorsch, Hoerber, Kryzanowski, McKague, & Reimer, 2007; Edwards, 2012; Mowatt & Young, 2006).
4. **Honesty and integrity.** Be upfront about what the volunteering position entails including potential risks, benefits, and timelines (Edwards, 2012).

I offer these two sets of principles as a starting point from which to base future programming, along with findings from my participant interviews. It is my hope that once this mentorship model is

actualized it will be powerful enough to positively influence provincial child welfare policy to include more accountable and reliable monitoring of cultural connectivity for all Aboriginal children in care.

## **Representation & Policy**

Article 2, Section 2 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child* (1989, revised in 1990) states that children have the right to be free of any form of discrimination on the basis of “race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status” (p. 2). “Indigenous-delegated child welfare organizations, in spite of their best efforts, have no authority to ensure these children remain connected to their family, community, culture, traditions and/ or language. Once in care, the children are not guaranteed their basic human rights” (Carrière & Thomas, 2014, p. 123). This identifies historical international pressures intended to promote and validate Aboriginal health and culture. Australian Aboriginal leader Gracelyn Smallwood (1996) argues that reinforcement of cultural identity is normal for the dominant culture (Western culture in this case), making the dominant culture seem invisible and status quo, and leaving members of the non-dominant culture to become defined as the “other” (p. 96). The theory of *kyriarchy* suggests that we may still be oppressive while we oppress others, and that every individual has a role in disrupting unequal power imbalances (Anti-oppression Network, 2014). Considerations of these cultural norms and marginalizing factors being safeguarded by Western political agendas are critical in the discussion of Aboriginal cultural identity maintenance. Indeed, the task of re-establishing an identity in-relation yet still separate from the dominant culture for Aboriginal children detached from their own culture, is as much a struggle for survival in society as it is an attempt at cultural identity safeguarding (Smallwood, 1996). Concerns for both the well-being of individuals and the society as a whole are central to the argument that recognizing and

enhancing the status of minority cultures is a human right, and that “a politics of recognition” is critical for reasons that are both individual and communal within the province of British Columbia (Hearst, 2012, p. 46).

Collins, Russell, and Turpin (2014), who presented an Indigenous policy lens at the *Moving Forward: Building Culturally Safe Organizations Conference*, outline policy creation strategies for the Aboriginal branch of the BC MCFD. Strategic application of the “Aboriginal Equity and Inclusion Lens” aims to rectify

errors in the past and ensure inclusiveness [of Aboriginal input] for the future, support working in partnership with Aboriginal people, agencies and communities, to help identify barriers, changes, and steps needed to avoid unintended consequences of government policy and to support policies that do not produce an inequality, inequity, disadvantage, cultural risk, or perpetuate cultural racism, and to support and respect universal human rights (p. 6).

In applying this for my purpose of designing a mentorship model for Aboriginal girls in care, Collins Russell, and Turpin (2014) state that Aboriginal partners including Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAA), Aboriginal professionals, scholars and community members, must be recognized as having equal voice, and be actively involved in every step of program development. Aboriginal representation and involvement in policy and program development is the best way to ensure there is Aboriginal perspective incorporated (Collins et al., 2014). A key application would be identifying how an Aboriginal perspective can be not just incorporated into, but is in the center, guiding program development (Collins et al., 2014).

**Aboriginal child welfare.** Social work fields such as child welfare and mental health have historically involved Euro-centric helpers pressuring and coercing Aboriginal people to follow protocols and practices designed for the Western mainstream (Simard, 2009). Often this has resulted

in the assimilation and the internalization of colonial processes by Aboriginal peoples not accustomed to such protocols, which usually do not include cultural maintenance components (Hart, 2002; Simard, 2009). The decades of historical ethnocentric practices carried out by social workers have left a general sense of distrust and lack of confidence among many Aboriginal peoples towards the profession. It is thought-provoking that although numerous governing agents repeatedly state the desire for citizens to become contributing members of society (United Nations, 1989; Government of Canada, 2013a; National Association of Friendship Centers, 2012; Province of British Columbia, 2013), Aboriginal parenting concerns around “neglect intervention programs” remain (Bennet, Blackstock & Trocmé, 2004). In BC, neglect by way of poverty and lack of housing is the leading cause for Aboriginal children to be apprehended (Baskin, 2007; Bennet, Blackstock & Trocmé, 2004).

Children are the center of First Nation communities, meaning they are the future and must be the communities' focal point (Anderson, 2000). Aboriginal peoples around the world have been emphasizing for years the need for traditional Aboriginal child welfare practices to be led by Aboriginal peoples and for philosophies to be acknowledged and supported as the all-purpose method of healing for Aboriginal people (Hart, 2002). In order to rightfully reclaim the significance of Aboriginal children in our communities, Cree/Métis writer Anderson (2000) argues that the philosophy of children in the center of all social networking and policy production implies that the caring of children should take precedence over the reclaiming of ceremony. There is a teaching from the Hul’qumi’num people on Vancouver Island, *nutsa maat*, we are all one; this speaks to how we are all interconnected. From every plant and animal, to all the people and stars, we do nothing in isolation (Carrière & Thomas, 2014).

It has been implied that retaining kinship ties between Aboriginal CYiC and their community

benefits both community and individual strengths, although kinship relationships may still carry uneasiness when individuals are unable to act without a degree of familial or political pressure (Carrière, Richardson, 2009). Saanich Nation or Coast Salish Peoples of in the Greater Victoria area include the Songhees, Esquimalt, Tsartlip, Tseycum, Pauquachin, Scia'new, Tsawout and T'Sou-ke Nations (Tourism Victoria, 2014). There is an estimated 15,000 Aboriginal people living off reserve in the geographically restrictive area of Greater Victoria, which covers about 696 km<sup>2</sup> (Victoria Native Friendship Center, 2014).

Despite lack of attention and funding for cultural continuity in the BC foster care system, the BC Child & Family Development Service Standards (2013) continues to state that to “preserve and promote a child’s Aboriginal heritage and connection to his or her Aboriginal community,” children are to be placed with Aboriginal caregivers, along with creating and maintaining the child's Cultural Plan in their Plan of Care (p. 3). Fortunately, on southern Vancouver Island I have learned of DAA Kwumut Lelum (serves nine Coast Salish communities and is located on Snuneymuxw First Nation) and Lalum’utul’ Smun’een Child and Family Services (serves the Cowichan Tribes), that are focusing work on effective and culturally appropriate Cultural Plans of Care for the Aboriginal CYiC in their jurisdictions (Thomas, 2014, personal communication). There is a lack of documentation available on cultural Aboriginal child welfare practices in the specific region of Greater Victoria, BC. This lack of information inhibits formal policy and cultural programming advances, a key issue addressed in this study in its investigation of a potential mentorship program to support Aboriginal CYiC (specifically girls) as part of their Cultural Plan while in care.

## **Conclusions**

This literature review explored epistemology and relevance of heterogeneous Aboriginal culture, and mentorship programming, as they related to the components necessary for a mentorship

model for Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria, BC. This literature review also identified existing, and determined current policies and practices for supporting cultural identity for Aboriginal girls in care. Future research should consider clear profiles of protocols around urban versus culturally-specific models of Indigenous Knowledge transition in volunteering and mentorship as current literature on it is very limited geographically, and not representative of Greater Victoria. However, considering perspectives of volunteering as ‘helping out’ this may prove challenging. Data on specific First Nation communities on Vancouver Island in relation to how they perceive urban versus traditional IK transmission in a potential mentorship model for Aboriginal girls in care in their region would be helpful in understanding what next steps might be for neighbouring First Nations.

To conclude this section, we can see that a significant number of scholars grapple with topics of Aboriginality and political structures around Aboriginal-centered programming, but that this dialogue is often generalized to regions much larger than Greater Victoria. The next chapter explains the methodologies of my study, explaining the Ethics Approval process, sampling design, and specific methods used for my personal research processes, data collection and analysis.

### Chapter 3: Methodologies

*“...it is not the outer manifestation of tradition but the value of the sacredness of life that is important”* (Anderson, 2000, p. 163).

This chapter describes the methods used in this study in several sections: data sampling procedures; limitations and delimitations in my research; and methodologies used. The design was a mixed-methods qualitative approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews, critical theory, grounded theory, and autobiography to examine components necessary for a mentorship model for Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria. One purpose of this design was to reflect on my female experience of living a non-Aboriginal lifestyle from growing up as a child with no cultural exposure and then moving into a non-Aboriginal foster home, and to expand my understanding of Aboriginal theoretical processes within an academic institution. My personal journey of identity development relative to the political nature of this work is also explored.

The section on ethics explains the process of working through University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board and considerations for the participants in this study. The following section on Processes, describes the sampling design utilized including initial contact, meeting, and follow-up with participants.

Critical theory is used to examine Aboriginal place-based knowledge for this work. This was used to examine how Aboriginal cultures and their epistemologies are used for the empowerment of Aboriginal people with anti-colonial undertones (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Next, I describe the specific qualitative methodologies used including semi-structured interviews, and rationale behind their usage involving honouring traditional Aboriginal knowledge transmission and validating the lived experience of the participants' knowledge and clientele.

Autobiography, a form of life writing (Benstock, 1988; Ellis, 2004; Heidt, 1991), was selected as a



complementary method drawing on my own experience to illuminate the topic in more crystallized ways (Richardson, 1994).

## Getting Personal

Sharing my story and what happened to me through a lens of cultural disconnection may help Aboriginal girls in care and assist their supporters (Carrière, 2007); this is a benefit of identifying myself as female, as other females may be able to better relate to my experiences. However, when I have to write about whether or not I am Aboriginal it is uncomfortable. I am trying to be compassionate with this emotionality, the emotionality of others, and to write this effectively and honestly. My experience of writing vulnerably was less ‘risky’ than described in my undergraduate social work classes. Rather, it involved reflecting on the content in the stories the interviewees offered, identifying my emotions and attachment to these emotions, and then layering their stories with mine (Ellis, 2004).

Being both nosy and a good listener have helped me through the process of combining autobiography and semi-structured interviews. My organic pull to autobiography stems from childhood habits of over-analyzing my mother, observing my surroundings and constantly catching inconsistencies between what people said they believed in, and what they did. A prime example from my childhood is when my mother claimed she was a Catholic and enrolled me in Catholic school, though she divorced my stepfather and did not attend church for many years. Considering the motives of people and institutions by examining their words compared to their actions is still something I question often, sometimes to the detriment of my relationships.

I do not want the *possibility* of me being Aboriginal to become my core identity status, but at the same time I’m not sure why I feel this way. As with most unfortunate things in life I try to find the silver lining to keep on going. Perhaps my cultural disconnect helps me relate better to what (dare

I say “other”? Not yet) Aboriginal girls are going through as they develop their own complex identities. This introspection helps me to understand socio-political relationships in a microcosmic sense.

Widening the lens relating to identity inconsistencies, here I am advocating for cultural mentorship while I have no current plans for undergoing any myself in the foreseeable future. After some reflection, I believe this is because I have prioritized fostering the holistic development of my stepson and family above my individual cultural needs; indeed, that is where more of my free time goes. How many culturally displaced, former Aboriginal girls in care can relate?

**Life-ology: Building a Fire.** This section will touch on how the foundational knowledge I have grown with has evolved. Pedagogies surrounding my upbringing were framed within a dominant Euro/Canadian-centric location involving poverty when I lived with my biological mother and nature-based spirituality when I lived with my foster mother.

When confronted with frustration I have always been drawn to spend time outside, whether in East Vancouver or on Vancouver Island. Noticing this, my foster mother suggested I read Starhawk’s (2004), *The earth path*, where it is asserted that that social justice should be combined with nature-based spirituality to truly advocate for life, culture, and natural processes. Through this, I learned some lessons about fire; “fire teaches us awareness...fire teaches us responsibility and mutual dependence...fire also teaches us about community” (p. 122). This book led me to spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle’s (2005), *A new earth*, focusing my attention inwards to observing my own awareness. How wonderful it was to finally become acquainted with my unconscious thoughts and feelings behind my voluntary apprehension. I have personally experienced the shift in how social analysis, political perspectives, knowledge production, and action can be shaped through what Kincheloe & Steinberg (2008) describe as a “complex multilogical context” (p. 138). Simply put, this means that

through our evolving perspectives throughout our lives the world appears more complex than what mundane first impressions would suggest. It is my understanding that a critical deconstruction of how I interact with others and the cosmos with IK, within the muddy puddle of colonial influences, allows for truly embodied IK praxis.

### **Indigenous Methodologies and an Urban Girl**

Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) defines a research paradigm as “broad principles that provide a framework for research” (p. 33). Respecting this, broad principles that have guided my research include: reflexivity in my intentions and capabilities of conducting this work; validating multiple perspectives based on lived experience; and honouring multiple epistemologies, that “stud[y] the nature of thinking and knowing. It involves the theory of how we came to have knowledge, or how we know that we know something” (p. 33). Kovach (2010) describes how in a Western and Indigenous mixed-methods approach to research such as when sharing circles are used often becomes problematic because it misses the epistemological basis on which the Indigenous methodology is grounded, and historically, has been viewed as an add-on, or token. Having only spent so many hours in university classes learning about Indigenous research, I’ve come to appreciate that my experiential understanding of Indigenous research praxis is green, budding with inexperience.

Have you ever wondered how you know what you know? I can’t help but wonder if I could have grounded an Indigenous research methodology in traditions from my lineage, had I been exposed to my culture at a younger age than twenty-something. For instance, since understanding that my father’s heritage may be Anishnabe I have learned that offering tobacco was and still is customary when asking for knowledge; this is a traditional protocol I utilized in my research, as I gifted participants medicine bags I made and filled with tobacco myself. This is a good start, but

what other Anishnabe values, ethics, or stories could have improved the Indigenous methodological grounding of this thesis? Even if I knew what they were, would it be appropriate for me to use them when I do not have proof my father is Anishnabe, and have not spent significant time in the territory of Six Nations? I think there will always be questions for me to grapple with when it comes to my identity and I am still trying to make peace with that. This is my attempt to answer the people who ask me how my way of knowing and being in this world influences my work.

I was honest about my inexperience with Aboriginal ways of knowing and being before I reached the University of Victoria. However, I am writing about links and parallels between storytelling and semi-structured, interactive interviews, and weaving in autobiography which has me reflexively engaged in the work, and exploring layers of Western/ Indigenous methodology. I can see, for example, using Indigenous theory around storytelling to justify Western notions of semi-structured interviewing. Since I am advocating for cultural continuity for Aboriginal girls in foster care, and make several mentions throughout of my own sense of cultural disconnection, I have no choice but to work from my mostly Western-oriented background.

I deeply consider what parallels exist between how I conducted my research and how my heart knowledge has bled into it. Messy work. I question if I have indeed been using unintended Indigenous theory to guide my process. I am a very spiritual person, so the groundwork for how and what I have written has focused on valuing voice, and legitimizing the use of informal knowledge creation and non-Western notions to support Aboriginal girls in care.

## **Critical Theory**

The relation between critical theory and Indigenous theory is the sense of place-based knowledge, and carries with it a local historical component (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In this research, critical theory was applied by considering the “politics, circumstances... a particular time

and place, a particular set of problems, struggles, and desires” (p. 9). Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou iwi affiliated author and Pro-Vice Chancellor Māori at the University of Waikato, Linda Smith (2000) offers eight questions that should be asked of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers alike implementing critical theory:

1. What research do we want done?
2. Who is it for?
3. What difference will it make?
4. Who will carry it out?
5. How do we want the research done?
6. How will we know it is worthwhile?
7. Who will own the research?
8. Who will benefit? (p. 239)

These questions are answered through a decolonizing application of autobiography and semi-structured interviews, by reassigning power to participants and myself, individuals aiming to deconstruct oppressive praxis in Aboriginal child welfare. This approach aligns with Wilson’s (2008) assertion that in critical theory “the goal is change” and that “research is not seen as worthy or ethical if it does not help to improve the reality of the research participants” (p. 37). The linkages between critical theory and life writing methods used in my work combine to raise local political consciousness. By “hono[uring] the Indigenous cultural practices” of verbal knowledge transmission, those working on this local project “contribute to steps that heal the wounds of colonization” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 13).

## Semi-Structured Interviews

**Theoretical grounds.** My primary research method was the use of semi-structured interviews. The interviewing process was a collaborative exchange of ideas, with the process initiated by me and the content informed by the participants; these “participatory views... advance the project of decolonization” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 10).

Ellis (2004) reminded me to be aware of how much energy I put towards the interviews. I considered this in terms of how much space I took up talking, whether in reflection or further probing, along with my passion for the topic that undoubtedly affected my responses in one way or another. Interview-based research complemented with an autobiographical aspect, via personal reflexivity in process and in my writing, is not only an effective technique, but also necessary to this study. My method of interviewing was centered on participants sharing their stories, ideas, and voice in relation to my questions, rather than answering my questions in a closed fashion, which left more room to “honour the exploratory approach” and “value the story as knowledge” (Kovach, 2009, p. 125). In accordance with grounded theory research methodology I focused more on whether the participant accounts were “*theoretically plausible*” rather than if they were constructed with indisputable accuracy (Belgrave & Charmaz, 2012). By asking Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants about cultural identity through story, I acknowledge the opportunity for healing associated with the decolonizing wind it brings. Verbal knowledge transmission and storytelling in qualitative research are said to complement the oral tradition of Aboriginal culture (Dandeneau, Kahentonni, Kirmayer, Marshall, & Williamson, 2011; Kovach, 2009), and for this study were an appropriate way to explore ideas around supporting cultural continuity. This is of notable importance, as Aboriginal peoples around the globe are known as being one of the most over-researched demographic groups in history. There is a dirty history of researchers taking advantage of

Aboriginal information and not ethically reciprocating despite gaining career advancement as a result (Ormiston, 2005).

One of the most accessible and informal resources that supports cultural continuity for children and youth is storytelling, which has been an essential traditional form of verbal knowledge transmission in Aboriginal cultures (Ormiston, 2010; Thomas, 2005). All stories have something to teach us, so it becomes critical in mentorship to actively listen and blend mentor's lessons with mentees' pre-existing heart knowledge (Thomas, 2005; Gehl, 2014). Children require guidance in accessing knowledge they cannot gain on their own. As supporters we must remember if we "fail to find balance...reject change or abandon [our] heritage altogether we abandon [ourselves]" (Alfred, 2005, p. 29). Flexible, honest and empowering mentors can reinforce Aboriginal children's critical understanding of their cultural identity through the telling of stories.

**Participant recruitment.** My procedure to find participants was informal but structured. The informal thread is noteworthy because some of the participants and I had pre-existing relationships before I began this research, while others were sought out due to their knowledge or experience. An Indigenous research paradigm aligns with my prior contact with several participants, in effect, making the research interview an extension of our already existing relationship. "Relational accountability" is supported since "rapport has already been built and trust established" (Wilson, 2008, p. 40). Although I knew some participants before the research began, every participant was approached via email request to participate, and each was given the list of interview questions prior to the interview. All participants also received a homemade medicine bag filled with tobacco, an Anishnabe protocol of gratitude I have recently learned to practice.

It is well argued that in Canada "social institutions that govern us have been shaped and organized to serve white power," which has not and will not prove to be more effective than us

having the power to design programming for ourselves (Alfred, 2005, p. 80). For this reason I chose to interview only individuals either currently working within an Aboriginal framework, or having respectfully worked with Aboriginal communities in the past. This helps to protect the integrity of my intention to gain insight from people invested in supporting cultural continuity of Aboriginal girls in foster care. There has been plenty of historical resistance, but I want to hear from allies.

My graduate supervisors advised me that five participants should offer more than enough data to address my questions; they were right, as each interview produced three to five pages of verbatim transcription for me to sort through. Each interview was heartfelt, transcribed by me in a timely manner, and follow-up was not pressured by time.

Participant selection was not based on specific heritage or experience of being formerly in care or personally involved in mentoring. Rather, criteria for selecting participants were based on their knowledge or experiences working in the area of Aboriginal child welfare on southern Vancouver Island. I also sought participants who understood my study through their working or personal experiences and were willing to express feelings and knowledge about the topic.

Participants who agreed to engage in the research after the introductory email or phone call were contacted again and provided with additional information. This included a list of the questions they would be asked during the interview (Appendix D), and the written consent form (Appendix A) outlining the project for their perusal. Providing all this information prior to their acceptance of the invitation to participate helped ensure full disclosure of the research design and intentions before the interviewing began.

Interviews were carried out with one university faculty member, one sessional instructor, and three social service workers. Out of the five participants interviewed, two elected to be personally identified by first name: one social service worker and one sessional instructor. Reasons for



participants not identifying themselves may have been political, ethical, or personal; these participants will be referred to by an alias. All participants gave additional opinions to supplement their answers, and as much as possible is respectfully included in this thesis. Comprehensiveness was favoured over concision because without their complete answers, it may be too easy to miss important content that may become incredibly relevant to literature and practice on a later date, as often happens with many life lessons.

**Interview process.** Themes that emerged from conversations with Aboriginal community members prior to the start of the study contributed to the development of interview questions. Interviews were then guided by six open-ended questions, each one encouraging elaboration on how a mentorship model could support cultural identity development and cultural identity maintenance for Aboriginal girls in foster care. They were living conversations that explored participants' personal reflections on professional practice. Interviews were one to two hours in length.

Participant observations based on participants' work experiences included considering Aboriginal people reconnecting with their culture by means of establishing and maintaining relationships, the accessibility and appropriation of resources, and ideologies underlying existing programming, as understood by participants. Their personal reflections delved into multi-Nation approaches to mentorship, bias and political considerations, and personal epistemologies and meaning making.

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by me. The use of tape recorders required little reliance on the use of field notes or memory. Participants were later provided with a word-processed transcription of our audiotaped interview so they could add any information or suggest changes to the record before it was analyzed and used in this thesis. All participants agreed to have the transcriptions emailed to them and edited, before they were emailed back to me.

Participants were not asked specifically about their clients or research, nor was any potentially identifying information about their clients included in this thesis, helping to maintain confidentiality. Each interview began by thanking the individual for participating, reminding them their participation was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw at anytime. Next, we reviewed the purpose and goals of the interview and once they fully understood the research project the participants read over the consent form. The signing of documents is considered by some Aboriginal people to be linked with colonization and the abuse of their traditions (Ormiston, 2005); if this was the case for any participant they were given the option to provide verbal consent in lieu of their signature (Appendix B). However, all participants opted for the written consent.

**Recording conversations.** The written page does not have the same energy as a face-to-face interview. Capturing the emotionality present during the interviews took several edits and much reflection back to the interview spaces. Trying to simply extract the facts loses the heart of the story, but this is partially recovered through my use of autobiography, which layers my experiences with the interviewees' stories. When hearing about their professional experiences I found myself relating some of it to my own social work experiences in the field. Working with youth in care and former youth in care as a counsellor and then as a teacher was reflected on with participants, especially in terms of how resources for the helpers (workers) are lacking, often leading to burnout or compassion fatigue. This kind of "interactive interviewing" focuses on the story when both the interviewer and the participant have had experience with the topic (Ellis, 2004, p. 64). My sharing during the interview process helped build common ground and helped to deconstruct the polar interviewer/interviewee roles; we were two people sharing a common interest, with the participants purposefully shedding the most light on the topics discussed. The interactions during our interviews helped during my interpretive analysis since some of my words were already in the transcription. The

conclusive meaning making, then, was not strictly about hard facts but rather about creating common understanding between the interviewees and myself.

Besides trying to reconstruct the story as close to my memory as possible, I also had the difficult task of omitting information. I based this on usefulness and therapeutic value both for the interviewees and Aboriginal girls in care that may benefit from the story. At first, it hardly had any of my voice and was rather an account of the participants' stories because I was terribly intimidated to remove any participant's respected voice. Then, after recommendations from my supervisors to frame the interviews more hospitably for the reader in this context, I did my best to sift them down to their more crystalized essence. This involved eliminating repetitions and phrases that, although meaningful in grounding our conversation, were not necessary for you to consider as the reader. After much sand sifting, three core themes emerged, and three sand castles were built from the ground up with foundations of crystal.

**Grounded theory.** Grounded theory “is a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories. These concepts/categories are related to each other as a theoretical explanation of the action(s) that continually resolves the main concern of the participants in a substantive area” (Grounded Theory Institute, 2014). Grounded theory has been notably useful for investigating complicated social issues not previously addressed, research areas that do not necessarily have a recommended research framework, or contain unclear links between populations and processes that are generally unexplored (Wang, Windsor & Yates, 2012). My data analysis follows Creswell's (2007) outlined components of qualitative design by identifying patterning, and categories from the bottom-up through organizing data into more abstract groupings of information (Creswell, 2007). According to Charmaz (2006) “constructivist grounded theory lies squarely in the interpretive tradition” and explores how participants create meanings and process in specific

situations (p. 130). The connection between Indigenous theory and constructivist methods outlined by, Wilson (2008), suggests, “In an Indigenous ontology there may be multiple realities, as in the constructivist research paradigm” (p. 73). For clarity, ontology describes how each of us understands the nature of the world differently, through our senses and our subjective experiences.

Constructivist grounded theory places priority on the studied phenomenon and sees both the data and analysis as collaborative experiences shared between researcher and participants. In essence, the method of grounded theory becomes the means and does not necessarily ensure knowing, but is useful as a tool for learning. I explored how participants created meaning from as close to the topic as possible (having lived myself in a non-Aboriginal foster home without cultural mentoring). This locates the data analysis in the “time, place, culture and context, but also reflect our social, epistemological and research locations” (Belgrave & Charmaz, 2012, p. 349).

My data consisted of just over five hours of in-person, semi-structured, interactive interviews that I transcribed verbatim. Immersion in the transcription process allowed me to sort, compare and interpret the interview responses from participants, characterizing a modified grounded theory approach. Relating to my consideration for Aboriginal epistemologies in research, it is noteworthy that grounded theory was created in the 1960’s to “counter the all-powerful reductionist knowledge produced through quantitative positivist science” (Benoliel, 2001, p. 7).

Categories were sorted, compared and contrasted until my analysis produced no new codes or categories and all the data were accounted for in three core categories of the constructivist grounded theory paradigm model (Creswell, 2007, pp. 195, 286-289). Categories were related and developed based on participant responses and my personal understanding and interpretations of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Open coding was my first step in data analysis involving the interview data being put into categories based on key words, ideas, or symbols (LaRossa, 2005). The next step in data

analysis was axial coding, which organized the data in deeper detail, by making connections between the categories and subcategories of participant responses (Creswell, 2007; LaRossa, 2005).

Subcategories do not refer to items that are in some way consequent of the main category (ex: subcategory of child abuse is foster care), but rather, a subcategory “denotes a category that is related to—not a subclass of—a focal category” (LaRossa, 2005, p. 848). Finally, I selectively coded the data, meaning I re-considered my thesis question and imposed delimitation based on the data’s relevance. This was by far the most challenging piece because I fear there will be valuable information lost by my perception of its inapplicability, which will only become clear once it is too late.

These three emergent categories of People, Programming, and Processing Ideas are related to each other as a theoretical explanation of the actions that resolve the main concern of the participants (Grounded Theory, 2014). Extensive “memoing” on the categories in relation to one another confirmed that no other categories could emerge, nor could any exist without the others. Each category offered specific notions around applicability for either the who, what, or the how of cultural mentorship program development. A theory was constructed from this approach: Cultural mentorship curriculum planning for Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria is based on the three core concepts of People, Programming, and Processing Ideas. Sub-categories follow each of these three not as sub-classes, but as related and necessary components of consideration in the curriculum.

Although no theories specifically for cultural mentorship designed for Aboriginal girls in care were identified, relevant theories around youth mentorship included systemic mentoring theory (which emerged from systems theory) that suggests interactions between youth mentees and adult mentors must focus on development for the youth, and may involve multiple caring adults (DuBois, Karcher, 2013, p. 459). Although systemic mentoring theory does not describe specific applications

for programming, there is a suggestion that guardians of youth mentees must be supportive in order for the mentee to gain optimal benefits from the mentoring relationship (DuBois, Karcher, 2013, p. 459). Interview participants also described how support from guardians would foster more benefits for the mentees.

Other theories complement particular areas (such as family systems, or specific) of cultural programming for Aboriginal CYiC rather than offering a perspective on the mentoring process. These include critical race theory (CRT), and theory of cultural interface. CRT helps us address historical and political components in how “race, racism and power continue to flourish” despite social justice advances (Constance-Huggins, 2012, p. 6). CRT also provides us background into how the social construction of race can appear invisible to those with racial privilege. The barrier in application for our purposes is that although CRT emphasizes the intersection of numerous forms of oppression it does not propose how we should address it; therefore, CRT is mainly useful in my theory of Fostering Fire as background to understand intersections of oppression. For our purposes, the theory of cultural interface describes how programmers may lean more towards one culture or another in mentorship, when they should focus more on the dynamic between cultures as a means of celebrating and reconciling cultural segregation (Yunkaporta, 2009). This relates to theory of Fostering Fire through the sub-categories of Processing Ideas: representation, protocol, and lateral violence.

## **Autobiography**

My experience of Aboriginal culture is holistic. Informal knowledge transmission can be in the form of experience, verbal or non-verbal communication, and other avenues that involve a less-structured approach formulated outside of any institution. The fact that I am even considering interview narratives as a form of inquiry speaks to minority methodologies being enacted.

Autobiography can include holistic Aboriginal and Western methodologies like storytelling and the bio-psycho-social-spiritual (BPSS) model. Not only is this the more culturally appropriate avenue to share knowledge for the purposes of this thesis, but also by acknowledging its importance in scholarly work by using it myself, I take on an anti-oppressive position.

Autobiography offered a perspective on the topic of cultural continuity for Aboriginal girls in care, in a multi-positional sense; I took on and explored the role of female, researcher, social worker, former youth in care, and considered my potential Aboriginal ancestral heritage. The combination of voices from the participants and myself has created a more-informed and layered consciousness of the subject. Although I include multiple perspectives, my writing is not objective; inevitably, through autobiography my voice and bias shine through. Another duality in the epistemology of this study was my role of being the researcher as well as guardedly identifying with my target group, Aboriginal girls in foster care. There is a purposeful and inescapable connection between my experience and some of the stories told by interviewees, as they described several ongoing conditions that I went through in foster care just under a decade ago. Autobiography involves combining my understanding of cultural identity through self-reflection to understanding the nature of this research, and larger extended actions for mentorship and community involvement (Dyll et al., 2008). This allows for documented reflexivity, a critical issue during my work as an “insider researcher” (Smith, 1999, p. 137).

Autobiography is considered by Dyll, Francis and Tomaselli, (2008) to be an unconventional social science method because it attempts to write the participant’s observations and subjectivities directly into the final analysis, whereas conventional social science writing excludes the subjectivity of the observer, and often even that of the observed. A critique of autobiographical writing is that it allows for no productive arguments in response, as conflicting opinions are both personally

experienced and valid (Dyll et al., 2008). Dyll et al. (2008) explain that human experience is too complex for a conventional, one-size-fits-all approach. In order to validate numerous perspectives on how to develop a mentorship model, my approach must respect the “guts of field experiences,” and not take pre-digested mainstream textbook methods at face value (Dyll et al., p. 348).

The significance of lived experience in Indigenous methodology is widely discussed in the literature (Anderson, 2000; Battiste, 2008; Carrière, 2007; Hart, 2001; Grande, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999). Specifically in Plains Cree knowledge, high value is placed on experiential knowledge and subjective experiences in education and cultural identity development (Kovach, 2009). Some even argue there is a distinct grouping of facts that one can only contribute as a result of having shared experiences with each other, paralleling lines of peer-mentorship (Dunbar, 2008).

The subjectivity of autobiography is further discussed in *Red Pedagogy* (Grande, 2008), which criticizes fundamentalist understandings of race and ethnicity, and instead values personal identity and performance narratives emphasizing Aboriginal self-determination in research and education. De-centering colonialism as the focus in research and re-centering Aboriginal “survivance” as the focus speaks to the active process of moving through a colonial state of being (Grande, 2008, p. 250). Fundamentally rooted in IK and praxis, Red Pedagogy seeks to build global solidarities among all Aboriginal people while analyzing and understanding forces associated with colonization. Red Pedagogy is not a theory or method to be applied, rather it is a function that allows for acknowledgement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal notions around conducting research (Grande, 2008; Gehl, 2012).

**Personal and political.** Here I present linkages between Western and Indigenous methodological processes within my research. Admittedly, I do not personally possess cultural



Aboriginal experiences that could be pulled on to inform my research design; instead, my experience is one of displacement and wondering.

My research preparations have involved on-going *miskâsowin*, a Cree word describing a process of exploring the center of myself, and finding out where I belong (Kovach, 2010). For me, this inward knowing is rooted in my personal experiences of not connecting with my heritage. The very act of asking appeared to be a bother to my social workers. Now, as I inch my way along a hilly path of learning about my heritage in adulthood, my passion to support other young girls disconnected from their heritage grows. How many Aboriginal girls in care sense this separation? This reflexivity in my research adds a dimension of purpose and is a validating factor for the incorporation of autobiographical methodology. Kovach (2009) described how purpose and inward knowing for a researcher are closely linked, and act as reminders to stay aware of my motivations and biases influencing the research.

To integrate tribal epistemology within my research process I acknowledge their “relational and holistic qualities,” and consider how my understanding of them influences my research and my life (Kovach, 2009, p. 63). I have not had the luxury of participating in or learning about Aboriginal research protocols relative to my ancestry. Smith (2012) explains a reason for this inexperience among new researchers being that “systemic mentoring and training of researchers does not usually occur until one reaches graduate level,” and that many are “self-taught, having received little curriculum support for areas related to [I]ndigenous concerns” (p. 136). Considering this alongside the fact that many Aboriginal girls in foster care may also be culturally disconnected, there is a harmonious irony that I am doing my research from an *urban* Aboriginal cultural methodology; when I refer to specific tribal epistemologies I name their origin. Smith (1999) asserts that naming specific Indigenous research methodologies “privileges Indigenous values, attitudes and practices rather than

disguising them within Westernized labels such as ‘collaborative research’” (p. 125). For me this is about being honest regarding myself-in-relation to tribal epistemologies. As Kovach (2009) eloquently states, “self-location anchors knowledge within experiences, and these experiences greatly influence interpretations” (p. 111).

Whether described as decolonization, Indigenous praxis, or resistance, “The point is that Indigenous research needs to benefit Indigenous people in some way, shape or form – that is the bottom line” (Kovach, 2009, p. 93). An inherent value within Indigenous research methodology is reciprocity, and the act of giving back to the community in useful practical ways.

## **Embracing the Process**

**Sampling design.** Mixed-methods approaches in qualitative research seek to “incorporate, intentionally and respectfully, multiple design standpoints” (Lewin & Somekh, 2011, p. 262). In this case, semi-structured interviews and autobiographical approaches were mixed. This design also reflects my prospective stances, and considers differing worldviews of Western and Indigenous epistemologies (Lewin & Somekh, 2011). Contemplating my positionality as a culturally dislocated, potentially Aboriginal female, former child in care, and researcher at a Western institution, Western research methodologies were more accessible for me to use. However, the “heart knowledge” (Gehl, 2012, p. 54) evident by my emotional, spiritual connection to my work that underlies my motivation is powerful.

My experience of foster care is undoubtedly subtly influenced by my status as female; I cannot describe a male or transgender experience. Additionally, four out of the five participants interviewed identified as female, leaving this study with a strong majority of female voices. However, I have not elected to employ feminist framework, because that framework focuses more on gender roles and ongoing social inequities surrounding them. Although this thesis discusses the role

of Aboriginal womanhood in families, exploring social problems as gendered experiences and therefore exploring the experiences as positioned, structured by patriarchy and potential inequality between men and women was beyond its scope.

**Bias in plan of inquiry.** Lewin & Somekh (2011) define bias as “an in-built tendency to see the world - and hence to interpret data - in a particular way. Researchers either need to eradicate bias or understand it through a process of reflexivity and account for it in reporting their work” (p. 321).

Self-reflection has been purposeful and pervasive for me. Muncey (2010) inspired me to think about artefacts that have surrounded me throughout my time in graduate studies, and to consider what impact this has had. I attempt to go a step further and consider location. During the three years I took to complete my Master’s degree I moved seven times, fell in love with my life partner and his family, and bought my first house. Talking about transition from one culture to another and back again within my writing has been genuinely aided by my own bouncy transitioning! I am intimately familiar with displacement, as are the Aboriginal girls in foster care I seek to support through this research.

## **Ethics**

Procedures for undertaking autobiography and semi-structured interviews in my study were formalized through the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) application process. Perhaps my greatest ethical concern was that I wanted to approach my research in ‘a good way;’ this phrase is echoed through many of my conversations around Aboriginal culture.

**Personal preparations.** Although I have not had any mentoring on traditional preparations for conducting research I was able to read about them and attempted to embody

“uy’skwuluwun...to be of a good mind and spirit” (Thomas, 2011, p. 108). Personal actions I took involved smudging and dream recording, which proved to be very insightful regarding my insecurities writing this thesis. I had a series of five dreams about big animals including black bears, polar bears and cougars, all of which included violence with me emerging unscathed. I went through another series of dreams in which I rode on the back of blue whales. I was able to communicate with them telepathically, breathe underwater, and enjoyed scenic tours of the west coastal waters from their atop their backs. In another dream, I was in Ontario where my alleged Anishnabe father is from. It was a mild day outside. I was invited into a log building with about five steps up the right hand side. Inside there were a few older men sitting in a small circle on the floor, they wanted to tell me something about the past, and not necessarily my own. All these dreams were very powerful.

In addition to much personal reflection during research preparations, I spoke with friends, family, co-workers, peers, University of Victoria professors and University of Victoria affiliated professionals working in a related social sciences field throughout my researching and writing process. It was important to me that the advice I gathered before commencing my interviews came from a personal place rather than a lens of Western legality and formalization, especially since most of my lived experiences have been informed by Western ways of knowing. With the groundwork for my research based in genuine curiosity, there has been reciprocal sharing of information, immense consideration for what is needed for the community of interest, on-going reflection of how I interact, observe, and interpret gifted knowledge, and above all, honesty about my intentions.

**University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board.** Recommended revisions from HREB were minimal, which I credit to the guidance I had from my thesis supervisors. After the initial HREB submission, we had to review processes around confidentiality with consideration to the small sample size.

Originally, I was not planning to layer my story with what the participants shared. It was not until after I had heard their stories that the undeniable parallels were illuminated between my own experience and what they face trying to share culture with Aboriginal girls in foster care. I had anticipated that feelings of relatedness would arise, but not to such an extent; when they did, it confirmed my initial interest in autobiography as a methodological approach.

In conclusion, chapter described the methods used in this study in several sections: data sampling procedures; limitations and delimitations in my research; and methodologies used. The design was a mixed-methods qualitative approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews, critical theory, grounded theory, and autobiography to examine components necessary for a mentorship model for Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria. Mindfulness around how participant responses inform all this work is the focus of the next chapter, *Research Findings*, which explores responses from five participants.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

*“I am working in a mentorship framework right now as a mentee, and I feel very strongly that the mentorship model benefits me as a learner, and because I’ve been doing this for some time, not just now but beginning when I was a young woman, I know it has benefitted my cultural identity”* (Interview Participant Sarah).

In this chapter, I explore responses from five participants interviewed for this study. Two gave permission to use their first names, Sarah and Tanille, and the three other participants will be referred to by their work title of Social Service Worker (SSW), or Faculty. SSWs may encompass Guardianship Workers, Delegated Social Workers, or Aboriginal Youth Workers, and Faculty and Sessional Instructors may include college or university professors; all participants currently work and live in Greater Victoria , as do I.

When considering the perspective from which to view participant responses, I was immediately drawn to Wilson's (2008) suggestion that critical theory encompasses a reality that is more fluid or malleable than a single truth. With subjective reality being shaped through cultural experiences, self-location, and values, there is shaping of epistemology done by myself-in-relation with participants during the interview process, and afterwards through my interpretations. In other words, these interactions create a more informed social consciousness with the purpose of improving knowledge to benefit Aboriginal girls in foster care. Discussion of responses will be given at the end of the response section, and follow a grounded theory framework as outlined in chapter three.

### Discussion of Questions

**Versions.** The objective of this research was to address the lack of cultural programming for Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria. It has provided the opportunity for Social Service Workers who work directly with these girls, and university Faculty and Sessional Instructors working

in this field, to voice their perceptions about how to address this well documented gap in literature and practice. Four main questions were generated to address this thesis question, with sub-questions under each one to appropriately consider the participants' epistemological location of Social Service Worker or Faculty and Sessional Instructor. In accordance with constructivist grounded theory methodology exploring "individual experiences, thoughts, feelings, and actions" interview questions "explored the interviewer's topic, and fit with the participants' experience" (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012, p. 351). The four main questions are listed below, with sub-questions listed in Appendix D.

- 1. What do the social service workers and/or faculty participants believe are the most critical components of successfully supporting Aboriginal girls' cultural continuity while living in care?**
- 2. What are the perceptions of frontline social service workers and faculty participants about necessary conditions for supporting cultural continuity for Aboriginal girls in foster care in general?**
- 3. What potential value do the social service workers and faculty participants see in a mentorship program for Aboriginal girls living in foster care?**
- 4. What mentorship model can be designed to support Aboriginal girls in foster care based on this research in ways that are sustainable/transferrable and focused on cultural continuity?**

Social service workers and faculty members working in these fields offered me valuable information about closing some of these gaps in care based on their work experiences and perspectives. Tailoring the questions to better suit these two groups was useful, as Faculty and Sessional Instructors drew more information from current literature and processing ideas, and Social Service Workers drew more from programming and networking experiences. All participants

described personal investments and passion in this area, contributing to genuine conversations that absolutely merits space in this thesis.

## **Participant Responses**

Participant responses will now be discussed question by question for better flow of information for the reader, rather than going through each individual interview from beginning to end. For each question, responses from the three Social Service Workers will be listed before the Faculty member and Sessional Instructor responses.

### **Question 1: What are the most critical components of successfully supporting Aboriginal girls' cultural continuity while living in care?**

*While sitting in a boardroom far bigger than needed for our purposes, I am offered a glass of water, and I sit in a comfy chair across from my first interviewee. Both of us are along the window, and it's a beautiful, sunny summer day outside. The milieu of this interview was informal and relaxed. After some chitchat, getting to know you kind of talk, I turn on the tape recorder and we begin working through our questions.*

**SSW1:** I think the biggest component to import would be exposure and connection in a physical, visceral way. If you are Cree, what is the point of introducing you to the Potlatch system it isn't part of your cultural identity, you know, but I think the system in which children are fostered doesn't take that into consideration- the individuation of cultural components and all that.

**Kate:** *What do you think about exposing Aboriginal girls in foster care to Aboriginal cultures other than their own?*

**SSW1:** No, I would say that isn't optimal at all. I think this is significant and anything else is inauthentic in that way. Here on the Vancouver Island the nine reserves that share the same language group still have protocols that differ from community to community. I mean, are we just going to put



beads and feathers on everything and call it a day? It's about trying to break out of that whole paradigm that is in everybody's psyche, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal, and especially people who are disconnected.

*Key points here direct me to think about the how and who of a mentorship model.*

*Experiential learning is something I tried to encourage with youth in care I worked with as well, and I interpret this to be a main focal point this interviewee would want to see in a model. I anticipated that a multi-Nation framework would raise a few eyebrows, and judging by this response I was right; we'll see how/ if others bring this up.*

**SSW 2:** What I see as the missing component with these children is the actual contact with their own people, and hearing about their culture from their own people. Because we are in an urban setting, so there is no way for many of them to get in touch with people who are even familiar with their own cultures. I am really reluctant to have our kids who want cultural training to be immersed in what I call 'pan-Indianism'.

I had someone tell me once, "We're going to teach the drum making as a cultural activity." For me that's not enough. What we need are the teachings behind making the drum. The cultural part, that is the frame of mind that identifies you as a cultural thinker, not just someone who is mechanically making a drum. For me this wasn't something wrapped up in a term called 'cultural teaching,' this was life. There are many foster parents who try to introduce culture into the lives of the foster children but they're not native, the majority of them, they have no idea about the background of these children, and so the cultural teachings are like a temporary pat on the head. They're just doing what required of them to be a foster parent. What I find is when they find even a little gem of culture they light up. It lights them up.

*The interview with this participant is less cushy, with us sitting next to each other along a table in another boardroom. The cadence of this participant is calmer, she is older than the first, and her eye contact is soft. Echoing the first interview, SSW2 has also described the necessary component of experiential learning with a depth of knowledge that only arguably comes from someone of the same First Nation background; however, this participant acknowledges that this is a challenge in an urban setting. The intention of the people invested with these girls is a key point, and I am excited to begin hearing new perspectives on terminology and the metaphor around illumination and fire.*

**SSW Tanille:** The most important part for our girls to want to engage in their culture is that we do. The mentor from the program would need to build a relationship with the girl before their support person could leave; depending on how often they were meeting this would take some time, but after they could do check-ins. I would say with our kids 90% won't go on their own but if I go they all will. If I say, "We're going to go here and we're going to do this," they'll all just say "Okay" and they'll come with me. So if I ask them to go on their own it's a whole different situation.

*Tanille is a friend and colleague of mine, and this interview took place on her couch over a bowl of soup and with her two lovely dogs. She offers a perspective on necessary components that I can absolutely relate to: how much of an outsider we can feel after being so disconnected, how difficult it can be to start new connections from scratch. I agree with her that reliable, and trustworthy support is a big motivator in mentorship.*

**Faculty:** We looked at what proportion of a band council was made up of women, and it turns out when women are the majority of the band council things go better for youth. They said it was their *job* to promote and support that for young people. I would be willing to bet cold hard cash that if you want to support the cultural identity of girls in community, you've got to connect them to

women. That informal visiting and that storytelling and all those natural ways that culture lives and gets passed from one generation to another are easily disrupted by little things like: there's not as much visiting, people only visiting within their own family groups and are not as wide. In the communities I was working with in Manitoba they were worried about how the 'nature of visiting' has changed.

*This interview took place in a small office at the participant's place of work, and offered yet another fresh perspective on the importance of females supporting females in cultural mentorship. The discussion on Aboriginal women asserting it was part of their job to support Aboriginal youth is encouraging. Considering a mentorship model as comparative to visiting was something I had not anticipated going into this project, but relates to how terminology could once again be reconsidered.*

**Sessional Instructor Sarah:** Living in an Indigenous family, and being supported in Indigenous activities, ways of knowing, and being and doing on a regular basis. Components that would be included in a mentorship model would include Elders and knowledge holders who can support these girls and young women with rites of passage and other types of cultural activities to support them with their identity and help them navigate- embracing who they are if they haven't had that opportunity. Community-based research [CBR] shows families that are working through this; we know that the way that our children know who they are is through the environment they are raised in; so in a mentorship model, it's trying to find those tools and people who can embrace them in that way. And no, I don't think it's too late once they are adults either, it's just very emotional. [Sarah sheds a tear].

*Sarah and I have since become good friends. This interview took place in a small office with her daughter quietly playing on a laptop nearby. Her mention of on-going cultural experiences involving activities, places and people really helps to sum up this first question nicely, and I noticed*

*that this was the first mention of Elders being involved in mentorship. Her comment on trying to “find” healthy Aboriginal adults to act as mentors will prove to be a meaningful focal point in later interviews.*

**Question 2: What are the necessary conditions for supporting cultural continuity for Aboriginal girls in foster care in general?**

**SSW 1:** It’s going to take a real paradigm shift that *needs* to happen. In my experience community members who are disconnected are so hungry for culture, they’re going to reach for often times, whatever cheap imitation, for lack of a better word, is offered to them. Aboriginal Friendship Centers support it, community events in terms of on reserve would support it but that’s hard you know; people can’t just enter into that. There are not a lot of places where people can get their cultural identity needs met. I think those needs are just as important as food and clothing. When I have had the privilege of working with people who have gone through that system [foster care] they ask *where do I belong?* I witnessed a man who had been reconnected with his culture and he is on fire now, he is on. It’s connection.

**Kate:** *What would you call it when people find that fire once they are reconnected with culture?*

**SSW 1:** I don’t think people ever actually lose it, but it just goes to sleep for a while. So this is like waking up. It’s great to see when they get it, and people know, they just know.

*Yes! This was so reassuring to me as someone who wants to reignite this fire. I can also relate to how I have often reached for culture, no matter who is teaching it, or what level of depth; perhaps many of us do not know what to look for yet in authenticity? It was unnerving to hear confirmation from the field that there is indeed a lack of cultural supports available, and I wonder what others will have to say about this. With the recurrence of the fire as a metaphor for*

*reconnecting to culture, it is suggested that connection to culture is never lost but only goes dormant, and can therefore be reignited through cultural mentorship.*

**SSW 2:** One of the issues we have with a lot of the girls growing up in foster care is their lack of respect for themselves because they haven't been made to feel important or worthy and if they can go back to their own cultural teachings, it will tell them they're important. A lot of them have been abused in care and they don't understand what's happening to them, but if they had those teachings about themselves I think it would lessen the impact of foster care on them. It would lessen the distress that they experience when they become teenagers, you wouldn't have the Aboriginal youth in gangs if they had a good sense of self worth they wouldn't need the gangs, they would have the family tie or community ties that they need to hold them up.

*This rang clear as day for me. When I was a teenager in care I partook in self-destructive activities because I was mad, lonely, and lacked a sense of belonging. Had I been more involved with extended family, and cultural connections that could be called upon in times of turmoil, I like to think I would have opted for that instead. Gang relations is an interest of mine as a social worker; however, small unstructured groups of culturally disconnected Aboriginal youth are perhaps more rampant than organized crime in Greater Victoria (at least when concerning children and youth).*

**SSW Tanille:** In my experience, the biggest component is relationship and community awareness. You're going to re-instill that intergenerational passing down of teachings. You can also get permission from whoever is teaching to pass it on and make sure you're really doing it right, so they would teach a couple times and then the mentor would teach a couple times with them supervising to make sure that they're doing it correctly. You would have to get permission from the community members too and they would say when the youth were ready to start passing on the teachings themselves as mentors.

You want to try and run it as nonhierarchical as possible; people are going to have to take on certain roles but it would be cool to put in as much diversity into the youth work as possible. I know dance is a big thing that a lot of our girls are becoming interested in learning about, so that's huge. A big piece of it will be getting the word out to all the organizations letting them know about what you're doing. Not necessarily asking for their participation but just letting them know that this is what you're doing and raising awareness. People like to know things, whether or not they're going to do anything with that information; if they find out that they were never told about it they might be upset.

*Two things are going on here; we are talking about relationships and community awareness, and also about Tanille's perspective on the logistics of getting a mentorship program up and running. She has suggested the creation of a self-sufficient and sustainable framework with many solutions that answer the call of funding, power-relations, and finding mentors; a potential barrier addressed by most participants later on. Suggesting that permission is required to pass on cultural teachings is important, as is respectfully informing potentially interested First Nation communities, a method of supporting the component of diversity.*

**Faculty:** We have to ask if the girl cares or even knows about their culture and about what could they learn about. Sometimes the caregivers are the ones pushing them to learn when they are not intrinsically motivated to become involved in their culture. On the other hand, the caregivers can also be the ones deterring the girl from participating in culture, whether the foster parent is Aboriginal or not. Programmers need to deal with motivating funders too because the resources are critical. There is a distrust of the *system* and so when outsiders come in with their bright and flashy ideas about mentorship it can be viewed as having systemic colonial roots. In order for this to work it

needs to come from within. So the question becomes, how do we motivate communities to support and encourage cultural continuity?

*This response is focused on motivation for mentees, funders, and intrinsic motivation for communities, and acknowledges a difficult history. Having a mentorship program developed by community rather than created by an external governing body is viewed as paramount, probably based on the systemic colonizing history of Canada against Aboriginal peoples. This finding reiterates what I have been taught about self-governing in First Nation communities, suggesting community-based research (CBR) would be an appropriate methodology for exploring the quandary of motivation further. Impacts of external influencers lead us to wonder how we can create cohesion among people involved, and remind us that participation ultimately comes down to the mentee's decision to engage or not.*

**Sessional Instructor Sarah:** I've noticed a fair amount of discussion and writing in recent years about bringing Indigenous youth and kids in foster care or from the Sixties Scoop back into community, and how is that done. From what I understand from local First Nation practices there is blanketing people and bringing them back, and I hear from other people I work with, that this is something that a lot of our communities are acknowledging, and people are asking *how can we do this, how should we do this*. It takes healthy, strong adults who have been able to work through a lot of their own internalized oppression, racism, and intergenerational effects they've been given because this affects almost every family in our communities. So it takes those people to be able to be invited to this type of longer termed programming.

*In this response Sarah is focusing on protocols around inclusion that are still currently in the developmental phase in some First Nation communities. It is encouraging to learn there is recent dialogue around the fire symbolizing cultural connection in Aboriginal people, and that many*

*communities are now discussing how this can be done. All participants have now identified locating healthy Aboriginal adults who have undergone their own work to overcome personal barriers of colonization and systemic racism as a potentially challenging factor.*

**Question 3: What potential value do you see in a mentorship program for Aboriginal girls living in foster care?**

**SSW1:** The mentoring framework is great; I think it's the best approach because it's relational. I think if you want to see change you need the relationship, absolutely. Love that. I think the mentor would benefit hugely as would the mentee. I know that reciprocity is a huge factor in Aboriginal philosophy and this is a perfect setup for it. I think some of the struggle may be finding healthy mentors, and that says more about the system than it does about the individual; Aboriginal community is very much in recovery. Sometimes people's noses get out of joint if there is too much representation of a certain Nation over another in centers, but I think if the intention is there it's going to work. It would be great to see something here [Greater Victoria], and again it's the resourcing part; the advocacy piece is huge. I think the foster care system is an extension of the residential school system; that is just a crazy idea that I have [sarcastic undertone]. Not to say there aren't great foster parents out there, but the system is highly flawed and I think there is way more wrong that happens than right, especially for our Aboriginal community. We have community that is not only wishing for change but demanding it, and that's a great thing to see. You need that motivation. When I think of the 'need' of the community as being the size of China and resources being Salt Spring Island, BC [185 sq. km], I think this is the reality of it and so working, working, working at it can be overwhelming at times. It's the system that needs to change, and mainstream consciousness.



*Excellent to hear that professionals in the field agree that mentorship is a great framework for a cultural support program. The systemic colonial undertones are becoming apparent through the responses now, and this one is geared at the foster care system and resource allocation as a negative consequence of the history of colonialism. With multi-Nations being inevitably involved in such a mentorship program, it is noteworthy that there can be tension about who is more represented or not. Benefits for both the mentee and mentor due to the nature of a mentorship model framework are identified as appropriately paralleling Aboriginal values of reciprocity.*

**SSW 2:** I think a mentoring framework would be a good program to support cultural continuity again providing that the mentor is from the same cultural background as the child. I think both the mentor and the mentee would benefit from this program. And again, some of the mentors are far away from home and don't have that family connection, so it would be good for some of them to begin to start building their own community here. I have been involved with other mentoring programs here [southern Vancouver Island], and I would love to see that grow into a cultural program. I think it could work. I think it's important for younger people to work with older people who carry the wisdom and have the life experience that they have, most of them have the language skills and the stories. We have a lot of residential school survivors. Many of them would love to mentor younger people but unfortunately they haven't done their own work yet. It is a challenge to find healthy individuals.

*It is great to hear more positive feedback that a mentorship model is a good option particularly for the region of Greater Victoria. In contrast to Tanille's discussion of peer-mentorship, the argument is made here to have younger mentees with adult mentors. Examples of cultural mentoring activities are offered. It is acknowledged here that finding healthy adults is challenging, and the rationale is placed directly onto the history of Residential Schools.*

**SSW Tanille:** It will also bring up the maturity of the mentoring group as well; a lot of the cultural practices have a lot of rules around them and you cannot just fly by the seat of your pants. We [adults] see gaining a cultural teaching lesson as massive; teenagers don't care, they want cars and money. It's about respecting their wants while also telling them "we want you to know this." So it's about making those mentors and finding that balance. I love mentorship models I think they're so great! Look at the Boys and Girls Club in some places they have a three-year wait list because they don't have enough mentors. There's obviously a massive need for it.

*Value identified here includes raising maturity, and building confidence in former youth in care by having youth mentor youth, and by working through the structure of cultural protocols in a mentorship program. Recommendations for motivating youth include respecting the autonomy of youth alongside cultural histories.*

**Faculty:** Follow through is absolutely essential for people to benefit from a mentorship model. With some programs, the workers come in, do their thing and encourage all these changes, and then leave; this leaves the community at a loss. Consider the notion of *resilience* within the child that is nurtured by their intrinsic motivation as well as by their environment. Children with this resilience factor always seemed to have a non-parent adult in their life who took a special interest in them. Resilience doesn't reside within the child (like a personality trait), or in the environment (like a caring non-parent adult), it's in the interaction between the child and his/her environment. That's the proper target for interventions.

*This response discusses processes of time and focus. As aforementioned in interviews, follow-through in relationships is critical; the impacts of cultural mentorship must remain in and benefit First Nation communities. Focus on motivation as it pertains to both nature and nurture influences for the mentee are identified as the objective for cultural mentorship.*

**Sessional Instructor Sarah:** It seems to me that lateral violence is an issue that needs to be addressed in an organization so that the conditions are safe and healthy and nurturing so that young women who are trying to find their cultural identity feel they can trust organizations, that there's no dumb questions, you know. There is another discussion going on that I've learned about through the courses I've had the opportunity to TA and teach on Indigenous scholarship, is the idea of who is *more* Indigenous. Taiaiake Alfred talks about moving closer to the fire, and that it's not about who was born on the *rez* or who is fluent in their language but it's the intention and the act of learning one's own cultural identity and practicing that in our daily life.

*The Native Women's Association of Canada (2014) describes lateral violence in First Nation communities and organizations, as intergenerational oppression that becomes internalized, leading people to feel powerless and eventually turn their anger against each other. Addressing lateral violence and embracing compassionate communication and action in a mentorship program is identified here. Three participants having identified the metaphor of igniting this fire by reconnecting and intentionally learning about culture is a key finding; my personal communications with Taiaiake Alfred have also alluded to the notion of genuine yearning to be closer to the fire/culture.*

**Sessional Instructor Sarah (cont.):** My research question is about what we do to reconnect with community when we have not been raised in community. I am working in a mentorship framework right now as a mentee, and I feel very strongly that the mentorship model benefits me as a learner and because I've been doing this for some time not just now but beginning when I was a young woman, and I know it has benefitted my cultural identity. I also think it has a lot of benefits for the mentors to be able to share these teachings and to practice traditions and ways of knowing, which really speaks to Indigenous ways of knowing and doing and being. I've never heard a person ever express to me that having some kind of mentorship opportunity was not beneficial to them.

*Having worked through a mentorship framework at different points during her life including as a culturally disconnected youth, Sarah brings an insider perspective. She reiterates that through a mentoring framework the benefits for the mentees were evident for her, and that mentors also benefit by sharing their knowledge, truly embodying Indigenous Knowledge.*

**Question 4: What mentorship model can be designed to support Aboriginal girls in foster care that will be sustainable, transferrable, and focused on cultural continuity?**

**SSW 1:** Mentorship can look like a variety of things to a variety of people. I think people would much rather see an Aboriginal person from a different territory than someone who is not Aboriginal, because there are so many shared values, you know, there is the land, connection to community your family, that belongingness to the cosmos. I think about how an Aboriginal person might feel with another Aboriginal person because they both share an *Aboriginal-ness*. Is a little glimpse into something better than nothing for people who are hungry for that and wanting to make a connection? My hope is that it [mentorship model] would be individual, and breathing, moving, and malleable. There is nobody out there that is governing how much cultural connection these children are having.

*Is something better than nothing? Is a cultural lesson from a different Nation appropriate and effective enough in a mentorship model to bring Aboriginal girls in care close enough to the fire and gain optimal benefits? A flexible model may accommodate this; perhaps a case-by-case basis for individuals would be preferred? Confirming my research that no one is monitoring how much cultural connection Aboriginal girls in foster care have to their culture is a disappointing finding (Turpel-Lafond, 2014). This leads us to ask, should this be monitored, and if so, by who, how, when, and for what purposes?*

**SSW 2:** I think a mentorship model is a good first step because the girls have such a difficult time going from their own home life to usually a white home with different ways of being. For my team, and me even if we can't make the familial tie we can get them in community where they are safe, where the teachings are honoured and we will hold them up as much as we can.

If you had an Elder who wanted to take the kids out on the land I'm not sure how parents would feel about that if they didn't know the individual. Children today live in this atmosphere of fear. And because we would have to be responsible if we were sponsoring this to do all the legal checks and everything else we would have to invade their privacy to make sure the kids were safe. So knowing that I think there would be some individuals that would not go through all that, and I can understand that its not that they might have a criminal record it's that our culture of Canada has been invasive enough to Native people.

*Identity and privacy are the focal points here. The terms, criminal record, fear, and invasive, surround the idea of privacy for the mentors, while terms, safe, familial, and honoured surround the idea of supporting cultural identity for the kids. On the one hand we are talking about enriching an Aboriginal child's cultural identity through relationship building and creating safe spaces, on the other hand, privacy of identity for Elders and other potential mentors who are not prepared to offer personal information is identified as an invasive challenge. Embracing identity and hiding identity, unfortunate that it seems polarized here.*

**SSW Tanille:** I think that calling it a mentorship model would throw some people off; that's what it is but that's not what people call it. Yes, time is a restraint but if this mentorship model worked that would take time off from the social workers and the girls could just go with the mentors. They [foster children] know they have us [social workers] forever but we need to teach them how to make their own support network.

You have to be able to sell your program too, come from the angle of families are different now, we don't have the families that we used before so we have to create different avenues so we can get what we used to get out of our families. This is a topic that comes up fairly often in the work that we do, we used to learn these things every day all day and now you never do, you have to look for them, it takes constant effort. A lot of kids are starting to adjust the idea that families are different.

*Key points here are changing the term of mentorship, providing more time for social workers to work on logistical family issues, and validating why a cultural mentorship program is needed rather than learning from our families.*

**SSW Tanille (cont.):** You might get some flack as to how the traditions are being taught, people can get pissy about it. But you have to play off the sensitivity from each Nation and show we're coming to your Nation for this thing, and we're coming to your Nation for that thing. It's like a multi-nation mentorship program, so we're not funneling. If you go back to the model I was talking about in the beginning, where you have the community member teaching the mentor it's not really the mentor that's coming up with this information, it's being backed up by the actual community. So the community member is signing off when they feel that mentor's ready.

Some community members think they have better information than a lot of professionals in the area, and that's where heads butt. The First Nation could also put forward the community members they want you working with so that would also help you keep people off your back. It's the easiest way to keep traditions alive right now and be intergenerational. It would also be the easiest way to keep your program alive because you wouldn't need as much funding and you have a constant flow of people. I know a girl right now I was working in one of our programs with that would love to be part of something like this; she's outstanding. She would be an amazing mentor for others and an amazing leader.

*Tanille wraps up her final response by talking about a multi-Nation, urban mentorship model, complete with pros and cons. She describes solutions to political challenges of a cross-cultural model: 1) be honest about which Nation specific cultural components come from, 2) gain permission from the First Nation community to share the cultural components, 3) ensure community members be directly involved in the mentoring process, so the cultural components are fully understood and respectfully passed on. It is exciting that she identifies a potential mentor.*

**Faculty:** A sense of community amongst the mentors, the mentees, the guardians, and everyone involved, but proposals and entering into community could be challenging. Writing for the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW), Mowatt and Young (2006) advise us to ask any contacts we have from Aboriginal communities to introduce them to community members directly, as a form of respect. Also structuring in flexibility, that allows room for program adjustments and changes as they are needed. Not only *could* you, but *should* you have mentors and mentees from the same First Nation? In our program we wanted to match up mentors and mentees from the same Nation but every now and then we couldn't; it was not logistically realistic. Realistically you might not want to have a mentor and a mentee from the same First Nation because with families that dislike each other it might not be the best-case scenario, and they might actually be better off being mentored by a woman of another Nation.

*As mentioned by other participants, the start-up of the program, including the securing of funds and community support, may be difficult in the beginning. The desire to have mentors and mentees from the same Nation not being realistic was a concern I expected to hear about, especially being here on Vancouver Island and therefore somewhat geographically isolated. The final consideration around families from the same Nation not being available to each other for whatever*

*reason is something to consider, especially with all the small and isolated communities on southern Vancouver Island, and BC.*

**Sessional Instructor Sarah:** As a Cree woman who reconnected with my family as a young adult and learned a lot about our teachings as a young adult, and now as a more mature adult, the way I understand an Indigenous way of knowing and being is through a mentoring framework.

Female women are primarily the ones doing things with the children and closer to the home. I don't think that is just a past way of describing community, I believe there is culturally a really strong role for grandparents and females. But because we don't really have that structure for young girls in foster care, they likely don't have that connection or opportunity. I think it's an appropriate model and approach because often mentors are people who are identified as Elders or knowledge holders. I noticed that what's been opened up with the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] hearings is a more public, you know, on the record, commentary on the intergenerational results in Canada of the Indian Act and residential schools and child welfare act, that what we have today is an overwhelming amount of Aboriginal kids in care. I'm not dismissing the importance of government policies and those spaces because from what I've seen it's created a public forum to speak truths on really deep issues. I believe its important to acknowledge there can be a role for public policy and that type of action because it creates a public space in the dominant space of society where this becomes a really heard issue. Sometimes when we aren't culturally connected, we ourselves might need to hear what's happening in the public space because we're not going to the big house, we're not going to the sweat lodge or over at granny's house, whatever it might be that provides young people with that cultural identity and cultural opportunity.

*Sarah beautifully wraps up the interviews with comments about Aboriginal womanhood and the politics around information sharing. She asserts that there has been and still is a strong role for*



*women in community, and agrees with the Faculty member that due to this, women are the appropriate people to be mentoring Aboriginal girls in care. This is in contrast to Tanille's earlier suggestions for a self-sustaining system of youth mentoring youth. Sarah's final comments reached me personally, when she described how when people feel disconnected they might look to public spaces (like media or the UVic's First People's House) for information, rather than abruptly entering into community. Public records and policies are suggested spaces for people to reach a broader audience with dialogue around culturally specific issues.*

## **Analysis & Theory of Fostering Fire**

Congruency of reciprocity in my research is honoured through oral tradition and ensuring “that holistic, contextualized meanings arise from research” (Kovach, 2009, p. 96). Interviewed participants had the opportunity to share and explain their knowledge, thereby maintaining ownership over their voice and ensuring “authentic, ethical representation” (p. 100). This is important because the academic world I walk in has colonial blackberry roots that pop up incessantly; “thus, the stories, and the content they carry, must be shared with this appreciation to protect them from exploitation or appropriation” (p. 103).

Through open, axial, and selective coding methods of grounded theory, participant responses were reviewed and a grounded theory was constructed. First I identified key words and ideas through open coding. Next, links and gaps in the key words and ideas were identified through the axial coding method. Finally, I selectively omitted data based on its direct relevance to the questions asked, by means of selective coding in grounded theory. From my interpretations using this method, the interview data produced three core themes: People, Programming, and Processing Ideas. The grounded theory approach assured ecological validity as my research findings accurately represented the real-world setting of Greater Victoria (Charmaz, 2009). My grounded theory is ecologically valid

because it is similar to the data from which it was established, based on literature and participant interviews. The constructs in my grounded theory are appropriately abstract, context-specific, detailed, and tightly connected to the data. This fulfills my thesis proposal of addressing the gap in literature and practice around the context-specific focus of cultural mentorship for Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria, BC. My theory suggests that cultural mentorship curriculum planning for Aboriginal girls in foster care is based on the three core concepts of people, programming, and processing ideas. Without these three sections the planning process is incomplete.

The categories organically arose from the interview data, as participants repeatedly described necessary components relating to at least one of these three fields. The first category, *People*, addresses who might be involved in a cultural mentoring program. As seen in figure 4, individuals described by the participants involved the cultural program participants themselves, and extended to organizers, guardians, and community members. These individuals would need to support the program in order for it to be sustainably supported, and if any were removed the program could collapse. The second category, *Programming*, includes specific actions potentially involved in a cultural mentoring program. In constructivist grounded theory development the concepts presented are intentionally abstract, yet still context specific to the topic. Programming considerations identified by participants included funding, pan-Indian cautions, activities, timeframes for mentoring, and privacy for individuals (particularly Elders). There is an assumed value statement on some of these actions, and I left the descriptions of them to the participants to extrapolate on (see Findings chapter). The final category, *Processing Ideas*, included ideas the participants argued were central to the development of cultural mentorship and essentially covers the *how* of programming. These encompassed considerations around specific protocols and territories, the nature of visiting in mentorship and community, representation of particular groups or ideologies, and lateral violence.

These ideas were repeatedly brought up during interviews and lead to the most contentious discussions; the process of how to set-up and maintain a cultural mentoring program became the focus in most of the interviews, suggesting discrepancies in how individuals believe it should be run. Below a chart is offered outlining the categories and sub-categories, before a more in-depth description in the following section. Crossover amongst sub-categories is eminent as they all related back to the focal topic of cultural mentorship in Greater Victoria.

Figure 4: Grounded Theory: Fostering Fire

<i>People</i>	<i>Programming</i>	<i>Processing Ideas</i>
Mentors & Mentees	Funding	Protocol
Organizers	Pan-Indianism	Nature of Visiting
Guardians	Activities	Representation
Elders & Community	Timeframes & Privacy	Lateral Violence

**People.** “Contact with their own people” (SSW2) was perhaps the dominant theme that arose from the interviews concerning people, meaning mentors and mentees would gain the most benefit if they were from the same First Nation; however, not all participants felt this way and advocated that a mixed Nation approach to mentorship would be more practical and sustainable on the geographically restrictive region of Greater Victoria. This alluded to how “pan-Indianism” (SSW2) is a main threat when promoting a “multi-Nation mentorship program” (Tanille). It was well argued that offering such a culturally diversified model which may be “not [culturally] relevant” to individual mentees is not respectful practice (SSW1). Yet others believed “people would much rather see an Aboriginal person from a different territory than someone who is not Aboriginal” (SSW1).

Consequently, alternatives were acknowledged: “it would be good for some of them [Aboriginal CYiC] to begin to start building their own community here” (SSW2) when mentors from their home territory are too far to mentor them in an urban setting like Greater Victoria.

Support people for mentees who are just beginning a cultural mentorship program was strongly advocated for by Tanielle, who argued that “Whoever their best friend is has to like it, once their best friend goes they’ll go, and if that’s the worker then the worker can slowly back off after going with them for some time.” Sarah also believes that “being supported in Indigenous activities” is a key component in a cultural mentorship program, aligning with SSW1 who asserts “people can’t just enter into [learning about Aboriginal identity]” without socio-emotional support; further supporting ideas around peer-support in cultural mentorship.

Who will the mentors be and how will they support mentees? Finding healthy, adult, Aboriginal mentors is described by all participants as likely being a major challenge, and Sarah believes this is partially because the “Aboriginal community is very much in recovery,” from the intergenerational effects of residential school and lateral, systemic violence. Confirming findings in my literature review, SSW2 affirms that many Aboriginal adults are “stuck in that residential school place and are often triggered by events that happen in the lives of other people.” Concerning Elders and healthy adult mentors who have worked through their healing, Sarah states, “Elders and knowledge holders can support these girls with rites of passage and other types of cultural activities” suggesting girls learn about who they are based on the environments they are raised in. This linked to the Faculty participants’ insistence that “resilience doesn’t reside within the child (like a personality trait), or in the environment (like a caring non-parent adult), it’s the interaction between the child and her environment. That is the proper target for interventions.”

**Programming.** Sarah spoke about needing healthy adults to sustain “longer termed programming”. An example of why long-term relationships in cultural mentoring programs are important is offered by the Faculty participant: mentees “don’t realize the power of the story until sometimes years later,” so with the mentor still in contact with the mentee, lessons, protocols, and questions can be clarified after some processing time has passed. Time and commitment from people are important components for programming.

Outlining activities in a cultural mentorship model led to conversations about trust between members on a child’s interdisciplinary care team. SSW2 remarks, “If you had an Elder who wanted to take the kids out on the land I'm not sure how parents would feel about that if they didn’t know the individual.” Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards Indicators (AOPSI) (2009) recommends that Aboriginal programs ensure all paraprofessional mentors go through a consistent screening process, investigating the values, personal characteristics, and criminal backgrounds of the mentors, ensuring that the mentors will support goals of the persons served and program will be met. As a parent myself, I can understand the concern over who takes my stepson and where. However, having observed a younger foster brother of mine with his mentor from Big Brothers, and experiencing how extended family and trust in these relationships can develop, I have a biased view in favour of trusting mentors. This atmosphere of historical distrust makes the mentor-approval process additionally fraught. In contrast, the Faculty participant noted, “male guardians of foster children may especially feel a suspicion or mistrust of mentors, on the groundwork of the men not being the complete caregivers and giving the First Nations child everything they needed.” We might anticipate concerns from guardians not only because they perceive the mentor as untrustworthy, then, but also because they perceive their child’s desire for mentorship as a reflection of inadequacy in their own ability to provide for their children.

Another programming consideration is the impact of program formality on participation by Elders. Elders who have not gone through formal education may be deterred from participating if the program is overly formal; one participant speculated, “I’m not sure they could handle a structured program” (SSW2). With no prior research found about how many Elders from Nations in Greater Victoria are comfortable with structured programs I cannot evaluate if formal mentorship would be an ineffective approach for some interested Elders. It was further speculated that the “culture of Canada has been invasive enough to Native people,” and consequently further invasions of privacy such as formal criminal record checks would be another deterrent to formal mentorship. SSW1 believes a more organic approach to programming would work: “I’m a great believer in nativity as being a fundamental factor in having things just build steam and see what happens; let the programs grow themselves.”

**Processing ideas.** As Aboriginal programs develop, “there can be this one-upping type of thing, to determine who’s more culturally grounded” (Sarah), and especially in a mentorship model there may be cases where “some community members think they have better information than a lot of professionals in the area, and that’s where heads butt” (Tanille), stalling progress.

Foster parents’ lack of understanding around the “individuation of cultural components” was brought up, linking to criticisms around how the “system” does not assist in connecting Aboriginal foster children with culturally supportive resources specific to their culture (SSW1). SSW2 described how, rather than teaching just “mechanically making a drum,” a mentorship model must teach depth of Indigenous Knowledge in cultural activities. Perhaps Tanille’s suggestion of identifying the who, what, when, where, and why of multiple Nations’ practices could support the authenticity of a mentorship model grounded in an urban, multi-Nation framework. SSW1’s discussion of general “Aboriginal-ness” alluded to a connection all Nations have with each other, the earth, and the

cosmos, ultimately placing us all in one interconnected cultural group. This question, whether mentors must be of the “same cultural background as the child” (SSW2) or not, was the most contentious topic raised by every participant, but with no Greater Victoria organizations “out there governing how much [cultural] connection these children are having” (SSW1), there is no precedent to gauge its importance. The Faculty participant has experienced in his own mentorship coordinating that matching mentees with mentors from the same First Nation “was not logistically realistic” in this region.

The varying terminology of “mentorship” (Tanille), “mentoring framework” (Sarah), or “cultural teaching” (SSW2) was another key point raised by several participants. The phrase “mentorship model” may need to be reworked into something more culturally orientated, yet still relevant to all First Nations involved.

Despite questions about the name, insistence that “if you build it they will come” framed the argument for allowing mentorship programs to grow organically, because people are “so hungry” for a cultural connection that they will support whatever is implemented to help (SSW1). How can we “create those spaces or opportunities [for visiting/mentorship] in urban settings?” (Sarah) The component of “informal visiting” (Faculty) was described as a disintegrating tradition in modern-day Aboriginal culture, particularly in urban areas, sparking a debate among participants to consider whether this *can* still happen organically, or if “people think it happens organically but it actually doesn’t” (Faculty). If indeed the Faculty participant is correct in that “the nature of visiting has changed” in Greater Victoria, then Tanille’s comment, “we have to find these things [cultural teachings] elsewhere now” because “we still want to teach the things we used to teach” seems likely to be true.

Another application of visiting for the purposes of creating a mentorship model brought up by Tanille was “being able to sell your program and promote through effective language and networking protocols,” not only for the purpose of getting community members and mentees alike to “buy into it,” but also “for grants and funding.” Financial support for a cultural mentoring program for Aboriginal girls in care is anticipated “to be hard to come by because you are not going to get the Harper Government supporting Aboriginal communities to support visiting” (Faculty). “Motivating funders” to gather financial resources was another point that led into discussions around a “distrust of the system” based on external supports being associated with having “systemic colonial roots” (Faculty).

The three preceding sections on people, programming, and processing ideas are interdependent on one another, and the founding components in the grounded theory of Fostering Fire. There were strong responses in terms of Nation-matching for mentees and mentors, and considering this is only from five interviewees there is clearly much work to be done before a consensus of best practice can be decided upon. Considering peer mentors versus adult mentors, the opinions are once again mixed, making me wonder how flexible or structured a cultural mentorship program would need to be to sustainably accommodate the most people. Despite these differences in opinion, all participants agreed a cultural mentorship program for Aboriginal girls in foster care would be beneficial for both the mentor and the mentee, and specific benefits for mentees were identified.

## **Potential Benefits and Solutions**

**Potential benefits.** A culturally grounded mentorship program for Aboriginal girls in foster care could have wide-ranging benefits, beginning by improving the lives of the girls themselves and extending into the community:



1. When young Aboriginal girls are disconnected from their cultural identity, a cultural mentorship program would lessen the distress they feel when they become teenagers.
2. Mentees would learn about the value of the female in communities.
3. Volunteering or community credits for Aboriginal high school students in care could be a benefit and motivating factor.
4. Maturity of mentees would likely increase due to exposure to rules around respecting protocols.
5. The program could public policy around BC MCFD legislated supports for Aboriginal kids in care.
6. Wide-spread information sharing allows minority groups to be heard on a platform too often monopolized by the majority.
7. A mentorship model could relieve the time pressures on social workers with high caseloads, unable to engage their Aboriginal girls in culture.
8. For those who do not have family nearby, this program could help them build community.
9. Elders would have an opportunity to share stories and engage in intergenerational knowledge transmission.
10. Supplementing current initiatives, a mentorship program could Aboriginal people who are culturally disconnected back into community.

Furthermore, as all of these effects ripple outward and build upon each other, the true “benefits are endless” (Tanille).

**Recommended solutions.** The participants did reach some consensus on recommended solutions for implementing and sustaining a mentorship program:

1. For supporting a flexible mentorship program that aspires to match mentor and mentee from the same Nation, while making cross-cultural matches when necessary, Aboriginal people at universities and colleges can find information about individual mentee's cultural background when mentors from the same First Nation are not available. SSW2 suggested, "We do need to take small steps even within Greater Victoria and the province of BC. We have people at colleges and universities close by who come from all over the province and they can certainly be tapped into helping young ones with learning about their cultural identity." Utilizing pre-existing programs such as First Voices and language classes on southern Vancouver Island were also recommended activities for all mentors and mentees (SSW2).
2. With consensus from all participants that finding healthy, female, adult, Aboriginal mentors would be difficult, Tanille offered a solution simply put as, "we're not going to find mentors, we're going to make them" (Tanille). Creating mentors out of mentees, with initial cultural knowledge transmission passed from a community member to a mentor, then mentor to mentees who would eventually become mentors themselves, would help promote self-sufficiency of the mentorship model in First Nation communities.
3. Running the program as non-hierarchically as possible could deconstruct power imbalances among all mentorship participants. "I'm a great believer in nativity as being a fundamental factor in having things just build steam and see what happens; let the programs grow themselves... Give it space to happen because A- we're dealing with the human condition and B- we're dealing with changes in history especially for Aboriginal people" (SSW1). People will need roles, but maintaining equality in things like language use, pay grade, and location can dismantle the power of assigned or assumed roles in work or identity.

4. The critical paradigm shift—away from assuming negative outcomes are inevitable, to a more optimistic platform—can be accomplished by exposure to culture, consistency in cultural continuity, and long-term on-going availability for people. As the Faculty participant stated: “direct it at health and wellness rather than fighting problems, the real answer is in proactivity and supporting health. Think *broadly*: when we support culture, we support health too.”

## **Recapping and Looking Forward**

This chapter has offered a detailed account of the five interviews that informed this study, with the addition of commentary to frame the discussion. I called upon Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson's (2008) suggestion that critical theory encompasses a reality that is more fluid or malleable than a single truth, to remember how complicated the politics around culture can become.

Through grounded theory, the three core themes that emerged were People, Programming, and Processing Ideas. Each of these sections was presented in a summary containing key points. Following Recommendation #4, I have outlined potential benefits as mentioned by participants, and have intentionally not listed potential barriers. Instead, a list of possible solutions to challenges described by participants is offered, again utilizing an optimistic lens.

We can see that there is currently no program in Greater Victoria that consistently promotes cultural identity maintenance of Aboriginal girls in foster care, aligning with BC MCFD guidelines and human rights (Carrière & Thomas, 2014; Collins, Russell & Turpin, 2014). There is evidence that the health of Aboriginal children in foster care is at its best when the child is connected with their cultural identity in a positive manner. Based on participant recommendations, creation of such a program should involve Indigenous methodologies and Aboriginal community stakeholders during every step of the planning process, with sensitivity to the nature of an urban versus a more traditional matching of mentor and mentee. Statistics show that First Nation, Inuit and Métis youth are among

the fastest growing demographic in Canada, and even though they are overrepresented in the foster care system there is no consistent training or programming to promote cultural continuity for them (Statistics Canada, 2014). Reasons for this appear to be partly financial, but mostly due to a lack—or blissful ignorance—of knowledge on the holistic benefits of mentorship on the part of policy makers, who focus solely on blunt quantitative data.

The following chapter on my conclusions will further crystalize the findings from participant interviews, and, considering them alongside the literature review, will offer recommendations for future research and action.

## Conclusion

*“Eventually, a fire does burn out. A project runs its course, or a movement enters a different phase. Do you want to bank your fire, to keep a small spark alive for another cycle? Or is it important to put it out completely? If so, how do you cool or smother what is left of it?”*

*Good firebuilders, good listeners, know you cannot rush this process or skip stages. The big logs won't burn unless you've carefully laid the fuel, left room for air, and gotten the tinder and kindling burning well first” (Starhawk, 2004, p. 123).*

My personal experience of cultural dislocation and my experience working in the social work field shaped the original concept of this research study. I am a former potentially Aboriginal youth raised in a non-Aboriginal home followed by six years in non-Aboriginal foster care, a reality of lived experience I keep spiralling around throughout this thesis. I have always been passionate about cultural connectedness for foster children, and this project provided me with a means to explore this topic of both personal and disciplinary relevance. Carrière (2007) defines the term *connectedness* as a feeling of belonging, of being an important and integral part of the world. Using autobiography as a framework through which I interpreted interview data, my personal reflexivity informed the work, creating a study with genuine insider content.

This research project addressed the lack of information available for the formation of a successful cultural mentorship program to improve cultural continuity of Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria, BC, Canada. This study has helped to fill a gap in the Canadian literature on cultural mentorship for Aboriginal CYiC in BC. Moreover, this study identified components necessary for the effective set-up and maintenance of a mentorship model, informed by professionals working in the field. These insightful voices consisted of social service workers supporting Aboriginal girls in care, as well as faculty members and sessional instructors teaching in the field, all

of whom currently live in Greater Victoria. This created place-based knowledge,, yet with many components for this mentorship model described by the literature and participants as being applicable for other regions, this information may be used by Aboriginal delegated agencies and other foster care support networks across BC.

The findings from this study may encourage social workers to advocate for more funding to protect and monitor cultural identity supports for Aboriginal girls in care in BC, or for existing funding to be redistributed with this goal. The response to my long ago request for cultural support was to offer therapy, but participants described many more appropriate alternatives to that inappropriate response. This study has confirmed that there is an evident lack of overall support to protect the integrity of Aboriginal identity for Aboriginal children in care in the region of Greater Victoria It is my hope that this research reaches beyond the scope of social work practice and advocacy, to the broader community of human rights advocacy and provincial support networks.

The resulting theory of this work is fittingly an interpretation of what I have heard and read from the data (Charmaz, 2014). My theory of Fostering Fire argues that the categories of: *People*, *Programming*, and *Processing Ideas* are necessary components for the curriculum development of a cultural mentorship program for Aboriginal CYiC, appropriately supported by my viewpoint as an insider-researcher with the perspective of cultural displacement while growing up in foster care (Charmaz, 2014). These three categories encompass the who, how, and why of cultural mentoring, and are applicable not only to Aboriginal girls in care, but to children and youth of any gender, regardless of whether or not they grew up in foster care.

## Summary of Interviews and Literature

This section will interweave key findings from the literature review and participant interviews. Predominantly led by the voices of participants in order to protect, honour, and validate their stories, this summary of findings is supplemented with major points derived from the literature.

**Cultural mentoring.** Throughout the research conversations trends arose concerning processes for running a mentorship model. These included the nature of visiting and relationships, and micro/macro service delivery barriers ranging from personal supports in the foster home to systemic racism and politics around identity. Differences in opinion and experience among the interviewees often centered on protocols about an urban, multi-Nation framework versus methods of knowledge transmission that are kept within specific First Nation communities, and debates about which were more appropriate for an Aboriginal population consisting of many different First Nations on southern Vancouver Island. It is interesting to note that the *how* of running what I call a *culturally-protective* mentorship model for Aboriginal girls in care became the grounding for many responses, rather than justifications for *why* the proposed mentorship program is needed. Every participant agreed that a cultural mentorship model would benefit Aboriginal girls in care in Greater Victoria. This finding suggests that the need for such a mentorship program already exists, and that as a collective, our goal now is to agree on process.

What is the link between cultural programming and identity formation? Aboriginal identity is rooted in cultural connectivity. It is foundational for these individuals to be provided with cultural safety so they can express, learn, and actively embrace their cultural heritage without fear of prosecution or oppression. Positionality of Aboriginal cultural mentorship would be an anti-colonial and pro-Aboriginal socio-cultural location. With this cultural safety Aboriginal CYiC would be building their cultural identities through observing others, internalizing cultural lessons, and

promoting their cultural health as Aboriginal people. Identity formation would require these individuals to not only engage in the mechanical actions of cultural activities, but learn the history and relevant purpose of teachings for them as valid cultural beings. With the cultural safety and cultural competence that a cultural mentorship model would provide, Aboriginal CYiC in Greater Victoria could access and embody Indigenous Knowledge. This is their right. From a traditional knowledge perspective, the founding evidence for cultural safety is ancient and embedded in traditional teachings. An evaluation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's (AHF) 140 plus projects implicitly identified cultural safety as critical to healing, and that relationships based on acceptance, trust and safety are the first step in the healing process (AHF, 2008).

What are the repercussions of not having a cultural mentorship program for Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria? Without cultural mentorship community and family ties remain unsupported, even un-established; no urban forum for promoting Aboriginal self-awareness is provided; nor are the cultural goals and aspirations of female Aboriginal CYiC nurtured. For many Aboriginal CYiC, there is identity displacement not only within their family unit, but also regarding their roles, associated multiple stigmas, and necessary coping strategies in society.

Overrepresentation of Aboriginal populations in Greater Victoria social services is taught at college and university levels, but without implementation of urban support for these groups, it is all talk.

The following sections are organized by key themes brought up by interviewees, and a summary of key points from the findings chapter. Come for a walk— I'll light the way with my driving metaphors.

**Pilot light.** A pilot light is “a small flame kept burning continuously, as in a gas stove or furnace, to relight the main gas burners whenever necessary or desired” (Dictionary, 2014). At first, I wondered how I could attain this fire discussed by my interviewees, but my quandary was put to rest



after several of them talked about how this flame that burns inside each of us never goes out: I didn't need to attain it, because I already had it. Although it may flicker through oppressive winds, it survives. I understand this flame to be a deeply personal, spiritual connection to culture and nature. It is a feeling of interconnectedness we get during a walk in the forest, a loving embrace, a peaceful moment that brings us out of distraction and reminds of who we are and why we're here. These flames, as beautifully highlighted by interviewees, these pilot lights, are what my envisioned mentorship model would kindle. The rest of my interpretations undoubtedly stem from this goal, and explore potential components in a mentorship model that would ignite pilot lights for other Aboriginal girls in care.

**Relation *ships* made for movement.** No matter how big or small the sailing vessel, it takes an outside force from the sky and the earth to make it go. Like these vessels, people need dynamism from others to create the biggest splash in their cultural development. Tanille talked at length about how important it is to nourish this relational component between a mentee and their support as they begin their mentorship journey. In her experience as a Guardianship Social Worker she has witnessed Aboriginal girls in care proceed hesitantly when trying new cultural teachings independently, and she believes that girls new to the mentorship program would need a friend or ally in the beginning of a mentorship journey.

This recommendation sounds straightforward, but what if the mentee does not have an ally to help ease them into cultural mentorship? In addition, what if there are no mentors from that mentee's home territory to mentor them? This leads us to the idea of urban transcultural mentorship that matches people across different First Nations; this finding was the most contentious topic during participant interviews. Having mentors and mentees from different First Nations was deemed isolating and "inauthentic" (SSW1) by some participants, even though all participants agreed it was

the most realistic option here in Greater Victoria. Participants described other mentoring programs they've been involved with, mentioning transcultural mentorship as a last resort: "we struggled with this one a lot, and of course we wanted to match up mentors and mentees from the same Nation but every now and then we couldn't; it was not logistically realistic" (Faculty1); and,

You can come from the angle of families are different now, we don't have the families that we used before so we have to create different avenues so we can get what we used to get out of our families, and this is how we are going to do it. Creating that sisterhood within the mentorship model where they're still learning the values of the female in the community rather than just giving it outside of the household, but it has to be sold as, this is what we do now because we can't do what we used to. (Interview Participant, Tanille)

Even though they describe the transcultural model as far from idea, both accept that, when an Aboriginal child is in need of support, something is better than nothing.

**Weaving all our multifarious relations together.** While walking in our front yard, my partner and I see a spider's web glistening in the sun 15 feet above the ground, connecting strands of silk to and from locations unknown. As the spider locates safe and solid anchors for its web's well being, so do we humans seek security by weaving our anchors for our life's well being in safe people and places. Anderson (2000) found that young Aboriginal women could find a sense of security in larger extended family groups, benefiting from opportunities to bond and receive guidance from several women rather than a single parent. This finding echoes the Faculty member's discussion of women in leadership roles:

We looked at what proportion of the band council was made up of women, and it turns out when women are the majority of the band council things go better for youth. This leads to the question, why? Is it that once women become a majority on a band council they start doing

things differently that has the effect of improving youth well-being? Or is it something about a community that would elect a majority of women to band council? (Interview Participant, Faculty)

In my own experience, I have sought out female supports in my life more so than male, but they were also more readily available; this chicken-or-egg question may not be something we can untangle, but we can see the value of female mentorship regardless.

Expecting participants to talk about Elder involvement and oversight in mentorship, I was surprised when some didn't mention Elders at all. However, Sarah did say that "components that would be included in a mentorship model would include Elders and knowledge holders who can support these girls and young women with rites of passage and other types of cultural activities to support them with their identity and help them navigate; embracing who they are if they haven't had that opportunity." Although foster parents may be culturally sensitive and loving, one non-Aboriginal foster parent acknowledges, "she won't [access Aboriginal culture] if she stays with me" (Bromfield, Higgins, Higgins & Richardson, 2006, p. 36). The cultural networking potential in Greater Victoria for foster parents to connect their Aboriginal foster child with is limited, and participants all advocated that more cultural services are highly needed in this region. This lack of resources leads interviewee, Tanille, to encourage her young clients to build social support networks outside of their professional relations with social service workers. Like the self-sufficient spider builds its own home. The fear is that the child may become too attached to the worker, since there are not many other cultural centres accessible to them. Another participant agrees: "there's not a lot of places where people can get their cultural identity needs met. I think those needs are just as important as food and clothing" (SSW1).

**Blackberry roots versus the arbutus tree.** I can personally attest to how pervasive the tubular roots of the blackberry bush are. I can also vouch for how dense and strong the arbutus tree trunk and branches are, creating some of the hottest fire I've ever experienced. It seems to me that the current state of cultural support is like blackberry roots, popping up everywhere as add-ons, difficult to remove and dangerous if ignored. These scattered roots of cultural supports for Aboriginal girls in care can grow into strong foundations, sometimes admired for their potential strength, but they can also be unmistakably 'mis-rooted,' leading to the wild growth of noxious plants rather than the slower controlled growth of a mighty tree.

As mentioned by participants, experienced by me, and confirmed through the literature, cultural sensitivity training for foster parents is not a common practice (Bromfield, Higgins & Richardson, 2005; Bromfield, Higgins, Higgins & Richardson, 2006; Carrière, 2007; Daniel, 2011). We know that "foster parents, fostering children and youth from racialized groups, have unique needs and may require assistance to address the cultural differences within their home and communities" (Daniel, 2011, p. 11), but research has shown that foster parents in BC find cultural sensitivity training insufficient (Carrière, 2007; Daniel, 2011), leaving them unable to address their Aboriginal foster child's cultural disconnect. Blackberry roots. SSW1, who has been working in the field for over twenty years, still needs to ask, "How can we expose them to connection with their community, with Elders, and with cultural and spiritual events that are happening?" Carrière (2007) also stresses the need for more "First Nation Community Mentors" to support Aboriginal children and youth who have grown up in care and want to return to their community (pp. 60-61). Arbutus trees.

**Oppressive elephants in the room.** As mentioned earlier, one interviewee expressed the concern that Elders in particular might not be well equipped to "handle a structured program"

(SSW2), but parents may hesitate to trust an unknown Elder, or any mentor for that matter, with their foster child. Although a formal background check or other legal due process could ensure that parents have grounds for trust, it would also be an invasion of privacy that might gain parental trust the cost of the trust of mentors, especially Elders who may be more likely to support an informal, more organic process. As she notes, a re-evaluation of the formal process of background checks is not really about mentors' criminal records: "it's not that they might have a criminal record, it's that our culture of Canada has been invasive enough to Native people. It is an issue" (SSW2). The fallout of colonization makes participation in these kinds of initiatives more challenging, especially for Elders and their families who are the direct survivors.

Beyond the powerful microscope of Elders' involvement in a formalized mentoring program, other barriers exist. When offering a peer-mentoring solution, for example, Tanille instinctively evaluated the program's cost: "I have always been a 100% advocate of youth teaching youth. It costs less because you can do it through so many avenues..." (Tanille). Indeed, financial concerns are prevalent, so we "need to deal with motivating funders too because the resources are critical" (Faculty). Unfortunately, there was no clear-cut suggestion for gaining funding, just numerous mentions as to how difficult it has become. Tanille, for example, noted that "if you have to get your own funding and the government won't pay for it, that will be a lot of writing in for grants and funding," a problematic situation because, even if the organizers are passionate and dedicated, their dedication "won't be hard work doing the job, it will be hard work making the job" (Tanille), short-changing their actual goal.

**Youth versus adult mentors.** Although all participants agreed on the value of a mentorship model in general, some recommended youth mentors and other recommended adult mentors. A cultural mentorship model with youth mentors could be more effective because children

and youth often learn best from their peers, rather than adults. I think many readers can refer back to their youth and recall the powerful strength of peer pressure and peer support— I certainly can. However, this powerful influence could prove to be positive or negative, as youth mentors would require maturity, cultural knowledge and experience, and motivated commitment to the mentees. What would happen if there were conflicts of interest in their social or family circles at school or in the community? What if the youth mentor became unavailable, or desired to follow another path for school, family, or career that disabled them from mentoring? Compared to adult mentors, youth are likely to have less cultural experience to share, and undergo seismic life shifts more often.

The other model has Elders and adults mentoring children and youth. Elders may benefit by telling their stories and engaging in intergenerational knowledge transmission, a highly valued process in many First Nation communities. Elders and adults also have more lived experience to draw from if the mentee were to ask critical questions about cultural teachings and protocols. The mentee would have support from an older generation, nurturing respect for older demographics. However, some participants argued that harm from colonization and residential schools has trickled into almost every Aboriginal family, making the search for healthy, female, adult Aboriginal mentors a difficult challenge. The fear is that these potential mentors are not in a good, healthy place to mentor youth in care; even those who have largely resolved their own personal struggles may find them re-emerging, triggered by close contact to the similar experiences of their mentee.

However, a long-term plan creating mentors from the mentorship program itself could blend both approaches and alleviate the challenge confirmed by all participants of finding healthy adult mentors who have gone through their own work of healing around the history of colonization. A community could member mentor a youth, who mentors a mentee, who eventually becomes a mentor. This self-maintaining system of creating cultural mentors would also raise the maturity and

confidence of the mentoring youth and engage them in cultural knowledge transmission from a young age. This model has numerous benefits for its participants, the community, and the functionality of the mentorship program itself.

## **Recommendations**

This study confirms literary findings that there is a lack of information on cultural support for Aboriginal girls in foster children in Greater Victoria. Participants readily suggested alternatives to therapy for accessing cultural support, but they could not recommend a particular cultural support program for urban Aboriginal CYiC in Greater Victoria. It also confirms that most social support programs designed for Aboriginal youth in care are focused on academics or career advancement, rather than cultural support. Finally, it finds strong debate about best practices as to matching mentors and mentees from the same First Nation.

My theory of Fostering Fire suggests that three main areas must be addressed for the successful creation and maintenance of a cultural mentorship program for Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria. These three areas include, *People, Programming, and Processing Ideas*, all of which have other sub-categories associated with them. The area of people addresses ‘who’ could be involved, the second area of programming addresses ‘what’ will be involved, and the final area of processing ideas addresses ‘how’ we will do all this. Based on these major findings, I offer three recommendations:

1. A Community-Based Research (CBR) project is recommended to investigate sustainable practices for a culturally grounded mentorship model in Greater Victoria, in collaboration with Aboriginal delegated agencies and non-Aboriginal delegated agencies.

As the Faculty participant rightly asked, “how do we motivate communities to support and encourage cultural continuity?” Intrinsic motivation must be understood on a micro-level in

community: we must meet the needs of individuals before we can even look at structures and systems. We need to ask, is everyone on board with the same vision? What about protocol? This information must come from First Nation communities. All three areas of Fostering Fire are considerable in this recommendation, but the main focus is on, *Processing Ideas*, ‘how’ to motivate communities to support cultural mentorship for Aboriginal CYiC who do not have cultural mentors in their families or social circles.

The 4 R’s guide to CBR in Aboriginal communities, as defined by Barnhardt and Kirkness (1991), prioritizes respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. Respect requires working local First Nations’ ways of knowing directly into the research design, thereby deconstructing power imbalances that have been historically hurtful in Aboriginal-focused research. Relevance directs research to be of utmost importance to First Nation communities, and not based on an outsider agenda. Reciprocity involves not only the researcher gaining data, but also the First Nation community gaining as many benefits as possible from research, particularly from actions that will lead to the betterment of their community. And finally, responsibility requires researchers to remain accountable to the community for their professional and personal ethics and protocols. These four principles should guide future research.

Implementations of this recommendation could involve the MCFD in accordance with their *Child, Family, and Community Service Act* (CFCS Act) which states, “for an Aboriginal child, the importance of preserving the child’s cultural identity must be considered in determining the child’s best interests” (Turpel-Lafond, 2013, p. 11). In addition, this recommendation would accomplish “building cultural competencies into practice” while “increasing community-based initiatives” as outlined in the MCFD’s *Operational and Strategic Directions Plan 2012/2013* (Turpel-Lafond, 2013, p. 40).



2. A study could also be carried out to discover how many Aboriginal girls in care on Vancouver Island are receiving services to support their cultural identity, compared to services around academic support.

Focus for this recommendation will be on the overall health and wellness of former Aboriginal children in care, and in relation to the two targets they received support from, how have services impacted the life of the former youth in care? Participants would involve Social Workers who have access to documentation that would answer these questions, rather than asking the Aboriginal kids in care. It is documented that most support services for Aboriginal youth on southern Vancouver Island are academically focused and developed through Western epistemologies (Aboriginal Non-Profits BC, 2014; Daniel, 2011; Fostering Education, 2014), rather than follow-up services for former Aboriginal youth in care, or cultural supports for current Aboriginal youth in care. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) should fund this study with resources allocated from project-based funding for Aboriginal Representative Organizations (AROs). Funding for projects is “directed to projects that address departmental priority areas, yield concrete results and promote healthier, more self-sufficient Aboriginal communities and people” (AANDC, 2014). This study falls under the fourth Priority Theme: Social Program Reform, First Nations Child and Family Services Program, which aims to “assist in ensuring the safety and well-being of First Nations children on reserve by supporting culturally appropriate prevention and protection services for First Nations children and their families” (AANDC, 2014, n.p.). Funding to conduct this study with off reserve populations is still required.

Connecting to Fostering Fire, this recommendation addresses the question of, *Programming*, ‘what’ to do in programming. What cultural mentorship programs, career skills, or academic programs are accessible in BC for Aboriginal CYiC, and what are they doing that can be further built upon?

Turpell-Lafond (2013) found that “attention to improving direct program delivery and services to Aboriginal children, youth and their families has been adversely impacted by the attention focused and resources expended on the various governance and service-delivery structural initiatives – initiatives that have no clear connections to the needs, rights and best interests of the children who should be the focus” (p. 52). Further, she asserts that over the past decade the MCFD has not provided “demonstrable improvements in outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and their families”, and that change is needed (p. 52). The recommendation focuses on what is available, sustainable, and where cultural mentorship pieces might be the most useful for Aboriginal girls in care. Since we are seeking to identify what programming components are effective for girls, it is appropriate to focus specifically on programs for girls here.

3. A second CBR study is recommended to explore multi-Nation urban mentorship model frameworks, compared and contrasted with a singular Nation framework committed to matching mentors and mentees from the same Nation.

For these recommendations to be actualized, continued research and implementation of recommendations will need to be done within Aboriginal communities and within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and delegated agencies. The framework for this proposed study should not be polarized on an all-or-nothing binary, examining only all-Nations and single-Nation models, but should examine a spectrum. Researchers should explore possibilities for, for example, a flexible mentorship framework encouraging a singular Nation model, but with allowances for cross-Nation mentorship.

Implementation of this recommendation focuses on the *People*, ‘who’ area of Fostering Fire. More consideration can be offered to how a cultural mentorship program could work for Aboriginal boys in care here, as we consider who all can be involved. As Tanille suggested, “keeping the boys

and girls separate at the beginning is a good idea”, but this does not consider transgendered Aboriginal CYiC.

For each recommendation researchers must ask “why” and “how”? Why is this a critical piece of cultural programming? How would this research support the cultural continuity of Aboriginal children and youth in care? These three recommendations are more than any one person can do. How would you, my imagined and actual Reader, be able to help with these tasks?

The above recommendations are also an echoing of BC’s first Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond’s (2014) recommendation that the BC MCFD, must

Urgently create a comprehensive plan to develop a continuum of residential services for children and youth in BC with complex needs that cannot be met in traditional foster home or group home settings, and fully fund and support that plan to ensure that these vulnerable children have access to residential care to support their optimal development. (p. 49)

This statement regards “traditional foster home or group settings” as non-Aboriginal settings, and we can assume that “complex needs” absolutely includes cultural identity for the overrepresented Aboriginal CYiC in BC.

## **Strengths and Weaknesses**

Strengths of this study include the passionate involvement and genuine interest of its participants. Awareness has been raised amongst members of the public with whom I’ve discussed the project, as well as others previously unfamiliar with Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and cultural dislocation. Another important outcome has been my own healing along this journey. Learning about the lack of IK amongst Aboriginal CYiC has left me feeling less like an outsider in this sub-culture. Instead, the very ordinariness of this lack has become my driving motivation to amend the situation faced by so many Aboriginal girls in foster care who are, in many ways, like me.

A subsequent project to follow up on this research could expand the number of interviewees to deepen my findings in this study. Cultural mentorship program is intended to enflame cultural awareness and cultural wellness of Aboriginal children and youth already apprehended, and does not address the root causes of the apprehension itself. My limited knowledge base of Aboriginal culture could be viewed as a weakness, but it can also be viewed as a truth without any value placed on it. My lived experience was incredibly valuable in carrying out this study: the desire to fill my cultural knowledge gap allowed me to explore experiential knowledge around my budding identity and to discover associations between my identity development and the life of Aboriginal girls in care.

## **Conclusions and Future Considerations**

A cultural mentoring program in Greater Victoria would provide cultural safety through “explicit and detailed recognition of the cultural identity of the Indigenous people and the historical legacy of power” ever-present in Canadian child welfare (Waters, 2009, p. 14). Health includes the “social well-being” according to the World Health’s definition of health (p. 19); safeguarding social determinants of health could be accomplished through the implementation of a cultural mentorship program.

This study uniquely focuses on creating a mentorship program for Aboriginal girls in foster care in Greater Victoria. Future scholarly research should consider how data about Aboriginal children on Vancouver Island is collected and monitored, and how resources are allocated based on the needs of clients, foster families, social workers, and Nations. Additionally, this project echoes Carrière’s (2007) recommendation for more “financial support for First Nation adoption programs” (p. 58). However, more information is needed to explore other mentorship frameworks on Vancouver Island, across the province, and across Canada that support Aboriginal children in foster care in

urban settings, and particularly to determine the best way forward. It cannot yet be judged whether culturally-protective mentorship is best carried out through multiple smaller networks, each building connections only within a single First Nation, or through embracing the pragmatics of a currently-contentious urban multi-Nation model. Nor can we argue that the implementation of cultural mentoring programs for Aboriginal children and youth in foster care would alleviate the root issues of poverty that lead to most Aboriginal child and youth apprehensions (Carrière, 2007).

Multiple perspectives from professionals who work with Aboriginal girls in care or have a thorough understanding of the literature greatly informed this thesis study. Participants described many challenges facing Aboriginal foster children in Greater Victoria who lose touch with their cultural heritage, and speculated as to why this is considered an acceptable status quo. They also offered many potential solutions, particularly that of creating mentors out of mentees in a self-sufficient peer-mentoring system. It is encouraging that all participants were eager to have these conversations, affirming that dialogue is welcome among professionals in the field. Fostering fire in Aboriginal young people via a cultural mentorship program is now a well-supported vision intended to support future implementation.

## Bibliography

- Abolson, K., & Willet, C. (2005). Putting ourselves forward: Location in Aboriginal research. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 97-126). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. (2013). *New approach to Aboriginal representative organizations project funding*. Retrieved from <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1386699114943/1386699171938>
- Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2003a). *From truth to reconciliation: Transforming the legacy of residential schools*. Ottawa: AHF.
- Ahrens, K. R., DuBois, D. L., Richardson, L. P., Fan, M., & Lozano, P. (2008). Youth in foster care with adult mentors during adolescence have improved adult outcomes. *American Academy of Pediatrics, 121*(2-8).
- Alarie, D., & Lévesque, D. (2009). The lost generation: First nation communities and white middle-class adoption. *Creating Hope Society*. Retrieved from <http://creatinghopesociety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/theLostGeneration.pdf>
- Alfred, T. (2005). *Wasase: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press Ltd.
- Aoki, T. T. (1984). *Toward curriculum inquiry in a new key*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Anderson, K. (2000). *A recognition of being: Reconstructing Native womanhood*. Toronto, ON: Sumach Press.
- Armitage, A. (2011). *Comparing the policy of Aboriginal assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Armitage, A. (2003). *Social welfare in Canada* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Barnhardt, R., & Kirkness, V. J. (1991). First Nations and higher education: The four Rs – respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 30(3). Retrieved from <http://jaie.asu.edu/v30/V30S3fir.htm>
- Barron, L., McKay-Turnbull, C., & Mills, M. (2003). *Urban Aboriginal youth in Winnipeg: Culture and identity formation in cities*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Canadian Heritage.
- Baskin, C. (2007). Structural determinants as the cause of homelessness for Aboriginal youth. *Critical Social Work* 8(1). Retrieved from <http://www1.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/structural-determinants-as-the-cause-of-homelessness-for-aboriginal-youth>
- Battiste, M., & Henderson, J.Y. (2000). *Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Press.
- Battiste, M. (2008). Research ethics for protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: Institutional and researcher responsibilities. In N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical Indigenous Methodologies* (pp. 497-509). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- BC Association of Family Resource Programs. (2012). *Home Page*. Retrieved from <http://www.frpbc.ca>
- Belgrave, L., Charmaz, K. (2012). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. Gubrium (Ed). *The Sage handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*. (pp. 347-366). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing
- Bennett, K. (2014). *Cultural permanence for Indigenous children and youth in care: Advancing knowledge and current practices for promoting resiliency and belonging* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Victoria, BC: University of Victoria. Retrieved from [https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/bitstream/handle/1828/5307/Bennett\\_Kathleen\\_MSW\\_2014.pdf](https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/bitstream/handle/1828/5307/Bennett_Kathleen_MSW_2014.pdf)

- Bennett, M. (2004). First Nations fact sheet: A general profile on First Nations child welfare in Canada. *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/docs/FirstNationsFS1.pdf>
- Bennet, M., Blackstock, C., Tromé, N. (2004). Child maltreatment investigations among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families in Canada. *Violence Against Women* 10(8), 901-916. doi: 10.1177/1077801204266312
- Benstock, S. (1988). *The private self: Theory and practice of women's autobiographical writings*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Press.
- Bisanz, J., Cardinal, C. Costa, J., & Klinck, J. (2005). Mentoring programs for Aboriginal youth. *Pimatisiwin*, 3(2), 110-130. Retrieved from <http://www.leclairinfo.com/SIIT/images/Mentoring%20Programs%20Youth.pdf>
- Blackstock, C. (2009). The occasional evil of angels: Learning from the experiences of Aboriginal peoples and social work. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 4(1), 28–37.
- Blackstock, C. (2009). Why addressing the over-representation of First Nations children in care requires new theoretical approaches based on First Nations ontology. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 6(3), 1-10. Retrieved from <http://www.jswvearchives.com/content/view/135/69/>
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Attachment I*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Brady, B., & Dolan, P. (2012). *A guide to youth mentoring: Providing effective social support*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- British Columbia Ministry of Child and Family Development. (2004). *The mental health and well-being of Aboriginal children and youth: Guidance for new approaches and services*. Vancouver, BC: Cardiff, K., Mussell, B., & White, J.



- Bromfield, L., Higgins, D., & Richardson, N. (2005). *Enhancing out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people*. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Institute of Family Studies, National Child Protection Clearinghouse. Retrieved from <http://www.research4children.org/data/documents/EnhancingOutofHomeCareforAboriginalandTorresStraitIslanderYoungPeoplepdf.pdf>
- Bromfield, L., Higgins, D., Higgins, J., & Richardson, N. (2006). Protecting Indigenous children: Views of carers and young people on 'out-of-home' care. *Australian Institute of Family Studies*, 75(42). Retrieved from <http://aifs.org.au/institute/pubs/fm2006/fm75/dh.pdf>
- Brown, J., Sintzel, J., Arnault, D., & George, N. (2009). Confidence to foster across cultures: Caregiver perspectives. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 18(6), 633-642.  
doi:10.1007/s10826-009-9264-z
- Brown, J., St. Arnault, D., George, N., & Sintzel, J. (2009). Challenges of transcultural placements: Foster parent perspectives. *Child Welfare*, 88(3), 103-126.
- British Columbia. Provincial Health Officer. (2009). *Pathways to health and healing: 2nd report on the health and well-being of Aboriginal people in British Columbia*. Provincial Health Officer's Annual Report. Victoria, BC: Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport.
- Brownlee, N., Castellan, B., & Neckoway, R. (2007). Is attachment theory consistent with Aboriginal parenting realities? *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, 3(1), 65-71.
- Canadian Women's Foundation. (n.d.). *The facts about human trafficking*. Retrieved from <http://www.canadianwomen.org/factsabouttrafficking>
- Carrière, J. (2010). Cultural planning, Aboriginal children and adoption phase 2. *Ministry of Children and Family Development*. Retrieved from [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/pdf/cultural\\_planning\\_phase\\_2.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/pdf/cultural_planning_phase_2.pdf)

- Carrière, J. (2007). Cultural planning, Aboriginal children and adoption phase 1. *Ministry of Children and Family Development*. Retrieved from [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/pdf/cultural\\_planning\\_2007.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/pdf/cultural_planning_2007.pdf)
- Carrière, J. (2007). Promising practices for maintaining identities in First Nation adoption. *First Peoples Child and Family Review* 3(1), 46-64.
- Carrière, J. (2005). *Connectedness and health of First Nations adoptees* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://icwrn.uvic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Carrière.pdf>
- Carrière, J., & Richardson, C. (2009). From longing to belonging: Attachment theory, connectedness, and indigenous children in Canada. In S. McKay, D. Fuchs & I. Brown (Eds.), *Passion for action in child and family services: Voices from the prairies* (pp. 49-67). Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Centre.
- Carrière, J., Thomas, R. (2014). Indigenous children and state care: The dark underside of citizenship. In L. Dominelli, M. Moosa-Mitha (Eds.). *Reconfiguring citizenship: Social exclusion and diversity within inclusive citizen practices* (pp. 117-126). Surrey, England: Ashgate.
- Callahan, M. (1993). Feminist approaches: Women recreate child welfare. In B. Wharf (Ed.), *Rethinking child welfare in Canada* (pp. 172-209). Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart.
- Corrigan, D., & Bishop, K. K. (1997). Creating family-centered integrated service systems and interprofessional educational programs to implement them. *Social Work in Education*, 19, 149-163.

- Carroll, D, Russell, K, & Turpin, C. (2014). *Indigenous Policy Lens* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://www.culturalcompetency.ca/downloads/applying-an-indigenous-lens-to-policy.pdf>
- Chantelle, R. (2007). Narratives of social support and health in Aboriginal communities. *Canadian Journal of Public Health, 98*(4), 347-351.
- Collins, B. & Collins, T. (2005). *Crisis and trauma: Developmental-ecological intervention*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Press.
- Community Panel, Family & Children's Services Legislation Review Aboriginal Committee. (1992). *Liberating our children, liberating our nations*. Victoria: Queens Printer.
- Constance-Huggins, M. (2012). Critical race theory in social work education: A framework for addressing racial disparities. *Critical Social Work, 13*(2), 1-16.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dandeneau, S., Kahenttonni, M. K., Kirmayer, L. J., Marshall, E., & Williamson, K. J. (2011). Rethinking resilience from Indigenous perspectives. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 56*(2), 84-91.
- Daniel, E. (2011). Fostering cultural development: Foster parents' perspectives. *Children and Youth Services Review 33*(11), 2230-2240. Retrieved from <https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/13519/Daniel,%20Ellice,%20MSW,%20Social%20Work,%20April%202011.pdf>
- Davidson, J. C. (2005). Professional relationship boundaries: A social work teaching module. *Social Work Education, 24*, 511–533. doi:10.1080/02615470500132715

- Davis, N., Hansmeyer, E., Minic, B., Prakash, S., & Rangan, S. (2013). Proceedings from 2013 Global Youth Economic Opportunities Conference: *Innovations: Youth and Economic Opportunities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S., & Smith, L.T. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of critical and Indigenous methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dockstator, M., & Kapyrka, J. (2012). Indigenous knowledges and Western knowledges in environmental education: Acknowledging the tensions for the benefits of a “two-worlds” approach. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 17, 97-112.
- Dolha, L. (2009, March, 24). The sixties scoop: How Canada’s “best intentions” proved catastrophic. First Nations Drum: Canada’s Largest First Nations Newspaper. Retrieved from <http://www.firstnationsdrum.com/2009/03/the-sixties-scoop-how-canadas-best-intentions-proved-catastrophic/>
- Dorsch, K., Hoerber, L., Kryzanowski, D., McKague, K., & Riemer, H. (2007). *Retention of Aboriginal volunteers at sporting events*. Toronto, ON: Imagine Canada.
- DuBois, D. L., Karcher, M. J. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of youth mentoring* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dunbar, C. (2008). Critical race theory and Indigenous methodologies. In N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical Indigenous Methodologies* (pp. 85-100). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dyll, L., Francis, M., & Tomaselli, K. (2008). “Self” and “other”: Auto-reflexive and Indigenous ethnography. In N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical Indigenous Methodologies* (pp. 347-372). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Edwards, T. (2011). Exploring volunteering among Aboriginal peoples and ways of encouraging and sustaining engagement in volunteerism: Literature review. *Native Women's Association of Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.nwac.ca/research/resources>
- Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents (n.d.). *Foster parents*. Retrieved from <http://www.fafp.ca/foster-parents>
- Fine, M., & Teram, E. (2009). Believers and skeptics: Where social workers situate themselves regarding the code of ethics. *Ethics & Behavior*, 19(1), 60–78.  
doi:10.1080/10508420802623682
- First Nations Child and Family Wellness Council (2014). *Indigenous approaches*. Retrieved from <http://www.fncfwc.ca/advocacy-activities/indigenous-approaches/>
- Health Canada. (2013). *First Nations and Inuit Health: Adaptation envelope - funded projects*. Retrieved from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/services/acces/adapt-list-eng.php>
- Heidt, E. (1991). *Vision voiced: Narrative viewpoint in autoethnographic writing*. New York, NY: Lang Publishing.
- Hodgson, M., & Laidlaw, T. A., & Malmo, C. (1990). Shattering the silence: Working with violence in native communities. In T. A. Laidlaw, & C. Malmo (Eds.), *Healing voices: Feminist approaches to therapy with women* (pp. 33-44). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hoey, S., Kazlowski, A., Lucus, L., & Sinha, V. (2012). *Child welfare research portal information sheet #98E*. Montreal, QC: McGill University, Centre for Research on Children and Families.
- Hughes, Hon. T. (2006). An independent report on BC's child protection system. *BC Children and Youth Review*. Retrieved from [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about\\_us/pdf/BC\\_Children\\_and\\_Youth\\_Review\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_April\\_4.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about_us/pdf/BC_Children_and_Youth_Review_Report_FINAL_April_4.pdf)

- Flemming, J., & Ledogar, R. J. (2008). Resilience and Indigenous spirituality: A literature review. *Pimatiswin*, 6(2), 47-64.
- Gaywish, R. (2000). Aboriginal people and mainstream dispute resolution: Cultural implications and use. In J. Oakes, R. Riewe, S. Koolage, L. Simpson, & N. Schuster (Eds.), *Aboriginal Health, Identity and Resources* (pp. 113-124). Winnipeg, MB: Native Studies Press.
- Gehl, L., & Ross, H. (2013). Disenfranchised spirit: A theory and a model. *Pimatisiwin*, 11(1), 31-42.
- Gehl, L. (2013a). Exploring Indigenous Knowledge with Lynn Gehl. *Moccasin Tracks Podcast*. Podcast retrieved from [http://moccasintrackswithdeb.podomatic.com/entry/2013-06-01T03\\_54\\_02-07\\_00](http://moccasintrackswithdeb.podomatic.com/entry/2013-06-01T03_54_02-07_00)
- Gehl, L. (2013b). Valuing intelligence of the heart [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.lynngehl.com/black-face-blogging/2>
- Gehl, L. (2012). Debwewin journey: A methodology and model of knowing. *AlterNative*, 8(1), 53-65.
- Giles, A., & Rose, A. (2007). Alberta's future leaders program: A case study of Aboriginal youth and community development. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 27(2), 425-450.
- Government of Canada. (2013a). *Aboriginal Youth Internship Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/social/fcf/ayip.html>
- Government of Canada. (2013b). *Public Safety Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/le/ht-tp-eng.aspx>
- Government of Canada. (2013c). Aboriginal children: The healing power of cultural identity. *Public Health Agency of Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/program/ahsunc-papacun/aboriginal-autochtones-eng.php>

- Grande, S. (2008). Red pedagogy: The un-methodology. In N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical Indigenous Methodologies* (pp. 233-251). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Green, R., Gregory, R., & Mason, R. (2006). Professional distance and social work: Stretching the elastic? *Australian Social Work*, 59, 449-461. doi:10.1080/03124070600986010
- Grounded Theory Institute. (2014). *What is grounded theory?* Retrieved from <http://www.groundedtheory.com/what-is-gt.aspx>
- Hall, M., Lasby, D., Ayer, S., & Gibbons, W. D. (2009). *Caring Canadians, involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2007 Canada survey of giving, volunteering and participating*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.
- Hart, M. (2002). *Seeking mino-pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal approach to helping*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Hearst, A. (2012). *Children and the politics of cultural belonging*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Hiiye'yu Lelum Society. (2014). *Hiiye'yu Lelum Society*. Retrieved from <http://hofduncan.org>
- Hummelle, L. (2001). *Exploring the mental health needs of Aboriginal people in the Capitol Health Region* (Unpublished masters thesis). Royal Roads University, Metchosin, BC.
- Kincheloe, J., & Steinberg, S. (2008). Indigenous knowledges in education: Complexities, dangers, and profound benefits. In N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical Indigenous Methodologies* (pp. 135-156). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kirky, S., & Woods, M. (2013, May, 8). 'Tragic' number of Aboriginal children in foster care stuns even the experts. *PostMedia News*. Retrieved from

<http://www.canada.com/health/Tragic+number+aboriginal+children+foster+care+stuns+even+experts/8354098/story.html>

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*.

Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press

Lewandowski, C., & Pierce, L. (2002). Assessing the effect of family-centered out-of-home care on reunification outcomes. *Research on Social Work Practice, 12*(2), 205-221.

Little Bear, L. (2010). Jagged worldviews colliding. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision* (pp. 77-85). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Little, L.M. (2005). *Engaging Aboriginal volunteers in voluntary groups with territorial mandates in the Northwest Territories: Case study - Aboriginal participation in the voluntary sector*.

Toronto, ON: Imagine Canada.

López, M., del Valle, J. F., Montserrat, C., & Bravo, A. (2013). Factors associated with family reunification for children in foster care. *Child & Family Social Work, 18*(2), 226-236.

doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2012.00847.x

Mast, M. (2014, January, 22). Aboriginal children's programs in BC braced for funding cuts. *Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/aboriginal-childrens-programs-in-bc-braced-for-funding-cuts/article16462133/>

McKinnon, I. (2006). BC's children in care: Improving data and outcomes reporting. *BC Children and Youth Review*. Retrieved from

[http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about\\_us/pdf/BCs\\_Children\\_in\\_Care\\_Improving\\_Data\\_and\\_Outcomes\\_Reporting.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about_us/pdf/BCs_Children_in_Care_Improving_Data_and_Outcomes_Reporting.pdf)

McCabe, G. (2008). Mind, body, emotions and spirit: Reaching to the ancestors for healing.

*Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 21*(2), 143-152. doi: 10.1080/09515070802066847



- Mowatt, B., & Young, J. (2006). *Guidelines for the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal women volunteers handbook*. Toronto, ON: Imagine Canada.
- Musico, I. (2002). *Cunt: A declaration of independence* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.
- Mutua, K., & Swadener, B. B. (2008). Decolonizing performances: Deconstructing the global postcolonial. In N.K. Denzin, Y.L. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical Indigenous Methodologies* (pp. 31-44). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- National Association of Friendship Centres. (2012). *Our Mission*. Retrieved from <http://nafc.ca/about/our-mission/>
- Neil, A, & Robert, L. (2008). Aboriginal youth resilience studies: 14 years of capacity building and methods development in Canada. *Pimatisiwin*, 6(2), 65-88.
- Ormiston, T. (2010). Re-conceptualizing research: An Indigenous perspective. *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, 5(1), 50-56. Retrieved from <http://journals.sfu.ca/fpcfr/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/173/142>
- Osmo, R., & Landau, R. (2006). The role of ethical theories in decision making by social workers. *Social Work Education*, 25, 863–876. doi:10.1080/02615470600915910
- Pelton, L. (1990). Resolving the crisis in child welfare: Simply expanding the present system is not enough. *Public Welfare*, 48(4), 19-25, 45.
- Province of British Columbia. (2009). Aboriginal operational & practice standards indicator: Operational standards. *Ministry of Child and Family Development*. Retrieved from [http://surroundedbycedar.com/files/brochures\\_and\\_documentation/AOPSI\\_2009.pdf](http://surroundedbycedar.com/files/brochures_and_documentation/AOPSI_2009.pdf)
- Province of British Columbia. (2013). Aboriginal child and family development: Delegated child and family service agencies. *Ministry of Child and Family Development*. Retrieved from [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about\\_us/aboriginal/delegated/](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about_us/aboriginal/delegated/)

- Province of British Columbia. (2013). Fostering Aboriginal children. *Ministry of Child and Family Development*. Retrieved from <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/aboriginal.htm>
- Province of British Columbia. (2013). *Caregiver support service standards and policy*. Retrieved from [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/sp\\_caregiver\\_support.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/sp_caregiver_support.pdf)
- Quinn, J. (2008). Perspectives on spiritual development as part of youth development: A youth practitioner voices her perspectives on spiritual development. *Wiley Periodicals*, 118(5), 73-77.
- Redfern, J. (2009). My story: Colonization, sexuality, and Aboriginal youth. *Our Schools, Our Selves*, 18(2), 11-16.
- Richmond, C. (2007). Narratives of social support and health in Aboriginal communities. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 98(4), 347-351.
- Simard, E. S. (2009). Culturally restorative child welfare practice- A special emphasis on cultural attachment theory. *First Peoples Child & Family Review* 4(2), 44-61.
- Simos, Miriam (Starhawk). (2004). *The Earth path: Grounding your spirit in the rhythms of nature*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Smallwood, G. (1996). Aboriginality and mental health. In M. Clinton & S. Nelson (Eds.), *Mental health and nursing practice* (pp. 103-118). Sydney, Australia: Prentice Hall.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). Articulating an Indigenous research agenda. In L. T. Smith (2012), *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (pp. 123-141). London, England: Zed Books.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). London, England: Zed Books.

- Statistics Canada. (2014). *2011 National household survey: Aboriginal peoples in Canada: First Nations people, Métis and Inuit*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/130508/dq130508a-eng.htm>
- Suina, S. (2000). Linking Native people around the spirituality of all life: The gifts of our grandmothers and grandfathers. In M. K. Padeken, A. Benham & J. E. Cooper (Eds.), *Indigenous educational models for contemporary practice: In our mother's voice* (pp. 93-100). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services. (2012). *Resource workers*. Retrieved from <http://www.surroundedbycedar.com/services/resource-workers>
- Thomas, R. (2005). Honouring the oral traditions of my ancestors through storytelling. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 237-254). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Thomas, R., & Green J. (2009). Indigenous Children in the Centre: Indigenous perspectives on anti-oppressive child welfare practice. In J. Carrier & S. Strega (Eds.), *Walking this path together: Anti-oppressive practice in child welfare* (pp. 29-44). Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Tolle, E. (2005). *A new Earth: Awaken to your life's purpose*. NY, New York: Penguin.
- Totten, M. (2009). Aboriginal youth and violent gang involvement in Canada: Quality prevention strategies. *E-Journal of IPC Review*, 3, 135-156. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencessociales.uottawa.ca/ipc/eng/documents/ipcr3totten.pdf>
- Turpel-Lafond, M. E. (2013). When talk trumped service: A decade of lost opportunity for Aboriginal children and youth in B.C. [Special Report]. *Representative for Children and Youth*. Retrieved from

[https://www.rcybc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/reports\\_publications/when\\_talk\\_trump\\_ed\\_service.pdf](https://www.rcybc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/reports_publications/when_talk_trump_ed_service.pdf)

Turpel-Lafond, M. E. (2014). Who cares? BC children with complex medical, psychological, and developmental needs and their families deserve better. *Representative for Children and Youth*. Retrieved from

[https://www.rcybc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/reports\\_publications/rcy\\_whocares-report\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.rcybc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/reports_publications/rcy_whocares-report_-_final.pdf)

Trimberger, G. E. (2012). An exploration of the development of professional boundaries. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 9(2), 68-75.

Unicef Canada. (2013). *Recommendations for Canada from the UN Committee on the rights of the child: In youth friendly language*. Retrieved from

[http://www.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/imce\\_uploads/concluding\\_observations\\_in\\_youth\\_friendly\\_language.pdf](http://www.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/concluding_observations_in_youth_friendly_language.pdf)

United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the rights of the child*. Retrieved from

<http://www.unhcr.org/50f941fe9.html>

Urban Native Youth Association. (2014). *About Us*. Retrieved from <http://www.unya.bc.ca/about-us>

Victoria Native Friendship Center (n.d.). *Youth Department*. Retrieved from

<http://www.vnfc.ca/programs-services/youth-department>

Volunteering Australia. (2007). *Indigenous Australians and volunteering: Take a closer look*.

Melbourne, Australia: Native Women's Association of Canada

Volunteer Nunavut. (2004). *Book 1: Understand volunteers and volunteer groups*. Iqaluit, NU:

Canadian Volunteer Initiative

- Walker, P. (2001). Journeys around the medicine wheel: A story of Indigenous research in a Western university. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 29(2), 18-21.
- Waters, C. (2009). Cultural safety: Exploring the applicability of the concept of cultural safety to Aboriginal health and community wellness. *Journal of Aboriginal Health* 5(2), 6-41.
- Watson, E. (2014, September). *HeForShe*. Speech presented at the United Nations Women 69th General Assembly, New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/9/20-september-heforshe-press-release>
- Wisener, R. (2009). *Discussion Paper: Attaching economic value to volunteer contribution*. Ottawa, ON: Volunteer Canada.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Woods, M. (2013). 'Tragic' number of aboriginal children in foster care stuns even the experts. *Post-media Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.canada.com/health/Tragic+number+aboriginal+children+foster+care+stuns+even+experts/8354098/story.html>
- Yolanda, T. P. (2012). Honouring Indigenous women. *Hearts of Nations*, 2, 1-109.
- Yunkaporta, T. (2009). Aboriginal pedagogies at the cultural interface: Report for DET on Indigenous Research Project. (Unpublished document). Kamloops: Thompson Rivers University Press. Retrieved from: [http://www.tru.ca/\\_shared/assets/Yunkaporta\\_draft\\_report29338.pdf](http://www.tru.ca/_shared/assets/Yunkaporta_draft_report29338.pdf)

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Written Consent Form

---

#### Development of a Mentorship Model for Aboriginal Girls in Foster Care on Southern Vancouver Island

You are invited to participate in a study entitled, **Development of a Mentorship Model for Aboriginal Girls in Foster Care on Southern Vancouver Island** that is being conducted by KATHERINE RITCHIE.

Katherine Ritchie is a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Masters of Arts Degree in Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by phone at 778-676-0030 or email at kr@uvic.ca.

As a graduate student, Katherine is required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in Education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Onowa McIvor and Dr. Monica Prendergast.

Dr. Onowa McIvor: omcivor@uvic.ca **250-721-7763**

Dr. Monica Prendergast: mprender@uvic.ca **250- 472-4045**

#### Purpose and Objectives

The objective of this research is to investigate the conditions necessary for creating a sustainable, culturally-rooted mentorship model for Aboriginal girls in foster care on Southern Vancouver Island. This research project aims to address the lack of information available for the basis of programming to improve cultural continuity of Aboriginal girls in foster care. It will provide the opportunity for social service workers who work directly with these girls, and/or university or college faculty members in this field, to voice their perceptions about how to address this well documented gap in literature and practice.

#### Importance of this Research

Although existing mentoring programs have shown numerous benefits for children and youth including raised self-confidence, better attitudes towards life and relationships, and improved ability to understand and express feelings, none on Southern Vancouver Island have a focus of supporting confidence in cultural identity. This investigation aims to be the first of its kind on Vancouver Island. The importance of keeping Aboriginal cultural knowledge alive while children are in foster care is identified as being of key importance for developing healthy attitudes later in life. This project will potentially explain the significant role cultural knowledge has in the positive development of Aboriginal girls in foster care. This project provides much needed information from social service workers and/or faculty on what they think would work best within their workplaces or fields of study. It also provides participants with the opportunity to be involved with the research project from the beginning stages through to completion.

#### Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your direct work experience or expertise with Aboriginal girls in foster care on Southern Vancouver Island.

#### What is Involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a face-to-face interview with myself that will last approximately one to two hours in time. You will be given the choice of location for the interview in order to create the least inconvenience and time commitment for you. My office space will be set-up at the University of Victoria as one option (MacLaurin A521). Other potential locations

could be faculty offices, other on-campus spaces (such as First Peoples House), coffee shops, or restaurants. Locations will all be outside of the your place of work and in a private place that allows for a confidential interview; your suggestions are welcome.

During the interview audiotapes will be taken and a transcription will be made by me with your permission. The transcription will be sent to you in word-processed document to review, add, or omit information before I use it in my thesis.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you including the loss of your time to participate.

### **Risks**

There are no foreseen risks to you.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include knowing your work experience has contributed to the development of a mentorship model. The knowledge shared in this research project will create an opportunity for society to benefit, by contributing to knowledge about how to develop a mentorship program that promotes cultural support. Potentially, the mentorship model could be applied to other Aboriginal groups of foster children on a provincial, national or international level.

Knowledge around how Aboriginal culture could be further supported for Aboriginal girls in foster care will potentially increase for the participants and myself through the interview process. Partial or full publication of the thesis project will help to fill the lack of literature surrounding mentorship models for Aboriginal girls in foster care, pertaining to cultural identity and healthy development.

### **Compensation**

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given a homemade medicine bag filled with tobacco as a traditional gift from me, rooted in my heritage from Six Nation of the Grand River, Ontario. Upon completion of my thesis you will receive a summary booklet of the proposed mentorship model. You will also be compensated for mileage or parking costs. If you consent to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants; if you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed, including consent forms, audiotapes, and transcriptions. Any compensation you were given will remain yours if you withdraw.

### **Researcher's Relationship with Participants**

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as peers or friends. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion have been taken including, all participants being compensated the same, asked the same questions, and allocated the same amount of time for interviews.

### **Anonymity**

By participating in this research there is a risk to your anonymity due to the small sample size of participants in this study. To reduce this risk pseudonyms can be used for your name and your place of work, you may select these names or I can assist you in choosing one.

For this specific study it is appropriate to offer you the option of identifying yourself in the research and having comments attributed to you. It is culturally congruent and aligned with an anti-colonial perspective that Indigenous people and non-Indigenous allies can exercise their power to speak about cultural identity.

### **Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by keeping all data including audiotapes and hard-copy forms in a locked filing cabinet. All typed data will be stored on a password-protected computer.

There is a possible risk of stigmatization due to the small sample size. You should refrain from naming other people in the interview, particularly those foster children or families with whom you may have worked with or have knowledge about.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: article publications, thesis publications, and conference presentations.

### **Disposal of Data**

Both the audio-recordings and hard-copy documents will be destroyed within six months of the successful defense of my thesis project, allowing time to effectively include the data in my thesis and for data verification by my supervisors if needed.

### **Contacts**

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include myself and my co-supervisors Dr. Onowa McIvor and Dr. Monica Prendergast. Please refer to the beginning of this form for their contact information.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

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

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature*

---

*Date*

### **Audio Recorded Data**

Participant to provide initials, *only if you consent*:

Audio recordings may be taken of me for: Analysis \_\_\_\_\_ Dissemination\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Even if no names are used, you may be recognizable if audio data transcriptions are shown in the results.



*PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

**I CONSENT TO BE IDENTIFIED BY NAME / CREDITED IN THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY.**

**I CONSENT TO HAVE MY RESPONSES ATTRIBUTED TO ME BY NAME IN THE RESULTS.**

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to provide initials)

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

## Appendix B: Verbal Consent Script

---

YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY ENTITLED, DEVELOPMENT OF A MENTORSHIP MODEL FOR ABORIGINAL GIRLS IN FOSTER CARE ON SOUTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND THAT IS BEING CONDUCTED BY KATHERINE RITCHIE. AS A GRADUATE STUDENT, KATHERINE IS REQUIRED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A MASTERS OF ARTS DEGREE IN EDUCATION. IT IS BEING CONDUCTED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF:

Dr. Onowa McIvor and Dr. Monica Prendergast.  
 Dr. Onowa McIvor: omcivor@uvic.ca 250-721-7763  
 Dr. Monica Prendergast: mprender@uvic.ca 250- 472-4045

### PURPOSE:

THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AIMS TO ADDRESS THE LACK OF LITERATURE AVAILABLE FOR THE BASIS OF PROGRAMMING TO IMPROVE CULTURAL CONTINUITY OF ABORIGINAL GIRLS IN FOSTER CARE. IT WILL PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS WHO WORK DIRECTLY WITH THESE GIRLS, AND/OR UNIVERSITY OF COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBERS IN THIS FIELD, TO VOICE THEIR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HOW TO ADDRESS THIS WELL DOCUMENTED GAP IN LITERATURE AND PRACTICE.

### IMPORTANCE OF THIS RESEARCH:

THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING ABORIGINAL CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE ALIVE WHILE CHILDREN ARE IN FOSTER CARE IS IDENTIFIED AS BEING OF KEY IMPORTANCE FOR DEVELOPING HEALTHY ATTITUDES AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE LATER IN LIFE. THIS PROJECT WILL POTENTIALLY EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE HAS IN THE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF ABORIGINAL GIRLS IN FOSTER CARE. IT ALSO PROVIDES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE RESEARCH PROJECT FROM THE BEGINNING STAGES THROUGH TO COMPLETION.

### PARTICIPANTS SELECTION:

YOU ARE BEING ASKED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY BECAUSE OF YOUR DIRECT WORK EXPERIENCE OR EXPERTISE WITH ABORIGINAL GIRLS IN FOSTER CARE ON SOUTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND.

### PROCEEDURES:

IF YOU CONSENT YOU WILL BE INTERVIEWED ON TOPICS RELATING TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE AROUND ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE. I WILL AUDIOTAPE OUR INTERVIEW AND CREATE A TYPED DOCUMENT FOR YOU TO REVIEW AND EDIT PRIOR TO MY USE OF IT IN MY THESIS.

**RISK:**

FOR THIS SPECIFIC STUDY IT IS APPROPRIATE TO OFFER YOU THE OPTION OF IDENTIFYING YOURSELF IN THE RESEARCH AND HAVING COMMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO YOU. IT IS CULTURALLY CONGRUENT AND ALLIGNED WITH AN ANTI-COLONIAL PERSPECTIVE THAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND NON-INDIGENOUS ALLIES CAN EXERCISE THEIR POWER TO SPEAK ABOUT CULTURAL IDENTITY.

THERE IS A RISK THAT YOU COULD BE IDENTIFIED DUE TO THE SAMPLE SIZE OF INTERVIEWEES AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION. TO MINIMIZE THE RISK YOU CAN CHOOSE A PSEUDONYM FOR YOUR NAME AND WORKPLACE, OR I CAN ASSIST YOU IN SELECTING ONE.

**BENEFITS:**

YOU WILL BENEFIT FROM KNOWING YOUR WORK EXPERIENCES HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MENTORSHIP MODEL. THIS INTERVIEW WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO VOICE YOUR PERCEPTIONS ON THE TOPIC.

THE KNOWLEDGE YOU SHARE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT WILL CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIETY TO BENEFIT, BY CONTRIBUTING TO KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HOW TO DEVELOP A MENTORSHIP MODEL THAT PROMOTES CULTURAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE. THE MENTORSHIP MODEL COULD BE APPLIED TO OTHER ABORIGINAL GROUPS OF FOSTER CHILDREN ON A PROVINCIAL, NATIONAL, OR INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.

**COMPENSATION:**

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A HOMEMADE MEDICINE BAG FILLED WITH TOBACCO AS A TRADITIONAL GIFT FROM ME, ROOTED IN MY HERITAGE FROM SIX NATIONS OF THE GRAND RIVER, ONTARIO. UPON COMPLETION OF MY THESIS YOU WILL RECEIVE A SUMMARY BOOKLET OF THE PROPOSED MENTORSHIP MODEL. YOU WILL ALSO BE COMPENSATED MILAGE OR PARKING COSTS. IF YOU CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE THIS FORM OF COMPENSATION MUST NOT BE COERCIVE. IT IS UNETHICAL TO PROVIDE UNDUE COMPENSATION OR INDUCEMENTS TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS; IF YOU WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IF THE COMPENSATION WAS NOT OFFERED, THEN YOU SHOULD DECLINE.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH MUST BE COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, YOU MAY WITHDRAW AT ANYTIME WITHOUT ANY CONSEQUENCE OR EXPLANATION. IF YOU DO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY YOUR DATA WILL BE DESTROYED, INCLUDING CONSENT FORMS, AUDIOTAPES, AND TRANSCRIPTS. ANY COMPENSATION YOU WERE GIVEN WILL REMAIN YOURS IF YOU WITHDRAW.

**RESEARCHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTICIPANTS:**

THE RESEARCHER MAY HAVE A RELATIONSHIP TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS AS PEERS OR FRIENDS. TO HELP PREVENT THIS RELATIONSHIP FROM INFLUENCING YOUR PARTICIPATION THE FOLLOWING STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN INCLUDING, ALL PARTICIPANTS BEING COMPENSATED THE SAME, ASKED THE SAME QUESTIONS, AND ALLOCATED THE SAME AMOUNT OF TIME FOR INTERVIEWS.

## **Appendix C: Script for Verbal Invitation to Participate**

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hello. My name is Katherine Ritchie and I am conducting interviews about a potential mentoring program for Aboriginal Girls in foster care, through the University of Victoria's Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education. I'm working under the supervision of Dr. Onowa McIvor and Dr. Monica Prendergast who are in the UVIC Faculty of Education.

### **STUDY PROCEDURES**

What will happen during the study?

I'm inviting you to do a one-on-one interview with me that would take about one hour within or outside of work hours at a time convenient for you. I will be asking you questions about your sense of issues around cultural continuity and cultural identity of Aboriginal girls in foster care. An example is, 'What do you think are important components that support cultural identity for Aboriginal girls in foster care?' I will audio record the interviews and provide you with a word-processed copy of the transcription prior to using it in my thesis.

### **RISKS**

Are there any risks?

The risks for you are very low. There is a small risk that due to the small geographic region of Southern Vancouver Island you could potentially be identified. To minimize this risk, you may choose a pseudonym for yourself and your place or work. I could assist you in selecting them, or you may choose to identify yourself. You can withdraw anytime and I will not use any of your information.

### **BENEFITS**

What are the benefits?

You will receive an honorarium in the form of a small gift for your time. By better understanding how a mentorship model can support the cultural identity of Aboriginal girls in foster care there are potential benefits for the girls, their care teams, and relative communities.

### **FOLLOW-UP**

What happens next?

With your permission, I can email you the consent form, and list of interview questions to look over before we meet for an interview.

Thank you for your time, I'll wait to hear back from you.

## Appendix D: Interview Questions

---

The underlined questions are the four research questions for my thesis. To answer them, I will ask the participants questions created underneath each one. Social Service Workers will have different questions than the Faculty members and Sessional Instructor.

1. What do the social service workers, faculty and sessional instructor believe are the most critical components of successfully supporting Aboriginal girls' cultural continuity while living in care?

*Social Service Provider-* It is my understanding that you work with Aboriginal girls in foster care. What do you see as the most important components that support their cultural identity? How do you think these components could or should be incorporated into a mentorship model?

*Faculty/ Sessional Instructor-* From your experience with the literature, in community, your teaching, or research, what are the most important components that support a cultural identity in Aboriginal girls? How do you think these components could or should be incorporated into a mentorship model?

*Social Service Worker-* Speaking again about Aboriginal girls living in foster care. What conditions do you see as most important to encourage ongoing cultural identity development?

*Faculty/ Sessional Instructor -* Speaking again from your experience. What conditions do you see as most important to encourage ongoing cultural identity development for Aboriginal girls (or children or youth) in foster care?

2. What are the perceptions of frontline social service workers, faculty and sessional instructor about necessary conditions for supporting cultural continuity for Aboriginal girls in foster care in general?

*Social Service Worker-* What organizational conditions do you think are necessary for the implementation of a mentoring program that supports cultural continuity? How do you envision these conditions being put into place?

*Faculty/ Sessional Instructor* - What organizational conditions are necessary for the implementation of a mentorship program that supports cultural continuity? How do you envision these conditions being put into place?

3. **What potential value do the social service workers, faculty, and sessional instructor see in a mentorship program for Aboriginal girls living in foster care?**

*Social Service Worker*- Why or why not would a mentoring framework be the best type of program to support cultural continuity? Who do you think could potentially benefit from this model and why?

*Faculty/ Sessional Instructor* - Why or why not would a mentoring framework be the best type of program to support cultural continuity? Who do you think could potentially benefit from this model and why?

4. **What mentorship model can be designed to support Aboriginal girls in foster care based on this research in ways that are sustainable/transferrable and focused on cultural continuity?**

*Social Service Worker*- What are the most important components in a mentorship program designed to support the cultural continuity of Aboriginal girls in foster care?

What barriers do you foresee for implementing this type of urban Aboriginal mentorship model? How could they be overcome?

*Faculty/ Sessional Instructor* - What are the most important components in a mentorship program designed to support the cultural continuity of Aboriginal girls in foster care?

What barriers do you foresee for implementing this type of urban Aboriginal mentorship model? How could they be overcome?

# Appendix E: UVic Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval



## Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Katherine Ritchie	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER:	13-219
UVIC STATUS:	Master's Student	Minimal Risk:	Decepted
UVIC DEPARTMENT:	EDCI	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:	19-Jul-13
SUPERVISOR:	Dr. Monica Prendergast; Dr. Onowa McIvor	APPROVED ON:	19-Jul-13
		APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE:	18-Jul-14

**PROJECT TITLE:** Developing a Mentorship Model for Aboriginal Girls in Foster Care on Southern Vancouver Island

**RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER:** None

**DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING:** Mary Catherine Marshall Award, University of Victoria Centre for Youth and Society

**CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.

**Modifications**  
 To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.

**Renewals**  
 Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

**Project Closures**  
 When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

**Certification**

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.

  
 Associate Vice-President, Research

Certificate issued On: 28 Jul 13

13-219 Ritchie, Katherine



# Appendix F: Ethics Approval Renewal



Human Research Ethics Board  
1180 St. James Street  
Victoria BC V8P 2C5  
Phone: 250.721.2322  
Fax: 250.721.2323  
www.hresb.uvic.ca

## Certificate of Renewed Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Katherine Ritchie	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER:	13-239
UVic STATUS:	Master's Student	RENEWED ON:	27-Jun-14
UVic DEPARTMENT:	EDS	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE:	18-Jul-15
SUPERVISOR:	Dr. Monica Prendergast; Dr. Onawa Mavor		
PROJECT TITLE:	Developing a Mentorship Model for Aboriginal Girls in Foster Care on Southern Vancouver Island		
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS:	None		

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: Mary Catherine Marshall Award, University of Victoria Centre for Youth and Society (previous)

### CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.

#### Modifications

To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.

#### Renewals

Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder approximately six weeks before your expiry date.

#### Project Closure

When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

### Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.



Associate Vice-President, Research Operations

CERTIFICATE NUMBER: 13-239-14

13-239 Ritchie, Katherine