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Indian Residential Schools: Perspectives of Blackfoot Confederacy People

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Indian Residential Schools: Perspectives of Blackfoot Confederacy People

by

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English Abstract

This qualitative research project explored two main themes: the Indian residential school (IRS) settlement agreement for survivors of federally funded and church-run institutions, and the participants' perspectives ($N = 16$) on the apology to the survivors and subsequent generations that have been affected. I focus on the First Nation population of southern Alberta, specifically the Blackfoot Confederacy (*Siksikaitsitapi*). I use a Siksikaitsitapi lens and methodology on their experiences at an IRS, the IRS settlement, the Canadian government's apology to former students, and the status of reconciliation as a whole. Criteria for participant inclusion were being an IRS survivor and a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Semistructured interviews revealed that receiving the IRS compensation led to survivors reliving their trauma and that money did not buy happiness or foster healing. Themes related to the IRS apology included its lack of positive reception and lack of sincerity; some stated they did not watch it, whereas others shared it was emotional for them to view. Other common factors that affected participants while in an IRS were loneliness, pain, abuse, and being unable to speak Blackfoot or engage in Blackfoot cultural practices. Learning from our shared past, Canadians must lean towards trusting and respectful acts of reconciliation, and respectful relationships, which form strong partnerships for all. A Siksikaitsitapi framework is provided as a starting point for relearning, rebuilding, renewing, and restorying after 500 years of decolonization. Using the framework, all stakeholders can begin to understand and heal issues relating to overall health and well-being from within an Indigenous lens and methodology. This approach respectfully honours the 7 generations before us and the 7 generations that will come after us.

Keywords: apology, Blackfoot Confederacy, healing, Indian residential schools, IRS, reconciliation, Siksikaitsitapi, survivor

Siksikaitsipowahsin Abstract

Amoyi aawakinao'takssini sinaaksisini ihtsitsi'poyo'pa Siksikaitsitapiiyiwa manistssaiksistttaissksinoahsaawa annikska itotoissksinima'tsaiksi aamostska Iitopiattsaahpi Niitsitapitaissksinima'tstohkio'pistsi; ki aahkaattsitssa'tsiisi annohka niitohtsipoinihtaisskoahpi Aokakihtsimaiks (*N* = 16), ki Apology. Aakattsitssopya'pssksk a'tssi'pa otaaniihpi anniksk isopoahtsi'sataiksi, aakattsittssa'tsii'pi annistsi sinaaksiistsi manistohtsi'poyihpiaawa aohakihtsimaiksi; isskoohsik, sokinaapioohsini (Niitsitapiiwa manistaotsistapi'tsii'piaawa ki naapikooaiksi manistaotsistapi'tsii'piaawa); niitstssksinima'tsaahpi Niitsitapiiwa annistka (Itaopiattsaahpi Niitsitapitaissksinima'tstohkio'pistsi), ki annohk issksinima'tstohkssini); ki niitaisokinaapioohso'pi aakitsinohtoo'piaawa annika niitaakawattaatoo'pi issohtsika. Aamoy aawakinao'takssini mattsitssa'tsii'pa manitsitsinikaapi annoo Canada, ki Naapiikoaiksi manistaotsistapi'tsii'piaawa akakihtsimanistsi, ki annistsiaokiaawa ihtaayissitapiiyaawa manistaakokakihtsimatoo'piaawa niitaisoksistomio'pi, niitaisokinaapioohso'pi, issksinima'tstohkssini, ki'akakihtsimaanistsi. Omiksi isopowahtsi'sataiksi aaniiyaawa, ikakaitapiyi ihtakanaiksi aawaahpitsimmohsini/ikkihkiniitakssini amoksisska itotoisssinima'tsaiksi annistska Itaopiattsaahpi Niitsitapitaissksinima'tstohkio'pistsi; imaniiyaawa ki ikohkssaana'piiwa, noohitssao'ohkoyoohtowayaawa. Ooki, tokskammiksi aaniiyaawa otatsimoihkaanowawaayi ki niitsiitsitapissksinima'tsaahpiaawa ihtomanisttayika'kimaayaawa ki amostsiyayi ihtsspommohssiyaawa maahkohtssawattaikkihkinii'takssaawa niitakanahpiaawa otaitaopissaawa annistska Itaopiattsaahpi Niitsitapitaissksima'tstohkio'pistsi. Ooki, tsa aakoohkanistohtsiistapokakio'pa amoistsi otsitsinikatoo'piaawa omiiksisska ikamotsiipioohssiksi? Ooki tsa aakohkanistohtsisstapiiyo'pa amoistsi issohtsika? Ikakaaoyi manistakohtsoksissitapiihpi

Siksikaitsitapiyiwa amoy aawakinao'takssini. Aahko'tsitskomahksikiipippitapiyi Niitsitapiiksi ihtakanaiksi annistsi Itaopiattsaahpi Niisitapitaissksinima'tstohkio'pistsi ki amohka maka'pookakihsimaani; ki annihkayi iikohto'totama'piiwa aahkstamaisinai'sin anniksk ikamotssipiohssiksi otsisinikssowawaistsi ki ahkitaisaanisto'saawa, ki aahoohkattohtotsiistapaisokskso'kowammotsii'yopa, ki aakohkattsitonnatsitapiiyi annikska aayinaiksi, aotoy'kiaiksi, ki aakoohkattsitohkanaisoksikso'kowammmotssiyo'pa.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to acknowledge within this *Mokakyomahsinaksin*—Wise Big Writing:

Those who suffered at the hands of colonizers, oppressors, assimilators, and abusers . . .

My mom and dad, *O'taikimakii ki Ihkitsikam*, who were quiet for so many years about their experiences in an IRS, yet who overcame the pain and trauma through reconnection of their Spirit with Creator, and shared their love with us . . .

My children, *Aawaakomootsiwa*—Ross, *Ipikstakii*—Courtney, *Sinohpiakii*—Chate-Lane, and *Okakiakii*—Chondra, who have blessed me each and every day with their love, laughter, teachings, generosity, and kindness. You are my purpose . . .

My grandchildren, Ti'en—*Siipiyapoo*, Tsisga—*Niitaahtaan*, Scotty—*Kiitokiiwa*, Tasitsa—*Aipootoo*, Kenneth—*Naapima*, and Tate—*Oa'ka*, who have filled my life with so much more than I could imagine. Your precious little souls have so much love and light to share with the rest of the world . . .

My siblings, Naato'saakii, Iitsoyoohkomi, Paahtsi'kayiiksao'kaasim, Aikitsttaa, kii Nato'waawaahkaaki, for their unconditional love and support throughout my life . . .

My extended kin, and for their children and grandchildren in turn . . .

For the seven generations that came before me, that lived, survived, prayed, fought, and died for us . . .

For the seven generations that come after me, that they continue the plight of our survival and that they overcome—*Kaamotaan* . . . for the seven generations that will come after them . . .

For all Peoples, on Turtle Island, that we may reconcile, that we may practice and know Kaamotaan . . . that we may live a long life, *Misommipaitapiiyssin* . . .

For you, for me, for us—a shared collective experience, may we walk together on this sacred journey . . .

This Mokakyomahsinaksin is also to say thank you, to show my gratitude, to show my honour and trust in our ancient and holy ways, *Kaaahsinnooniksi*. Their teachings work, they feed our soul, they guide us, and they keep us humble and honest. I'd like to humbly acknowledge my family, my older sisters and brother, and my parents who assisted in translating English words to Blackfoot. Special thanks to the loving memory of my uncle, *Omahksipiitaa*—Marvin Fox, who translated the English version of the abstract into Blackfoot. As this project has undergone several drafts and supervisors, the abstract has been reviewed since *Omahksipiitaa's* passing. I'd like to thank *Api'soomaahka*—William Singer, III, for ensuring the translation reflects the Blackfoot context.

I'd like to modestly thank my committee members, Dr. D. Louie, Dr. K. Lenters, Dr. A. Hanson, and Dr. J. Fields of the Werklund School of Education for their support and guidance. I'd like to send genuine thanks to Dr. J. Ottmann, Dr. D. Smith, Dr. H. Devine, and Dr. J. Frideres, for their gentle guidance along my journey. A heartfelt thank you to Dr. E. Duran for sharing your teachings with me. To my editor, Karen Crosby, who worked endlessly and patiently with me for several months, and those who assisted and guided me throughout my PhD journey, a humble thanks.

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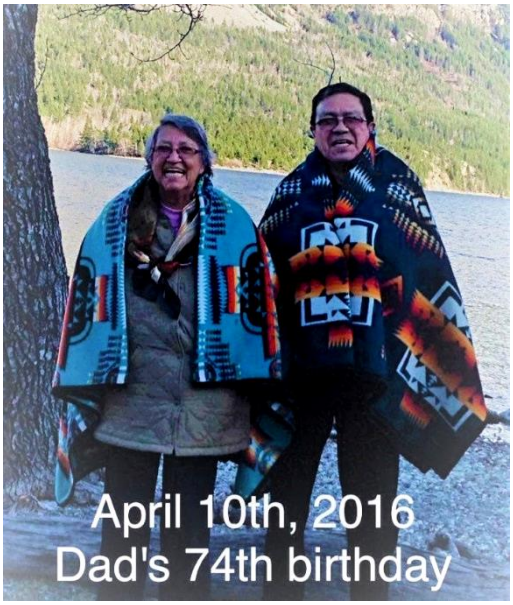
A humble thank you to Wayne, Alice and Marie.

Dedication

I dedicate this *Mokakyomahsinaksin*—Wise Big Writing—to the loving memory of my mother, *Otaakimaakii*, and to the living memory of my father, *Iihkitsikam*. Their unconditional love speaks volumes and has contributed to who I am today. As survivors, they reconciled and forgave, including themselves.

My mother lived a vibrant life and taught me, by way of modelling, to be a strong Siksikaitsitapi woman and mother. I walk an academic journey due to her belief in achieving credentials not only to be a change agent, but as part of my own survival to provide comfortably for my family. Mom, thank you for continuing to walk with me each day.

My father has also lived a colourful life and taught me, again by way of modelling, to be courageous and to take chances even when it feels uncomfortable. His return to Self, through many challenges and hardships, is testament to aligning mind, body, and spirit after his years in an IRS. Dad, thank you for continuing to be my safety net after Mom's passing.



Otaakimaakii, February 10, 1943, to January 25, 2018

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List of Blackfoot (Siksikaitsipowahsin) Terms

Siksikaitsipowahsin term	English meaning
Aako'ka'tssin	Annual circle camp (sometimes referred to as Sundance)
Aaopaatoom	Ceremony
Aato'si	To have sacred power, i.e., healing powers
Aatsimoyihkaani	Prayer
Ai'pommaootsp	We have gone through a transfer
Aissksiniph	We know it to be like that
Aistomatoominniki	Indigenous epistemology = coming to know your heart
Aamsskaapipiikani	South Peigan located in Montana [Blackfeet]
Ao'tsistapitakyo'p	We have come to understand
Ayo	A term used at the beginning of a Blackfoot prayer
Ihpiyi	Dance
Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa	Source of all life; Creator; Maker
Iikskaapii	Really important and cannot be ignored
Iitsskinnayiiks	Horn Society members
Ini'stoto	Kiitakini'stoto; I will honour you
Ini'yimm	Feelings of gratitude and appreciation towards a person
Ipissowaasi	Thinly scalloped meat hung to dry; Morning Star's name. (Ipissowaasi, however, does not mean "morning star," as is commonly assumed. "Morning star" would be *Ksiskani'kanna'soiyi*, literally "morning sparkling.")
Isskoohtsi	Past time; long ago
Ittahsiinihki	Sing a victory song
Kaaahsinnooniksi	Grandparents; ancestors; ancients
Kaamotaan	To overcome; to survive; to recover; reconciliation
Kaamotaani	Survival of all perils (said for the wishes for long life)
Kana'kaaatsiiks	Any one of the societies, Horns, Maotokiiks, etc.
Kana'tsotomitaiksi	Brave Dog society
Kainai	The Blood Tribe (Kainaiwa)

Siksikaitsipowahsin term	English meaning
Kakato'siiksi	Stars
Kimmotsiisinni	Values; kindness, caring, and generosity. These are among the most, if not the most, important values in Siksikaitsitapi society.
Kiipiitaipooka	Grandparent's child
Kiipaitapiiyssinnooni	Our way of life
Ksahkomma iikatsimapsiwa, aawatsimihkasatawa	The earth is sacred; our relationship is sacred.
Miisommipaitapiiysin	A long life
Mokakyomahsinaksin	Wise Big Writing
Moohkinstsis	Elbow; Calgary
Napi	Old man; hero; representative of human fallibility; reminds one that to do things that are wrong will result in negative consequences
Niistoo'akook	I am
Niita'p	Really; truly
Niitsii	Be so
Niitsitapi	Blackfoot-speaking real people
Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin	The life or lifeworld of Niitsitapi
Niksookowaaksi	Friends; relatives
Ninnaistako	Chief Mountain
Nipaitapiiyssinni	Way of life; constant motion of breath
Nitaisstammatsokoyi	Teachings
Oki	Hello; greetings
Ohkotoks	Big rock
Paaahkoonstsis	A mishap; an embarrassing moment
Paitapiiyssin	Up and living; alive and walking around as physical beings
Piikani	Also, Aapatohsipiikani, North Peigan located in Canada

Siksikaitsipowahsin term	English meaning
	(Skinii Pikani)
Pommaksiistsi	Ceremonies that transfer knowledge
Pookááks	Children
Siksika	The Blackfoot Tribe
Siksikaitsipowahsin	Blackfoot language
Siksikaitsitapi	Blackfoot speaking real people
Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin	Blackfoot way of life
Sspoopii	Turtle
Waatoyinnayi	Sing and pray for luck and good fortune

Chapter 1: Introduction to *Siksikaitsitapi*—Blackfoot Confederacy People

Do not feel lonely, the entire universe is inside you.—Rumi

Language reflects the philosophical system of a people. *Siksikaitsipowahsin*, an agglutinating language, evokes and describes the relational perspective of *Siksikaitsitapi*. *Niitsi'powahsinni* is a mirror of the sacred world of the *Niitsitapi*. *Nipaitapiiyssinni* is the *Niitsitapi* life; it is the world of the sacred—a world that is called into being by the people's words. Language holds the knowledge, the content, the relationships that constitute the sacred way of life, the "good heart" of the people . . . *kaaahsinnoon* is stating that *Siksikaitsipowahsin* [the Blackfoot language] and *Aatsimoyihkaani* [the good heart] are one and the same. If *Niitsitapi* lose their language, then the way of life, the good heart and prayer, the connections to the cosmic world of alliances, and, subsequently, the good path will be altered. (Bastien, 2004, pp. 127–128)

Permission

As far back as I can remember, I recall my grandparents were active members in ceremonies, various cultural gatherings, and Elders' visits in schools on our reserve; I do not recall hearing my grandparents speak English—only Blackfoot (see Figure 1 for photographs). I remember on a few occasions my grandfather, *Mookakin* (Patrick Weasel Head Sr.) came into my Grade 4 classroom with Harry Shade. They shared stories of Napi (a trickster) and other teachings from the Blackfoot history and culture. Further readings about Napi can be read in *Napi: The Trickster* (Dempsey, 2018). In this book, Dempsey (2018) detailed that

Napi was not alone as a trickster. Other similar creatures were known to Indigenous people all across North America and throughout the world. Whether it was Raven on the

West Coast, Bluebird in the Southwest, Rabbit in the Southeast, or Nanabush with the Algonkian in the East, they all shared the same characteristics. As they travelled they created the landscapes around them and interacted with creatures they met—sometimes humorously and sometimes tragically. Their stories are a rich part of the folklore of Indigenous North America. (p. 25)

Figure 1. Photographs of my grandparents, *Mookakin ki Poonah*, circa 1977 and 1974, courtesy of Adolf Hungry Wolf.

I recollect that Harry Shade spoke some English. My grandfather, however, did not; he spoke only Blackfoot (*Siksikaitsipowahsin*). I was proud to see and hear my grandfather share stories. My grandmother, *Poonah*, was also active in our[1] ceremonial ways—and I have felt an affinity to her since I can remember. It is with their teachings (*nitaisstammatsokoyi*), and the teachings of *Kaaahsinnooniksi*, that I honour within this document recollections of survivor[2]

[1] Throughout this manuscript, unless otherwise indicated, references to *we, us*, and *our* indicate the Blackfoot people.
[2] Survivors: In this dissertation, I use the terms *survivors* and *elders* interchangeably for participants within this research project and for those who may be referenced in text documents. Survivor does not entail that a person continuously struggles every day; however, those who

stories of Indian residential schools (IRS) and Siksikaitsitapi nitaisstammatsokoyi with you, the reader.[3]

Adolf Hungry Wolf (1977) received permission from Mookakin to photograph him at a pipe ceremony. Mookakin stated,

> You ask what I think of pictures and writings. I think it is very good to make a record of what goes on. Life is changing very fast. Soon these scenes will only be memories. The young people will never know how we operated our holy ways if they cannot see and read and hear these records that can be made today. We all have treasured photographs of our long-gone chiefs and relatives and camps. In the same way, our grandchildren will someday treasure a record of what things are still like today. (as cited in Hungry Wolf, 1977, foreword)

Accordingly, this introductory chapter discusses elements of Siksikaitsitapi language (Siksikaitsipowahsin), culture (siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin), and worldview (kiipaitapiiyssinnooni). It is my hope that as the reader, you will come to the realization that culture, language, and worldview are interwoven and cannot be separated; they are relational and fluid.

I start this dissertation, this Wise Big Writing, which is Mokakyomahsinaksin in Blackfoot, with the aforementioned quote from my maternal grandfather, Mookakin, to acknowledge his wisdom and that of the ancients; to honour him and the knowledge that was

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attended IRS have survived and walk their survival each day. This teaches of humility, strength, honour, courage, grace, and love. I wish to acknowledge those who have survived and who continue to share their stories as teaching mechanisms for the greater society to hear, to learn from, and to build positive relations as we move forward together.

[3] I address the reader directly throughout the manuscript.

transferred to him and all those who have gone before me, in the hopes that this publication may be read, in turn, by those who come after me.[4]

Prayer—Aatsimoyihkaani

I honour the seven sacred directions, the seven sacred animals, and the seven sacred teachings.[5] The order in which I have chosen to place them is due to my Blackfoot teachings. I share, at the beginning of each chapter, the direction, the animal, and the teaching that I have chosen to use as my guide, as I am positioned within these sacred elements as an Indigenous person. Due to my use of an Indigenous methodology, and by means of storytelling as a foundation to share the participants' experiences at IRS, I, as both a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy and as an academic researcher, share this research project as a Wise Big Writing.

To begin, I start with a prayer to greet you and thank you for reading this project relating to the Blackfoot Confederacy people, their stories, and their worldview, as well as Indigenous people across Turtle Island and in other lands. As such, I begin in the east direction, and I pray for all to have courage—to overcome whatever it is you wish to overcome within your own lives. I ask the bear to watch over you, and I wish for you, the reader, continued and many blessings as you humbly walk your journey. The following excerpt shares this worldview of how people are interconnected with the plants, animals, water, soil, stars, planets, air, and all of Creation. It is Our World:

> In order to understand us you need to understand the world around us. *Ihtsipaitapiyopa* is the name we give to the Essence of All Life. This is Creator, the Source of All Life.

[4] I discuss my journey of undertaking this Mokakyomahsinaksin in detail in the final chapter to provide further understanding of the intergenerational effects of IRS and to portray how integral ceremony, language, and relations are to one's identity and well-being.

[5] The seven sacred directions are east, south, west, north, downward, upward, and within; the seven sacred animals are bear, beaver, buffalo, eagle, horse, turtle, and wolf; and the seven sacred teachings are courage, wisdom, respect, love, honesty, generosity, and humility.

> Ihtsipaitapiyopa made all living things equal. Human beings were not given the right to rule over or exploit the rest of nature. We recognize plants, animals, and rocks as other living beings who are different from us but also our equals.
>
> Each plant or animal has unique gifts and abilities that they share with humans. Some plants can cure our diseases, others give us important nutrients. Buffalo are strong animals that once provided much of what we needed for survival. Birds are swift flyers who helped warriors to be stealthy and quick.
>
> These animals visited us in human form and taught us how to call on them for their special gifts. This is how we became so closely connected to the beings with whom we share the earth. (Glenbow Museum, n.d.-b, paras. 1–3)

I pray you all have a long life, *Misommipaitapiiyssin*, and that you continue to walk upon Mother Earth in a sacred manner.

Context

Oki Niksookowaaksi, niistoo'akook Aai'piihkwikomotaakii. Greetings my friends and relatives, I am *Aai'piihkwikomotaakii.* My English name is Terri-Lynn Fox. Investigation, research, and documentation of any sort requires writers to be reflective of who they are and what they bring to the research—their story.

I grew up on the Blood Reserve, also known as the Blood Tribe. My relations and extended kin are among the Blackfeet reservations in Montana, the Piikani Nation, Siksika Nation, and Blood Tribe. All of these tribes are Original Peoples within the Blackfoot Confederacy. All speak Siksikaitsipowahsin. I have four children and many adopted children in the context of Siksikaitsitapi ways. I now have grandchildren, for whom I feel much joy, happiness, and affinity for their smiles, their laughter, and their hugs and kisses. My parents are

O'taikimakii ki Ihkitsikam. My maternal grandmother, Poonah, was the daughter of Miikskimm, Mary Derouge (Blackfeet and White heritage), and Tatsiiki'poyi (Joe) Iron, who was the son of Ki'somm, Moon. My maternal grandfather, Mookakin, was adopted by Weaselhead. My paternal grandmother, Pi'akii, was the daughter of Morris Many Fingers and Annie Pace. My paternal grandfather, Tsa'tsii, was the son of "old man" Stephen Fox and Cecile Charging Woman. It is a good day to be able to share who I am and elements of my story with you—interwoven within this Wise Big Writing . . .

I am honoured and blessed to be an extension of this ancestry. The ancestors all have a story; it transcends to my parents, to myself, to my children, and will transcend to theirs in turn. Given this integral element of introducing myself while acknowledging the participants' stories, without which this research project would not have been possible, I am an extension of this Wise Big Writing. As Martin (2003) stated, "The protocol for introducing one's self to other Indigenous people is to provide information about one's cultural location, so that connection can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established" (p. 203).

An exploration of these occurrences in Canadian history can assist Canadians in gaining a general understanding of this legacy so that Indigenous and Canadian people can have a shared understanding, and to foster greater respect for Indigenous peoples. Learning about and from the perspectives of IRS survivors can assist with understanding their experiences pertinent to understanding their pain, trauma, and suffering.

This Research Project's Contribution to Reconciliation

In this project, I evaluate reconciliation by sharing the voices of Indigenous peoples and communities.[6] Through this work, we can help to inform further attempts at reconciliation,[7] at both systemic and individual levels. In this section I present the research questions and describe the process of reconciliation.

Research questions. I asked the following research questions, as my guide, to understand survivor perspectives and to operationalize reconciliatory and healing pathways:

1. What are the experiences and perspectives of Blackfoot Confederacy survivors of Indian residential schools?
2. How can those experiences and perspectives inform stakeholders as to what has worked and what changes are needed for reconciliation to truly occur?

By understanding the experiences and perspectives of Blackfoot Confederacy survivors of IRS, all stakeholders—including all levels of governments, institutions, health care, and policy makers—gain insight into what has worked and what changes are needed for reconciliation to truly occur.

The process of reconciliation. *Systemic reconciliation*, a term I have coined within this dissertation, is a process of recovering, overcoming, harmonizing, and surviving. It captures the amalgamated effort to describe actions and related documents along a timeline from before the Canadian government's apology (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008), to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC's) Calls to Action (TRC, 2015), and the numerous

[6] For Canada and Canadians, to bring about justice and fairness to Indigenous Peoples, who participate in a foreign, settler-based, and non-Indigenous system in present-day Canada (i.e., health, education, politics, social and economic policies, and all other institutions); to seek redress for countless historical wrongdoings, directly and indirectly, as well as intergenerationally, for good relations to be built.

[7] *Kaamotaan*: To survive, to recover, to overcome; to create harmony (see Chapter 6).

documents, past, present, and future that include, and will include, significant undertones for respectful and meaningful dialogue to occur and real change to be realized. Systemic reconciliation is the practice of reconciling (as outlined above), as opposed to systemic discrimination, which is the practice of racial and other perpetual inequalities (Johnson, 2000, p. 237).

In her work, L. T. Smith (1999) has elucidated decolonizing processes or methodologies as "a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed . . . and within an indigenous framework, methodological debates are ones concerned with broader politics and strategic goals" (p. 143). Several of her decolonizing projects and processes are incorporated in Figure 2 as part of framing and operationalizing systemic reconciliation (L. T. Smith, 1999, pp. 143–160). Additionally, given the stance I have taken regarding the system of reconciliation, or systemic reconciliation, delving into a process of this magnitude will ensure the voices of Indigenous people are heard and respected. They must be an equal coil of the political and strategic goals of Canadian and Indigenous relations.

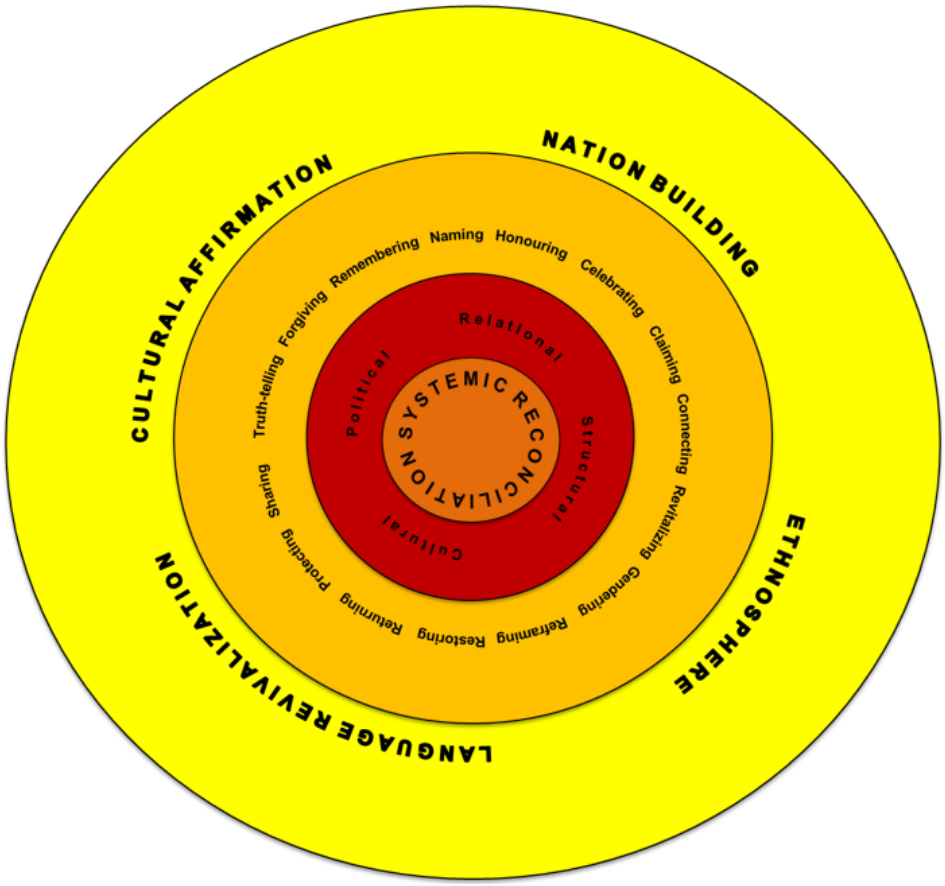

Figure 2. Systemic reconciliation—process, practice, and pedagogy.

Several authors have described the reconciliatory pedagogy as a process of reconciliation and have included the elements of truth, justice, forgiveness, and healing (Nussey, 2014; Smithers Graeme & Mandawa, 2017). Poitras Pratt and Danyluk (2019) positioned "the power of truth-telling as a necessary element *en route* to reconciliation" (p. 2), which aligns with what I am affirming as the reconciliatory process (see also Poitras Pratt et al., 2019). Further, Smithers Graeme and Mandawa (2017) shared this statement from the TRC's (2015) final report:

> Together, Canadians must do more than just *talk* about reconciliation; we must learn how to practise reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families, and in our communities, governments, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. To do so

> constructively, Canadians must remain committed to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. (p. 126)

As Figure 2 outlines, and as an introduction to the Siksikaitsitapi Methodology—Conceptual Framework (see Chapter 3), these elements of truth, truth-telling, forgiveness, justice, and healing are inclusive of *heeding the process*, or fulfilling the promises. As Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi (2009) stated, the process of reconciliation must go slowly and cannot be forced (p. 143). Additionally, they detailed that both spiritual and monetary support are equally crucial in this process of reconciliation. These authors also wrote that there is no word for *reconciliation* in their language, Nuu-chah-nulth (as is the case with Siksikaitsipowahsin; there is no literal English translation). They noted that the word *oo yoothloothl*, "looking after (or, looking beyond)" (Corntassel et al., 2009, p. 145), is a close approximation and exemplifies a commitment to move forward or beyond the problem.

Another element I include as part of laying the foundation in the reconciliatory process in understanding the systems and cultures in which all individuals participate, and how we can fuse these practices, is what Davis (2014) has defined as the *ethnosphere*:

> Together, the myriad cultures of the world make up an intellectual, spiritual, and social web of life that envelopes the planet and is as important to its well-being as is the biological web-of-life that we know as the biosphere. You might think of this cultural web-of-life as being an ethnosphere. And you might define the ethnosphere as being the sum total of all the thoughts, dreams, ideals, myths, intuitions, and inspirations brought into being by the imagination since the dawn of consciousness. The ethnosphere is humanity's great legacy. It's a symbol of all that we've achieved and the promise of all that we can achieve as the wildly curious and adaptive species we are. (para. 2)

Indigenous and non-Indigenous people must genuinely desire respectful, meaningful, and long-lasting nation building, with all beings in mind—humans, animals, plants, the water, the air, the tangible and intangible manifestations that create cultures, and the respectful advancement of all forms of life.

Figure 2 details concepts, terms, and overarching themes that I have organized and conceptualized for systemic reconciliation to occur and for understanding how this tool can be used for evaluating systemic reconciliation as stakeholders move forward together. I have developed this theoretical and practical framework based both on the literature, my own understanding of systemic reconciliation, and my position as both researcher and Blackfoot member. This conceptual framework paves the way to support, shed light, and teach Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples what systemic reconciliation is and how it can work.

Right now, Canadians are at the point of reconciliation. We, Indigenous people and Canadians, must act now; it is timely, and it is necessary, to fill the gaps. My interest is to inform readers about reconciliation by sharing the voices, feelings, stories, and recommendations of those who contributed such an enormous part within this Wise Big Writing. For future research projects and reconciliatory programs, the execution of this work can shed much-needed light on the way forward, together, to reach reconciliation.

Issue

This research examined the experiences of a specific First Nation population in southern Alberta related to their perspectives about the IRS settlement and the Canadian government's apology to former students (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008). Consequently, I explore two main themes: the IRS settlement agreement for survivors of federally funded and church-run institutions, and the participants' thoughts on the apology to the survivors and the

subsequent generations that have been affected. I focus on the First Nation population of southern Alberta, specifically the Blackfoot Confederacy,[8] to increase understanding of the challenges these First Nations individuals face in their daily milieu as a result of their attendance at IRS.

My motivation to explore IRS was sparked by the public action by the Conservative federal government and its apology to First Nations people across Canada for its involvement in residential schools (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008). Those who attended were experimental subjects of the government's assimilation policy (J. R. Miller, 1996; Monchalin, 2016) and were exposed to cultural genocide—the systematic attempt to kill all members of a particular social category, usually defined by characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality (Johnson, 2000). The assimilation that these individuals were subjected to included learning and speaking a different language and being forbidden to speak their mother tongue. They also had to learn and practice different social roles without having the ability to maintain and practice their own cultural roles and responsibilities as Siksikaitsitapi children. In addition, they were required to adopt a new religion while not being allowed to practice their own spiritual beliefs, ceremonies, or rituals. Children were separated from their parents for months at a time, as enforced by the Indian Act of 1876 (Government of Canada, 1876).

Duncan Campbell Scott was an early enforcer of the assimilation policy. A long-serving deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, Scott assured parliament in 1920 that "our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into

[8] Blackfoot Confederacy Nations include Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika Nation. The Blackfeet nation in the U.S. has ties to this confederacy, but due to the Canada–U.S. border, it is not always noted as part of this confederacy.

the body politic and there is no Indian question" (as cited in Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002, p. 3).

The live broadcast Canadian federal government's apology to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people across Canada on June 11, 2008, was a critical starting point for many on their healing journey. The government acknowledged that the assimilation tactics were wrong, thus validating the survivors' pain, sorrow, and suffering. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology acknowledged this wrongdoing:

> Today we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm and has no place in our country. . . . The government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes, and we apologize. . . . We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions and that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize. . . . These institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled and we apologize for failing to protect you. (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008, p. 1)

The prime minister went on to say,

> Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry. . . . The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly. . . . We are sorry. (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008, p. 1)

In attendance that day on the House of Commons floor were 11 Aboriginal leaders[9] and the oldest living IRS survivor at the time, 104-year-old Marguerite Wabano. Hundreds of people gathered to watch from the gallery while others watched from the front lawn of Parliament Hill. Still more watched from their homes and other meeting places.

Methodology

In this research I examined a chapter in Canadian history that is deep-rooted in my own personal and academic lifeworld. For some researchers, the exploration of First Nations people is a curiosity. Academic disciplines teach others about First Nations people and the unique and oftentimes unfair and inhumane policies that govern them within Canadian society. Consequently, although an outsider's perspective may be perceived as more objective and rational to mainstream society, an outsider might not deliver an accurate depiction of a people's culture or experience. For the generations who attended the federally funded, church-run IRS, their stories need to be presented through their own cultural lens. As an insider, I can provide a unique interpretation that is reflective of a Siksikaitsitapi worldview, as well as an understanding of research inquiry as an outsider. I discuss this positioning further in Chapter 3, Methodology.

For this reason, I needed to respect, understand, and adhere to my participants' belief systems and for them to be practiced while undertaking fieldwork for this research. My Siksikaitsitapi heritage afforded me a greater advantage than most researchers given that I know how to adhere to cultural sensitivity. I was raised with specific ways of knowing cultural protocol in relation to sacred (secret) knowledge. In addition, the fieldwork I undertook while completing my master's thesis (Fox, 2005) included human subjects as research participants, and

[9] Phil Fontaine, Beverly Jacobs, Patrick Brasseau, Clem Chartier, Mary Simon, elders, and others.

my method of collecting data was culturally sensitive. This previous research inquiry was a strong foundation for the current research project.

Summary

What did I hope to achieve undertaking this Mokakyomahsinaksin? First, I wanted to increase our own understanding as Indigenous peoples, as well as the broader society's awareness, of survivor stories, including their thoughts, their perspectives, their reality from within their cultural lens, and their knowledge from within a Siksikaitsitapi context. Additionally, I hoped to provide a methodology from which to conduct research within a Siksikaitsitapi framework that honours, respects, connects, and aligns with *Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin*, the Blackfoot way of life.

This study provides a specific Indigenous context from all angles—the researcher is from the Blackfoot Confederacy; knowledge arising is from the Blackfoot Confederacy people; outcomes are framed within an Indigenous context; and the methodology, as ways of knowing, doing, and being, is rooted within the Siksikaitsitapi position. As an Indigenous author, I hope to pave the way for many other Indigenous students to infuse methods and methodologies. I am honoured that I can now share and state that this research transfer of knowledge was framed within, thought about, and written by an Indigenous student and Blackfoot member. Is that not an honourable way forward?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

> *Kaaahsinnoon* offered guidance about traditional pedagogy to me: the Eurocentred way is easy to follow—in fact, it is a lot easier to follow than our ways of learning. We have to follow our protocol, our Indian way of life. (Bastien, 2004, p. 125)

> We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children (Native American Proverb).

Honouring our ancestors and the ancients, *Kaaahsinnoon*, and sustaining our future for our children, *pookááks,* it is my wish that the reader gain insight into the worldview of Blackfoot Confederacy people (*Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin*—the life or lifeworld of Niitsitapi) and where they are situated at present while reading through historical policy. This chapter reflects the direction south and honours the beaver as the sacred animal. It provides needed wisdom into the Blackfoot Confederacy people, culture, and history. In this chapter I first provide a literature review of various documents that detail historical occurrences of where and why Siksikaitsitapi are situated at present; unfortunately, this state went from one that was good in relation to each other and those around them to one of extreme dependency and trauma. Next, I provide a chronology of specific policies to inform the reader of why the Blackfoot people are in a state of emergency in terms of health, education, self-sufficiency, and overall apathy.

This chapter is not a detailed historical account of policy; however, it does feature policies that have affected health, education, governance, and community for Blackfoot people over 500 years. To gain an understanding and a greater appreciation of the worldview of Blackfoot Confederacy people, one ought to know the history of this evolution of policy that has

affected every realm of their lives—spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical, familial, and communal, in addition to their relationships with the plants, animals, air, water, and cosmos. Bastien (2004) detailed, "The history of the *Siksikaitsitapi*, their origins, the sacred knowledge and science are the fabric from which their identity is woven. . . . The breach from these sacred ways originated with colonialism" (p. 8).

Relationships, connection, and story hold much value in Blackfoot culture. These value systems are centred in modes of transmittance, how one speaks to the other, and how one creates one's everyday reality. Bastien's (2004) quote reads in part, "The breach from these sacred ways originated with *colonialism*" (p. 8, emphasis added). In this chapter I discuss this history of colonialism, which started with the Doctrine of Discovery in 1493 (R. J. Miller, 2011; Reid, 2010) and has continued through to present day. Researchers, authors, and chiefs have all affirmed the statement made by Bastien that the breach from sacred ways originated with colonialism. One might ask, then, what is colonialism? Fleras (2017) defined colonialism as

> a violent and traumatic process reflecting a specific era of European expansion and settlement over the so-called "underutilized" lands. European powers forcibly exploited indigenous peoples by appropriating land and resources, extracting wealth, and capitalizing on cheap labour, while invoking racial doctrines to justify and explain their removal, exploitation, or extermination. (p. 349)

Fleras's (2017) definition points to why there is much devastation in many Indigenous tribes not only in Canada, but in other colonized and industrialized nations throughout the world. A shocking and sometimes dissonant thought occurs when, in some of the courses I teach, I raise awareness of pre-Confederation history. Many Canadians, it appears, do not think of this land as

having had a history before that, or maybe they do not think of that history. When I share that history, I observe puzzled looks on their faces. Why is that? Fleras (2017) also noted,

> Canada was not a barren and unpopulated land mass that magically sprung into existence like mushrooms in the damp. Canada-building was forged in the crucible of colonial violence whose aftermath continues to reverberate throughout this "Indian" country. . . . To unlearn this [one-sided] version of Canadian history requires that the story be retold from a different perspective. That alone—a commitment to unsettling these notions of Canada as a privileged "white space"—makes it doubly important to deconstruct the politics of power from the perspectives of those who were (and continue to be) dispossessed, marginalized, and or exploited. (p. 8)

Thus, the lands that had been occupied for centuries by Indigenous peoples precontact and pre-confederation requires that all Canadians are aware of this history. Reconciliatory action regarding teaching this history is a positive stepping stone for change to occur. This history also needs to be taught and honoured in all realms of Canadian society.

The continuous and consistent evolution of "Indian" policy, since European explorers and fur traders reached the east coast of present-day Canada, has certainly affected Indigenous–White relations in numerous ways. Issues such as territorial boundaries; land claims and settlements; Constitutional inclusion; treaty rights (and negotiations); educational, political, and social policy; and maybe more profoundly at present, the health and healing of Indigenous peoples, are all integral to understanding how Indigenous peoples have adapted to these changes (and in many instances, impositions), and what data and statistics indicate about their future in Canada.

Introduction of Blackfoot Confederacy—Siksikaitsitapi

As the Government of Alberta (n.d.) has noted,

> The term 'Blackfoot' actually refers to 3 tribes—the Blackfoot proper (Siksika), the Bloods (Kainai), and the Peigan (Piikani). Each tribe was independent, but they all spoke the same language and regarded themselves as allies. The Blackfoot proper are the northernmost of the tribes and currently occupy the Bow River east of Calgary. To the south are the Bloods, situated on the Oldman, Belly, and St. Mary rivers west of Lethbridge. To the west of the Bloods are the Northern Peigan on the Oldman River. In Montana, the southern branch of the Peigan occupy the upper Missouri River drainage. This distribution of tribes reflects the area controlled at the time of the treaties; it is thought that throughout the last few hundred years the tribes continually expanded their territory southward. (Tribes section, paras. 1–2)

Additionally, elders have continued to affirm identity and language, and why there are distinct tribes within Blackfoot Confederacy:

> We are commonly called Blackfoot, but we have various names for ourselves. We recognize three large groups of clans: the Kainai (Many Leaders, also called the Blood); the Piikani (including the Amsskaapipiikani in Montana and Apatohsipiikani in southern Alberta); and the Siksika (Blackfoot, also called northern Blackfoot). We share a common language and culture. In the past we were not united in an alliance. However, because the three divisions often supported one another, many people referred to us as the Blackfoot Confederacy. (Glenbow Museum, n.d.-b, Who We Are section, paras. 1–2)

Hence, the relationships and relationality of Siksikaitsitapi are integral to one's identity and are strong links for the transmission of all that is Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin.

Siksikaitsitapi and their ways of knowing (epistemologies; *aistomatoominniki*—coming to know your heart) and being (ontologies)[10] have existed. Legend has it that we are inhabitants of Turtle Island; others have conceptualized specific regions to be their homeland within this island. In the southern region of Alberta, and part of northern Montana, this region is known as the Blackfoot Confederacy, not only to its people, but to surrounding tribes, either as allies, as enemies, or as trade relations.

The vast area of land we inhabited has been detailed and documented in both oral (as told by elders) and written history. Figure 3 provides the boundaries of the traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy People. As LaPier (2017) explained,

> The territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy extended from the North Saskatchewan River in the north to the Yellowstone River in the south and from the Rocky Mountains in the west to the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers in the east. (p. 6)

Most places in this region have a Siksikaitsipowahsin name. *Ohkotoks* means "big rock" in English. There is a Napi legend explaining how Ohkotoks came into being.[11] Calgary is *Moohkinstsis*, which means "elbow"; hence, the Elbow River. This region is common and known to the people of the Blackfoot Confederacy; its history and context is thus in the stories of the Blackfoot people as well. Niitsitapi—Kainai, Siksika, Piikani, and Aamsskaapipiikani, all encompass this region, and one can find many a story among the people. These stories are

[10] Siksikaitsipowahsin does not have a term for *ontology*. However, much of Niitsitapi life is spent in the process of trying to understand the spiritual existence (Bastien, 2004, p. 226).

[11] "Once, Napi gave his buffalo robe to a Rock, and then took it back. The Rock became angry and chased Napi across the prairies, flattening anything that tried to stop it. Finally, the meadowlarks managed to blow the rock apart, scattering its pieces across the plains. The largest fragment is near the town of Okotoks, Alberta" (Glenbow Museum, n.d.-c, Okotoks section, para. 1).

wonderful and alive when told in Blackfoot; however, they have a very different feel when translated into English.

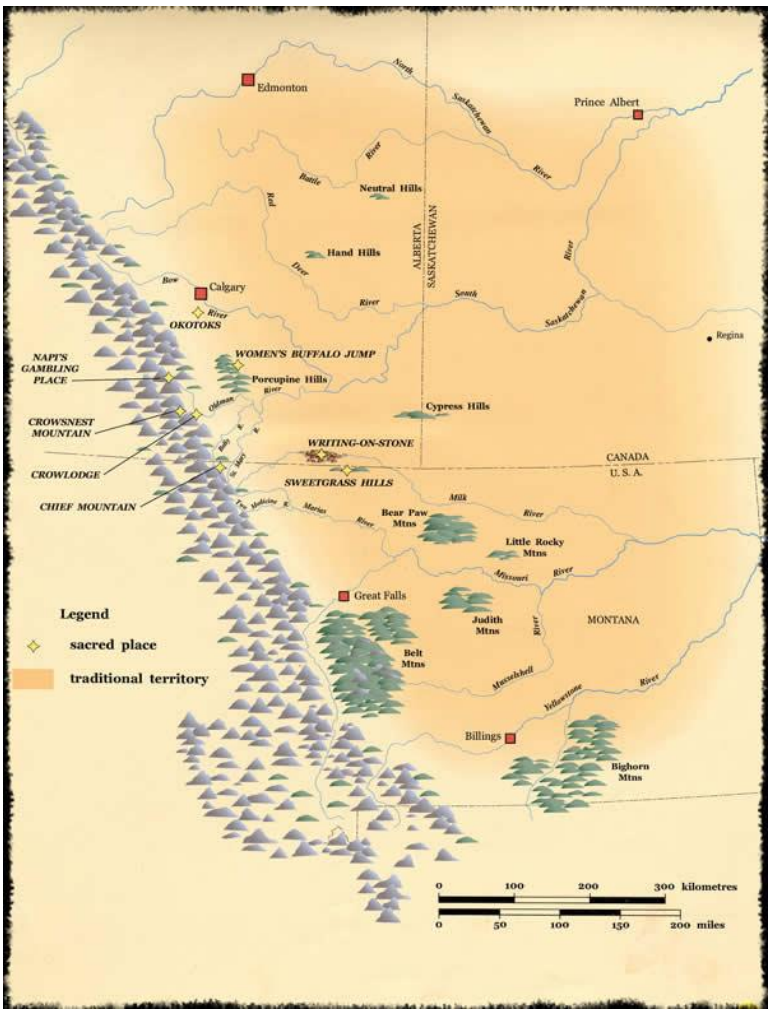

Figure 3. Blackfoot Confederacy territory.

Used with permission from Glenbow Museum, n.d.-a, Our Traditional Territory [image]. Copyright 2019 by the Glenbow Museum.

Chief Mountain—*Ninnaistako*, a majestic site, is an historical site for Siksikaitsitapi, which I have travelled to and hiked upon. As we take walks up the hills at my folks' homestead, one can only be in awe taking the final step to see the foothills, the mountains, and our homeland. Chewing-Black-Bone, on the Blackfeet Reservation, was the meeting place for the

Fox family reunion in 2005. The sacred sites of the Belly Buttes,[12] where the annual *Aako'ka'tssin* (Sundance) is held, the Cypress hills, and the Bow River are all places where ceremonial rituals have been conducted and are still practiced today. The Blackfoot Crossing, where Treaty 7 was signed in 1877, is along the Bow River, where I have taken walks and felt its tranquility and sacredness. My family and I travel to these sacred places on occasion.

It was not until the North West Mounted Police arrived in 1874, almost 150 years ago, that non-Indigenous people began to settle on the land. The Blackfoot continued to pursue a traditional lifestyle "until the near extinction of the buffalo in 1881. . . . Only with the loss of their food supply were they obliged to adapt to the new era" (Government of Alberta, n.d., Territory section, paras. 1–2).

Unfortunately, many know that the land area set aside for Kainai, along with Siksika and Piikani Nations, is not what was agreed upon; many members today still have ill feelings towards the federal government. Specifically, for those who attended IRS, the knowledge of the wrongful boundaries only adds to their frustration, confusion, and anger. However, the Siksikaitsitapi belief in their spirituality has assisted them in keeping specific teachings alive, as well as a sense of their history and the hope that one day, equality and fairness for all people will prevail.

However, some of this traditional knowledge and history is being lost through the premature deaths of its carriers. One of the roles of elders who have accumulated reservoirs of personal experience, knowledge, wisdom, or compassionate insight is to freely offer this wisdom to living generations of their people in an effort to help them connect harmoniously with their

[12] "The Belly Buttes were created when Katoyissa (Blood Clot) ripped open the belly of the giant bird that was threatening our people. Its heart became Heart Butte in Montana and its intestines became the Belly Buttes. Each summer the Kainai have their Akoka'tssini (the time of all people camping together) at the foot of the buttes" (Glenbow Museum, n.d.-c, Belly Buttes section, para. 1).

past, present, and future (Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992, p. 179). Weibel-Orlando (1997) wrote that the fear of the loss of identity as a people because of the relentless assimilationist influences of contemporary life leads many ethnic minority members to view their elders as vital cultural resources for their children. In the case of First Nations people, there are few elders relative to the large number of youth, who need them as cultural resources (Fox, 2005).

Researching how cultural knowledge was and is transmitted intergenerationally among Siksikaitsitapi, as a whole, is a challenge. However, such research may give insight into whether each group views traditional cultural knowledge as needed and positive, what they know about cultural knowledge, and how traditional cultural knowledge is or should be transmitted. How elders transmit knowledge, and what lessons, values, and beliefs individuals may learn from this knowledge, are specific questions only the elders, and those who listen to them, can answer (Fox, 2005).

Blackfoot Worldview—Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin

Bastien (2004) provided a detailed account of Blackfoot People in her book *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi.* In this book, she provided Siksikaitsitapi ontology, epistemologies (aistomatoominniki—coming to know your heart), and pedagogy (issksinima'tstohkssini—education in all forms). Ontology is a subfield of philosophy that focuses on the question of what exists and what does not (Johnson, 2000). Epistemology is the study of knowing, of the basis for knowing, and how it is that people come to know what they know (Johnson, 2000). Epistemology is concerned with various issues about knowing, including the relationship between the knower and the object of knowledge; variations among different types of knowledge (scientific, spiritual, and so on); the nature of truth; the possibility of understanding social life using scientific data alone; the possibility of attaining any kind of valid

knowledge about anything at all; the most valid methods for acquiring different kinds of knowledge; and the role of reason and the senses in knowing (Johnson, 2000). Finally, pedagogy is the function or work of a teacher; teaching (Pedagogy, n.d.). These three concepts are encompassed within the belief of *Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa*, the Source of Life (Bastien, 2004, p. 11).

From Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa, Siksikaitsitapi know and practice the teachings from the Source of Life. In this,

> The law is acknowledged in the thought patterns and organization behavior of *Siksikaitsitapi.* The pipes and bundles form the societies that shape the organizational behavior of the people. Balance is the mission of the *Siksikaitsitapi* culture, and through the organization of societies, balance is manifested in the values, norms, and roles of the people. Striving for balance becomes the motivation of life and the impetus for all relationships. Thus, we see that relationships are connections with cosmic beings creating alliances. We talk about it as *Kipaitapiiyssinnooni* [our way of life], the *Siksikaitsitapi* lifeworld which we seek to understand, *Paitapiiyssin* ["up and living", "alive and walking around as physical beings", "the processes of our way of life"]. (Bastien, 2004, p. 11)

Bastien's (2004) detailed method of bringing together and infusing all aspects of Siksikaitsitapi, kiipaitapiiyssinnooni, and paitapiiyssin provides clarity in the relationships and relationality of Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin. The former are foundational for one's identity as Siksikaitsitapi and knowing one's relationship with and to Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin.

Bastien's (2004) book also depicted traditional teachings of *kaaahsinnooniksi* (grandparents). She stated that the purpose of her book was "the articulation of the ontological responsibilities of *Siksikaitsitapi* identity so that they can have an impact" (Bastien, 2004, p. 2), whether that be within the current educational system or within the discipline one is researching.

Likewise, she added, "The structure and processes of *Siksikaitsitapi* epistemologies and pedagogy are constituted through the lived process of these ontological responsibilities" (Bastien, 2004, p. 2). Hence, historically, one's identity was lived in connection to, in relation to, the ancients, ancestors, the cosmos, the environment, and the individuals nearby, and this in turn helped mould one's reality as Siksikaitsitapi. It may seem complicated, yet when one is immersed in traditional cultural ways—language, ceremony, roles, and responsibilities—then it is not complicated at all. It is a way of knowing—epistemology and ontology. Figure 4 provides a visual that allows one to envision how this process is cyclical and puts the Siksikaitsitapi identity at its core, which allows for the transference of knowledge.

Figure 4. Interconnection of the elements of the Blackfoot worldview—Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin.

In a similar fashion, Little Bear (1994) has referred to a different mode of knowledge transfer. He affirmed acquiring knowledge and the transfer of

> [this] notion of constant motion, which the quantum physicists sometimes talk about in terms of chaos theory, we've talked about in terms of the trickster. In other words, the whole notion of chaos is not new to us at all. We've always known the trickster. The

> trickster might manifest itself as a raven, sometimes a coyote, sometimes—as in Blackfoot—as an old man. . . . The notion of *observer-created reality* is also incorporated into Native thinking. The notion of relationships, relational networks, is very important too. This discovery of time and space being the same is old hat in Blackfoot. We've always thought about it that way. If I were talking about somebody I see in the distance over there or somebody I saw several days ago, I'd talk about them in the same way. Time and space have always been the same thing in Blackfoot, in Cree and in many other Native languages. (p. 70)

Similarly, when Bastien (2004) described the Siksikaitsitapi Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin, and how the relations to the ancestors and the ancients, and literally all of the cosmos and the beings "teach" us, or transfer knowledge, these are one and the same—yet different, fluid, and constant. One can then begin to understand the importance of relational networks (Little Bear, 1994) in acquiring and transferring such knowledge systems.

Why are people constantly on a quest for knowledge? How do they use this knowledge? Is it ever enough? As they strive towards attaining educational knowledge, through various institutions, they may forget at times, or may not have been taught, the essential value of the act of transfer of knowledge. Thus, as Bastien (2004) posited,

> The responsibility of seeking knowledge is fundamental to the identity of *Niitsitapi*. Knowledge is generated for the purpose of maintaining the relationships that strengthen and protect the health and well-being of individuals and the collective in the cosmic universe. In this respect, seeking knowledge is a fundamental responsibility for contributing to the collective good. *Ao'tsistapitakyo'p* ["we have come to understand'] is the *process* of coming to know. *Aissksiniph* means "we know it to be like that." (p. 2)

Bastien (2004) added that both these Siksikaitsipowahsin words refer to a level of understanding and presence within the web of alliances and responsibilities that is different from merely knowing (p. 3). To further exemplify what Little Bear (1994) and Bastien have stated, Wilson (2008) reiterated in *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* that knowledge, relations, relationships, truth, and transfer of knowledge are infused and interconnected—fluid and constant:

> In an Indigenous ontology there may be multiple realities, as in the constructivist research paradigm. The difference is that, rather than the truth being something that is "out there" or external, *reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth*. Thus, an object or thing is not as important as one's relationships to it. This idea could be further expanded to say that *reality is relationships* or sets of relationships. Thus, there is no one definition of reality but rather different sets of relationships that make up an Indigenous ontology. Therefore, reality is not an object but a process of relationships, and an Indigenous ontology is actually the equivalent of an Indigenous epistemology. (p. 73, emphasis in the original)

Believers of the Circle Camp or Sundance, Aako'ka'tssin, have existed for thousands of years. The Aako'ka'tssin occurred during the summer months and is considered to be the most holy ceremony for Siksikaitsitapi. As Dempsey (1972) has documented, "In summer the camps gathered for the holy Sun Dance in the shadow of the Belly Buttes; from there the Indians drifted onto the plains in search of buffalo" (p. 4). The Blood people gave thanks each day for their customs and beliefs, their families, and their very existence. They hunted the buffalo, which provided them with their food, clothing, shelter, tools, toys, and life. This lifestyle is illustrated in the following passage:

> Thanks to the existence of an estimated fifty million buffalo the Indians on the Great Plains had developed a distinctive way of life. The Plains people for thousands of years had used the buffalo's hide for clothing, braided ropes, and tepee covers. From its bones they made handles, needles, and other items. They took the horns and shaped them into spoons or drinking cups. The sinews provided thread for sewing, as well as strings for their bows. They ate its nourishing meat, including its vitamin-rich internal organs. (D. B. Smith, 1985, p. 50)

Siksikaitsitapi lived in a cyclical rhythm with the earth; they were provided with specific laws with which to lead their lives in relation to the animals, plants, water, and environment. They adhered to these laws in their daily milieu. To aid the reader in visualizing this reality, Figure 5 shows how one may come to understand these relationships as fluid, constant, and positional.

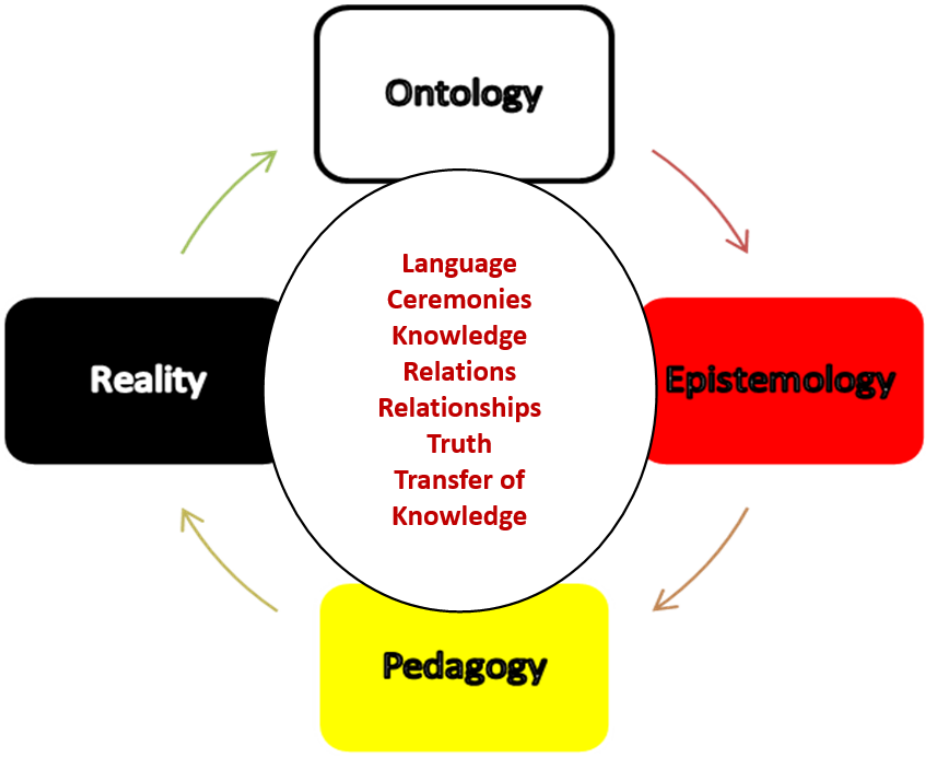

Figure 5. Relational knowledge transfer—truth/one's reality.

From Quandamooka ontology, Martin (2003) shared her understanding of this particular group of people and their worldview. In "Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing: A Theoretical Framework and Methods for Indigenous Research and Indigenist Research," she detailed a Quandamooka woman's understanding of this ontology:

> God gave our Yulubirribi (salt and sand people) nation nutritious food supplies and miraculous medicines and the ability for our people to utilize these gifts by listening to his messages for management from weather, flora, fauna, environment, heavens and each other. After creation, he then gave our ancestors knowledge to pass on through learned and natural expression the ways and means of existence without having to defeat his gifts. This expression is enjoyed by the Koenpil, Noonuccal and other nations form of education for some hundreds of thousands of years. (as cited in Martin, 2003, p. 7)

Reflecting on the aforementioned quote, Little Bear (1994), Bastien (2004), and Wilson's (2008) work also detail how the infusion of relations, language, and teachings from the old ones, and how, in the old ways, balance and harmony were always sought after and prayed for. Martin (2003) further stressed the importance of not only "the Land and People, but also the Entities of Waterways, Animals, Plants, Climate, Skies and Spirits" (p. 7). This emphasis again illustrates interconnections that lie within the transfer of knowledge from that which is outside of us, yet it is the foundation of who we are as we feel, observe, hear, touch, taste, and smell—thus we use all our senses for this transfer of knowledge to occur.

Quandamooka and Siksikaitsitapi ways of knowing and being share similarities. Martin (2003) described how the Quandamooka people adhere to the Entities, detailed by a Koenpil–Noonuccal man:

> Men and women, no matter how high in status they thought they were, had no right whatsoever to decide over the fate of their country or their Mother Spirit. They were there since the time of creation, and our Dreaming or Dreamtime began a long time ago. We are somewhere in the middle of it now and there is a long time to come. Where we now put ourselves in the position of the God and we think we have the right to decide over the fate of our Mother Sprit, we are actually denying the further generations a human right, a blood born right, and we are taking away the Mother Sprit. And that means we are also taking away their spirit. (p. 7)

Balance and harmony are always at the forefront of ontology. We know what we know due to observation and laws that have been transferred to us by *Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa*—Spirits, Creator/Maker, or Higher Power. It is our responsibility to share and teach these ways, adhere to them, and honour them, because in turn, we honour those before us and those who come after us—the fluidity and foundation for the Blackfoot blessing *Kaamotaani*, a long survival.

Indian Act of 1876

Any policy which further enforced eradicating Indian systems—language, spirituality, ceremony, and political, social, and educational methods—was welcomed by each succeeding government office and the officials who executed these policies. The introduction of European culture, and its education, religion, and economic and political systems, was boldly imposed upon Indian people.

Initially, the Indian Act was designed for the Indians living east of Lake Superior; thus, western Indians were excluded until such time as the superintendent general of Indian Affairs considered them advanced enough in civilization to take advantage of the act (Tobias, 1987, p.

133). It affected areas of traditional Indian sexual, marriage, and divorce mores and furthered Christian-European values. Tobias (1987) wrote,

> The federal government has a strong tendency to follow the legal obligations option and to look for advice from the law officers of the Crown. This advice tends to restrict treaty interpretations to the strict written terms of the treaties and to a century of case law from the European-influenced Canadian court system. No one in the federal government has been bold enough to try publicly to define or interpret what was meant by the reference to spirit of the treaties contained in the policy statement. . . . On the Indian side, however, there is no such hesitation to try to define the spirit of the treaties. Indian leaders believe that certain Indian elders have knowledge of the true intent or spirit of the treaties. The Indian leaders are often the contemporary spokesmen for the elders' interpretations of the treaties. The elders do not rely on case law or written documents, but on oral history. Knowledge of the treaty negotiation events has been passed down from generation to generation, starting with the chiefs and headmen who actually signed the treaty. (p. xi)

The context in which documents are written creates discrepancies in how one understands and interprets them. If these documents were to be written in Siksikaitsipowahsin, utilizing a Siksikaitsitapi context, they would be perceived very differently. Thus, remembering that there are always at least two perspectives to understand and be aware of is critical.

In 1876, the Indian Act was enacted. As Monchalin (2016) explained, "This act consolidated all prior federal legislation related to First Nations peoples and centralized the administration of 'Indian' lands and laws, placing it under the authority of the 'Superintendent of Indian Affairs'" (p. 109). Ultimately, the act housed all Indian Affairs related to every realm of

First Nations life under one legislation. How convenient this would be for the new Confederation to handle matters within one department and make decisions on Indians' behalf.

Monchalin (2016) added that the Indian Act "was initially intended to be a temporary set of laws, in effect only until 'Indians' came to be assimilated fully into [Canadian society]" (p. 109). Although the legal counsel and politicians at the time pushed for assimilation, this did not happen, and there remains much resistance since 1876. The following is a hand-picked list, and certainly not an extensive one, of some of the provisions within the Indian Act:

- Defining who is and who is not an "Indian";
- Implementing a nontraditional (for us, a non-Blackfoot) chief and council governance structure and regulating Indian lands and reserves;
- Outlawing "Indian" culture, dancing, and ceremonies (specifically for Blackfoot Confederacy people, this included the Sundance ceremony, which is still practiced today);
- Decreeing that First Nations women and their children would lose their Indian status upon marrying a non-status man (this provision would not be amended until 1985 under Bill C-31). (Monchalin, 2016, p. 110)

This list should give readers insight into the policies that govern Indigenous people, still today, and how this intrusion has had astounding effects on the way of life for thousands of people. While past leaders were ensuring their people were protected from frontiersmen, discussions had occurred throughout Canada with First Nations for treaties to be signed.

In 1870, the Government of Canada assumed sovereignty over the Northwest for the fur trade. This portion of territory, which lay between the mountains on the west, the Great Lakes on the east, the United States boundary, and the Saskatchewan River system, was considered ripe

for settlement and development (Price, 1987, p. 3). The European fur traders were a mere handful in the midst of an Indian population that numbered in the tens of thousands. Alliances were made with Indian women, which resulted in a population of mixed-blood, or Métis, people. By the time the government had taken over the Northwest, this new group became a "new nation" (Price, 1987, p. 11). Eventually, IRS were in operation, and sending Indian children to these schools was mandatory. If parents did not comply, they would be imprisoned according to the clauses of the Indian Act of 1876.

In concurrence with examining the Indian Act of 1876, the following excerpt is from Harold Cardinal, as cited in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), in opposition to the White Paper of 1969,

> We do not want the Indian Act retained because it is a good piece of legislation. It isn't. It is discriminatory from start to finish. But it is a lever in our hands and an embarrassment to the government, as it should be. No just society and no society with even pretensions to being just can long tolerate such a piece of legislation, but we would rather continue to live in bondage under the inequitable Indian Act than surrender our sacred rights. Any time the government wants to honour its obligations to us we are more than ready to help devise new Indian legislation. (p. 236)

This next section discusses Treaty 7, as Blackfoot Confederacy people occupied this region after 1877.

Treaty 7

There was much change during the time of treaty negotiations; essentially, Treaties 1 to 7 began in 1871 and ended in 1877. No two treaties are alike. They differ depending on their leader, their geographical area, their population number, and how the people who signed

understood and interpreted what a treaty would mean for their people. The treaties were a vehicle to impose cultural change. The introduction of electoral systems, location tickets, and private property were included within the Indian Act, and these concepts may not have been fully understood by both parties during this period of "negotiation." Not surprisingly, Indians were skeptical during this period.

Treaty 7 encompasses the Blood, Siksika, and Piikani nations, and includes Stoney Nakoda and Tsuut'ina nations (the latter two are not Blackfoot-speaking nations). As persuasion would have it, the creation and signing of treaties became unavoidable for Indian people. Although the concept was foreign to them, some leaders did appear to understand the process. Crowfoot, Chief of the Blackfoot, and Red Crow, Chief of the Bloods, were allies during the Treaty 7 process, as were they during any other type of invasion or trespassing within the Blackfoot territory. Red Crow, for his fierceness and numerous warriors, could not be taken down without another war breaking out; Crowfoot was a respected leader for his diplomacy when he spoke with government officials.

Treaty 7 was negotiated between September 19 and 22, 1877, after much contemplation by both Red Crow and Crowfoot. Monchalin (2016) noted,

> Settlers rather than Indigenous peoples pressured the government to get this treaty negotiated. Traders and missionaries added their voices, telling the government that they were afraid they would be faced with violence if they were to venture into these Indigenous territories without a treaty being in place. (p. 98)

There is controversy about the true spirit and intent of Treaty 7. J. R. Miller (1996) has detailed accounts of elders who are descendants of those who were alive at the time of the signing of Treaty 7, and who have recollected those orally transmitted stories:

> Elders consistently report, for example, that they and previous generations comprehended the Treaty as a peace treaty, not land surrender, although the latter remains the position of the government of Canada. The Elders assert that the issue of land surrender was never mentioned to Indian leaders at the negotiations, nor were copies of the final formal treaty ever supplied to the leaders after the signing, which meant the treaty's final language was never communicated or translated by any formal process. (p. 281)

Here, the reader can appreciate the complexities and interpretations of the treaty. Furthermore, translators may or may not have translated exact words or concepts between the negotiating parties. Therefore, present-day misinterpretations are still discussed and negotiated relating to land claims. Monchalin (2016) added, in her review of Treaty 7,

> A most significant problem is that the treaty was supposed to be a peace treaty, primarily, and elders do not remember Indigenous negotiators ever having been told that it was about surrendering land, as is stipulated in the government's treaty document; all of the elders surveyed agree: their people never gave up their territories. (p. 99)

Problems and inconsistencies with interpretation, understanding, and different language systems encompassed within a specific worldview and context all point to differing views of treaty negotiations and enforcement. Regardless, the result is that Treaty 7 is enforced by what the government documents continue to uphold even at present.

I must mention a neighbouring tribe in the U.S., the Blackfeet Reservation or Southern Peigan (*Aamsskaapipiikani*). Prior to the 49th parallel being the international border that separates Canada and the U.S., four tribes lived within the Blackfoot Confederacy: Siksika; Kainaiwa; Piikani, which later became the northern and southern Peigan after Treaty 7 was signed in 1877; and Aamsskaapipiikani, which, by 1878, was in the U.S. LaPier (2017) stated,

“Prior to the establishment of the reservation, Blackfoot Confederacy territory included much of what is now Montana and the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in Canada” (p. 6). The reserves (or reservations) today do not reflect this original territory due to many factors, especially political oppression and economic marginalization.

Today, the people of the Kainai, Siksika, and Piikani Nations are a growing population surpassing the 20,000 mark. Red Crow’s legacy and the tranquil landscape of the Belly Buttes are encapsulated in the Aako’ka’tssin. The majestic Rocky Mountain skyline during the cold, brisk, and sometimes serene winters is breathtaking; the summer sun provides a picturesque figure, which compares to none. The flow of the creeks can be heard in the quiet of the night; some say you can hear the songs of the old people lingering in the air. The mix of the old and new can seemingly provide a positive future for Blackfoot people.

As a Blood Tribe woman and mother, I do see that the intelligence and bravery of Red Crow and his counterparts, who had pride in their people and culture, have allowed many to achieve and excel in both the Blackfoot and Euro-Canadian lifeworld. With great leaders from whom we can learn today, our tomorrows will be even more prosperous, with development in all aspects imaginable, and with a youthful population, prosperity and success can only follow.

The next section details the IRS, as this sets the reader up for a broader understanding of the chapters to follow.

Indian Residential Schools 1831–1996

Numerous documents have been written about the IRS and its intergenerational effects in all realms of Indian lives (Barman & Hare, 2007; Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; J. R. Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999), whether cultural, political, social, educational, physical, or socioeconomic. This section is not an expanded historical or sociocultural account. Rather, I share a condensed

timeline here and detail the history and intergenerational effects in other parts of this Wise Big Writing.

Residential schools' origins date as far back as the 1600s, to the early days of Christian missionary infiltrations into North America (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002, p. 3). One can observe from documents how colonization and assimilation had their origins in early years of contact (Alfred, 2009; Battiste, 2013; Daschuk, 2013; Deloria, 1973). Yet, there are those who state that respect did exist for the distinct nations already on this land. This changed due to the vast amount of land, which in Europeans minds could be used for economic growth and expansion, in addition to political influence, in shaping future development of this land mass.

Why were IRS built? And what was the policy behind their operation and longevity? To answer these questions, the reader must gain insight into the early years of oppressive policies. From the Nicholas Flood Davin Report of 1879, it is written, "The assumptions of his [Davin] era—that 'Indian culture' was a contradiction in terms. Indians were uncivilized, and the aim of education must be to destroy the Indian" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002, p. 3). Continuing with this process of destroying the Indian, Duncan Campbell Scott, who was the deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, vowed to rid Canada of "the Indian problem" (as cited in Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002, p. 3). As noted in Chapter 1, he stated, "Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question and no Indian Department" (as cited by Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002, p. 3). This quote makes it clear that after Confederation, the federal government continually enforced oppressive policy to "get rid of the Indian problem."

Between 1831 and 1996, there were at least 130 industrial, boarding, and residential schools and hostels operated across Canada (Reimer, Bombay, Ellsworth, Fryer, & Logan, 2010, p. 1). For over 150 years, Aboriginal children were removed from their families and forced to attend residential schools (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; J. R. Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999). The federal government operated these civilizing schools with the churches—Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian—thus the "Indian problem" would be dismantled by education—progressive education (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002).

This type of education was different than that of off-reserve, nonresidential schooling, and the funding was not equal (for either Indigenous or non-Indigenous students). The funding for nonresidential schooling was greater; on the flip side, however, there were many travesties within the IRS, which included hunger; non-Indian languages taught and spoken; non-Indian spirituality, which would introduce children to one of the four main religious denominations—Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, or Presbyterian; children separated from their parents and extended kin for months at a time; physical, sexual, cultural, emotional, and mental abuses; and the exploitation of children's labour and servitude (Bastien, 2004; Milloy, 1999).

In the next section, I discuss the IRS compensation as background for the reader and as part of participant questions for this research study.

Indian Residential Schools Compensation

Although it is difficult for anyone to determine an amount that is worthy and that satisfies the survivors' experiences and abuses at an IRS, the common experience payment,[13] along with

[13] Dissatisfied with the Canadian government's failure to uphold its promises to address the effects of residential schools, in 2006 the Assembly of First Nations (2019) initiated the largest class action lawsuit in Canada's history. The class action led to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), which included an initial fund of over $1.9 billion and the

other options for compensation such as the independent assessment process, have been in operation since 2006. The common experience payment is the first component of the settlement agreement that offers all IRS survivors a payment for the common experience of having attended these institutions. This component begins when a survivor fills out an application form and ends when that person either receives payment or receives a denial (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002, p. ix).

The second component of the settlement agreement, the independent assessment process, was established to compensate survivors who chose to come forward as victims of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools. This process is designed to resolve and compensate claims of sexual abuse, serious physical abuse, or other wrongful acts that caused serious psychological consequences. The adjudication secretariat deals with most claims through a hearing conducted by an adjudicator, with a promise to adjudicate abuse-related claims within a nine-month period (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002, p. x).

What sparked the IRS settlement agreement? Was the agreement an act towards reconciliation? Did Indigenous people have input? From whose perspective does one find the answers? In Chapter 4, I outline survivors' responses to these questions.

Monchalin (2016) has provided details to assist in answering the aforementioned questions. In her book *The Colonial Problem: An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada,* she stated, "In the 1990s, residential school survivors started legal challenges against the churches and governments for their crimes against children" (Monchalin, 2016, p. 133). Hence, from a reconciliatory perspective, Indigenous people were seeking this reconciliatory act

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creation of the Independent Assessment Process (IAP), designed to provide individualized compensation to survivors.

from their abuses and oppressors but had not yet coined the term *reconciliation*. How could these injustices have continued to occur throughout children's IRS attendance?

With this research project, I hope that reading these stories provokes many to continue to stand together and push for much-needed justice in numerous realms of Canadian society, especially for Indigenous people. These injustices and crimes against children have not been erased just because the IRS system has been shut down: There are intergenerational ramifications, and for generations not yet born, we must stop these injustices to ensure systemic reconciliation is reached. As Monchalin (2016) pointed out, "In 1995, the administrator of Port Alberni Indian Residential School, Arthur Henry Plint, was convicted of indecent assault against 18 of the school's students; the victims were from 6 to 13 years of age" (p. 133). Plint was sentenced to 11 years in prison for his rape of both young girls and boys (Monchalin, 2016, pp. 133–134).

> Testimony from a victim provides details of his horrific experiences with Plint:
>
> Arthur Henry Plint was the dorm supervisor for the younger boys, boys my age. My first week there, he woke me up in the middle of the night. He said to come into his office because there was an emergency call from my father. . . . He had a door from his office right into his bedroom. He took me there, dropped his robe and faced me, naked. . . . [After forced oral sex,] I started to get sick and tried to puke. He laughed and told me that if I puked on his bed, I'd get hurt. . . . After that, Plint raped me anally about once a month for the next three years. I finally got up my nerve to tell Mr. Butler what Plint was doing to me. . . . Butler gave me a severe strapping and called me a dirty, lying Indian. (as cited in Monchalin, 2016, p. 134)

The above testimony is but one child's story about his experiences at an IRS. How many others will tell or have told their story, similar to the one above? And how many children told those who were in a position to help them, but who instead punished them? How many children were punished for telling the truth? How many children's stories will it take for the government to believe them? Generally speaking, one cannot place a monetary value on the crimes against children, and sadly, many had already died and did not receive any type of redress while alive. Plainly speaking, Reimer et al. (2010) stated,

> The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (2007) is the common experience payment (CEP) process that offers a financial package to all former students of 137 recognized schools. . . . In the Settlement Agreement, "common experience" refers solely to attendance at a residential school. The CEP is compensation for the general loss of culture and language that resulted from a system that separated children from their families and communities and that operated under policies of civilization and assimilation. . . . Using a '10 plus 3' formula, each former student alive as of 30 May 2005 is eligible to receive $10,000 for the first year (or part thereof) of attendance at a residential school and an additional $3,000 for each subsequent year (or part thereof). (p. 5)

How could the federal government not put into place the IRS settlement agreement? It had to be addressed and acknowledged. Was it enough? Only time will tell.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

According to Frantz and Russell (1995, p. 424) truth from a Blackfoot context is *niitsii* (be so, be true) or *niita'p* (really; truly). Another word may be *Mokamitapsinni*—much depends on who is saying it, in what situation, and what they may be referring to. Reconciliation spoken

in Siksikaitsipowahsin translates to *kaamotaan*,[14] which is "to recover; to survive; to overcome" (A. Bruisedhead, personal communication, February 27, 2015). To say the words *truth* and *reconciliation* in Blackfoot changes the context and meaning of how one understands these concepts in English, and how Canadians and Siksikaitsitapi understand and use the words in English. If we were to speak of the truth, or to say something closely related to reconciliation (as there is no literal translation), the context would change due to circumstances and worldviews. Today, however, many new terms are being added to Siksikaitsipowahsin to capture what kaamotaan would mean to Blackfoot-speaking people as it does not literally translate from the English. Although such translation is complicated, Canadians nonetheless ought to strive to have an understanding of the differing languages spoken in present-day Canada, and the social context in which words are used.

This section highlights some of the goals of the TRC and is by no means a detailed description of the documents that encompass the TRC's work from 2008 to 2015. In its mandate, the TRC (n.d.) outlined its terms of reference and specific goals:

- Acknowledge residential school experiences, impacts, and consequences.
- Provide a holistic, culturally appropriate, and safe setting for former students, their families, and communities as they come forward to the commission.
- Witness, support, promote, and facilitate truth and reconciliation events at both the national and community levels.
- Promote awareness and public education of Canadians about the IRS system and its

[14] Hundreds of years ago, we did not use the term *reconciliation* as it is understood today. Long ago, if we were to survive, overcome, or recover, it would apply to the experience at that particular time period and would be dependent on the environment and elements. The concept and context today is very different: *kaamotaan* now relates to understanding and forging our way forward from the dark chapter of the abuses in IRS.

impacts.

- Identify sources and create as complete an historical record as possible of the IRS system and legacy. The record shall be preserved and made accessible to the public for future study and use.
- Produce and submit to the parties of the agreement a report with recommendations to the Government of Canada concerning the IRS system and experience including the history, purpose, operation, and supervision of the IRS system; the effect and consequences of IRS (including systemic harms, intergenerational consequences, and the impact on human dignity); and the ongoing legacy of the residential schools.
- Support commemoration of former IRS students and their families in accordance with the Commemoration Policy Directive. (Goals section, para. 1)

Generally speaking, the process was not an easy one, yet for the TRC to be looked upon by other Indigenous peoples around the world as a positive mechanism to be used to bridge the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, time, energy, and resources are needed. Ultimately, we hope, it will be worth the while. The TRC (2015) issued 94 calls to action, categorized as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Calls to Action From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Category	Number of calls to action
Child welfare	5
Education	7
Language and culture	5
Health	7
Justice	18
Canadian government and the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*	2
Royal proclamation and covenant of reconciliation	3
Settlement agreement parties and the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*	2
Equity for Aboriginal people in the legal system	3
National Council for Reconciliation	4
Professional development and training for public servants	1
Church apologies and reconciliation	1
Education for reconciliation	4
Youth programs	4
Museums and archives	4
Missing children and burial information	6
National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation	2
Commemoration	5
Media and reconciliation	3
Sports and reconciliation	5
Business and reconciliation	1
Newcomers to Canada	2

Note. Adapted from *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015. Copyright 2015 by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

From the list, the reader will notice 18 calls to action for justice. Why are there increased numbers for this particular institution in Canadian society? Education has seven calls to action, and health has seven. These are areas of concern because historical policies and circumstances

have made these realms challenging and outright oppressive for Indigenous peoples to move forward, equal to other Canadian citizens. The TRC's (2015) call to action 18 stated,

> We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health in Canada is a direct result of the previous Canadian government policies including residential schools, and to recognize and implement health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law, constitutional law, and under the Treaties. (p. 2)

In this specific call to action, one can clearly observe that the policies of the past have had a hand in the many social issues, lack of educational attainment, ill health and well-being, and community and family dysfunction that plague Indigenous groups. This disharmony and imbalance of Aboriginal people needs to be understood at all levels within Canadian society for all parties to move forward together on any level, and specifically if reconciliation is to be achieved.

Apology to Survivors of Indian Residential Schools, June 2008

Survivors in this study posed several questions as part of how they conceptualize the apology, such as "How do you apologize?" and "How do you make it meaningful to the recipient, and from the heart?" To exemplify one way to apology, Monchalin (2016) noted, "In 1986, the United Church of Canada apologized in general terms for the harm its missionary work had on Indigenous peoples" (p. 137). In 1998, the Right Reverend Bill Phipps offered the church's direct apology:

> To those individuals who were physically, sexually, and mentally abused as students of their Indian residential schools in which The United Church of Canada was involved, I offer you our most sincere apology. You did nothing wrong. You were and are victims of

> the evil acts that cannot under any circumstances be justified or excused. (as cited in Monchalin 2016, p. 137)

Again, from a different perspective on an apology, in 1993, Archbishop Michael Peers of the Anglican Church also expressed an apology to Indigenous leaders,

> I am sorry, more than I can say, that we were a part of a system which took your children from home and family. I am sorry, more than I can say, that we tried to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of your identity. I am sorry, more than I can say, that in our schools so many were abused physically, sexually, culturally, and emotionally. On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I present our apology. (as cited in Monchalin, 2016, p. 137)

Yet again, another perspective of an apology was given by the federal government on June 11, 2008. This was a monumental occurrence in Canadian history: an official, publicly broadcasted, all-encompassing federal government apology given to all survivors of IRS. It was given due to IRS injustices and crimes against children, and to the schools' role as one of the main drivers used to enforce, alter, and assimilate the Indian peoples of Canada to "civilize" them. Modifying and transforming young Indian children to learn the European way of life was the way to "get rid of the Indian problem."

The IRS settlement agreement and the apology are ways to reconcile with Indigenous people; however, were Indigenous people directly involved in these processes? Why did it take the Canadian government so long to accept the thousands of stories and testimonies from survivors before it acted? As a further example of reconciliatory acts, the Australian government demonstrated how a government can change the national agenda by mobilizing the media:

> On February 13, 2008, when it apologized to Indigenous peoples, a special television event was promoted, giant screens were set up where crowds could gather, and school children were assembled to witness something historic. Indigenous people from across the continent converged on Canberra, camped in front of the parliament and crowded the galleries. (Barta, 2008, p. 204)

These actions were similar to the prime minister of Canada's apology to Indigenous people, and the reasons why: injustices and crimes against children. Further similarities between the Canadian and Australian governments are noted in the following statement read by Kevin Rudd, the Australian prime minister:

> Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment . . . in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation's history. The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.
>
> We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians . . . for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country. . . . To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.
>
> We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation . . . based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility . . . where all Australians . . . are truly

> equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia. (as cited in Barta, 2008, pp. 204–205)

Reiterating Canada's apology about equal opportunities and as partners that will shape the next chapters, one might ask, has this change or reconciliation begun? Were these apologies to showcase good government actions with little substance, or were they genuine words that will take flight in years to come? Barta (2008) further stated,

> The words deserved to be received with acclamation, and they were. After some further remarks about the great length of the indigenous past and new hopes for the future, building on the "audacity of faith" of the day, the house and the crowds all round the country burst into spontaneous applause, embraces, tears. [Prime Minister] Rudd made a point of pledging immediate and sustained action in housing, health and early childhood education for deprived communities and—another first—invited the Leader of the Opposition to join a bi-partisan commission to oversee effective action. (p. 205)

However, and what may be more shocking from a news article about the apology (Wellington & Smith, 2019), an Aboriginal elder, Kathy Mills, after being asked about Australia making progress in achieving reconciliation between the Australian government and Indigenous peoples, stated, "Sadly, no" (There's an element we have to fix section, para. 1). Despite a majority of Australians pushing for reconciliation, "There's an element that is not surfacing that is holding Australian people back. The Australian people who have marched with us, demonstrated with us who have supported us all the way have been disappointed as well" (Mills, as cited in Wellington & Smith, 2019, There's an element we have to fix section, paras. 2–3).

Again, these acts and gestures alluding to reconciliation are quite a slow and cold process. Reconciliation is achieved by those who have done wrong (namely, governments) making amends with those who have been wronged; in these instances, the Indigenous peoples of both Canada and Australia. Connecting how Australian Indigenous peoples and Blackfoot Confederacy peoples have both been affected by colonialism and residential schooling encourages change in both countries and paves the way for evaluation to occur on an international scale. How have the Australian and Canadian governments made strides to reconcile with their Indigenous peoples, and can their actions be evaluated as positively meaningful? Comparing print documents assists in this evaluation of international systemic reconciliation (see Chapter 1 and Figure 2).

Why is systemic reconciliation a slow process? Why did it take years for Canada to acknowledge the wrongs of the IRS system, compensate the survivors, and apologize to the original inhabitants of Canada? As a genuine act towards reconciliation, Canada must partner with Indigenous people, treating them as equals in a nation-to-nation relationship, to raise awareness of, and continually work toward, reconciliatory movements. The evaluation of this act is when Indigenous people are part of the process and can then say, "We accept your apology because you have humbly, honourably, and consistently made strides towards acknowledging the wrongdoings," and we are then part of building the future path of Canada.

What is still shocking to me, as both an educator and member of an Indigenous tribe, is how many non-Indigenous people do not know of the IRS, the apology, or the TRC. Just as July 1 is remembered as a stepping stone for Canadians, June 11 ought to be a commemorative date. All Canadians should know and understand the intent of that day and its statements for bringing about truth and reconciliation for all Canadians, especially Indigenous peoples.

Conclusion

The spirit—the life of knowledge—is never-ending and will continue to live. Brant Castellano (2000) affirmed, "Sacred knowledge, enduring knowledge, is often described using fire as a metaphor" (p. 25). Moreover, she included an Anishnabe (Ojibway) elder's description of knowledge: "Sifting through the ashes to discover the embers from the sacred fire, which when it is rekindled brings the people back to their true purpose" (as cited in Brant Castellano, 2000, p. 25). As a consequence, we recognize and affirm that knowledge is there, enmeshed within the cultural realms of language, ceremony, values, and ancient teachings—there lying in balance with our environment, animals, the universe, and to and with each other.

Policy for Aboriginal peoples, whatever form it has taken—verbal agreement, military alliance, or legislation—is nonetheless an agreement between two distinct peoples, or groups. Interpretation, however, is where some might get it wrong; most times this interpretation has aided in the diminishing of Indian peoples' inherent rights, privileges, and freedoms.

For instance, Chamberlin (1997), in his essay "Culture and Anarchy in Indian Country," discussed Kemmis's comparison of the preambles to the constitutions of the state of Montana and the United States. Both begin with the words "We the people," and the preamble to the United States constitution then proceeds immediately to identify the specific purposes of government of which the constitution is to be the instrument. Montana's preamble, however, before getting down to the instrumental details, has this to say: "We the people of Montana, grateful to God for the quiet beauty of our state, the grandeur of its mountains, the vastness of its rolling plains" (as cited in Chamberlin, 1997, p. 13). It then goes about ordaining and establishing the constitution. Kemmis asked, "Why did the authors of the constitution pause to

express their gratitude for the Montana landscape?" (as cited in Chamberlin, 1997, p. 13). It would be possible

> to argue that they were simply being longwinded in a document which should be lean and concise. But it could also be argued that [they] said not a word more than they had to say, and that [what] they had to say . . . [was] that the way they felt about the place they inhabited was an important part of what they meant when they said "we the people." (Kemmis, as cited in Chamberlin, 1997, p. 13)

But now we must ask the question: Why? The preamble could potentially be related to land, ownership of that land, who is in control, and who has the authority to dictate how the land is operated or divided. Maybe more important than that relationship, though, is to ask why land is such an integral element for the continuity of a people? Chamberlin (1997) detailed further of the preambles of the Montana and United States constitutions:

> That is, it may be that they recognized that the political culture of a place cannot be something apart from the place itself . . . the community which develops and depends upon that culture is also, in a fundamental way, a part of that place; and the ways in which a people become public, the ways in which they constitute themselves as a people, are determined by deep convictions about that participation in place and the culture which is nourished by it. (p. 14)

All Indigenous people hold sacred the land and the relationship to the land. This focus is what makes them Indigenous. If the land is taken away, their way of life erodes; consequently, a way of life (kiipaitapiiyssinnooni) is eradicated—the Indian problem is no more.

I end the chapter with the following quote, as it may assist the reader in understanding the simplicity yet complexity of understanding Indigenous of traditional laws and how non-Indigenous policies have tried to undermine those laws, and in some cases, wipe them out:

> During the ceremony Charlie Fisher explained that traditional Native common law was comprised of only five words. The first was Respect, which meant respect for all things, for all people, for the Creator, and for yourself. The next two were Good and Bad. If you learned respect, you would then know what was bad and what was good. The last two were Good Life, for if you understood the law and followed it, a good life would be the result. (Ross, 2006, pp. 191–192)

Chapter 3: Methodology

> Tribal people's knowledge is based on thousands of years of observation and participatory relationship with the natural world, their places of settlement or seasonal migrations . . . nature as living energy is the foremost assumption and understanding of any Indigenous epistemology. It is understood as the source from which all life originates and from which all knowledge is born. *Ihtsipaitapiyopa* [that which gives life] is the *Siksikaitsitapi* term expressing this understanding. (Bastien, 2004, p. 39)

> His grandparents had a log house, too; he would stay with them. He used to sleep with his grandfather; he would hear him sing at night. [He sang me the song his grandfather sang at night; what an honour.] He doesn't know what kind of song—his [grandfather's] own power, or for war. (Survivor 7)

Siksikaitsitapi people have lived on this land since time immemorial. This Mokakyomahsinaksin, Wise Big Writing, provides elements of their perspectives relating to the IRS compensation package and the federal government's apology to Indigenous peoples across Canada. How have these specific occurrences affected their lives, and what can both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people learn from the stories framed within this project? What guidance do the survivors provide? Their recollections of their experiences, as well as how these events have influenced them and their families, address these questions on a deeper cultural understanding of Siksikaitsitapi from within their cultural lens.

Background and Context

Aligning this chapter with the Blackfoot worldview, Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin, I acknowledge and honour the direction of the west—evening time. It is also the virtue of respect, and the buffalo teachings. The Siksikaitsipowahsiistsi, Blackfoot words, for respect are *ini'yimm*—consider special, feel respect for—or *ini'stoto*—treat special, with kindness and respect (Frantz & Russell, 1995, p. 61). What I know is that which I have learned from the experiences I have had with my family and within my tribal affiliations, from within my formal and informal schooling, and in my individual lived experience connecting with the environment. I say Thank You to Creator—Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa—when I see an eagle soar, when I hear a child laugh, or when I kiss my children, and now my grandchildren, goodnight.

My cultural teachings, the ways of my ancestors, Kaaahsinnooniksi, and how they've transmitted knowledge, have guided my writing throughout this chapter. Our relationship(s) as Siksikaitsitapi to and with the others are synonymous with who we are—relationships are interchangeable and intangible. We know certain things because we live them; we have either seen or heard or felt specific phenomena in and from our surroundings with family, tribal connections, and environment—including animals, plants, water, air, and cosmos.

Our four concepts of who we are, physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual, are fundamental to Indigenous people. "First Nations cultures are based on beliefs about the Earth, animals and plants from time immemorial. . . . Lived experience is central to First Nations knowledge" (Crowshoe, 2005, p. 6). Writing this chapter has taken me aback, and as such I have become ever more reflective in my thinking, and in my word choice; it has enlightened me as an individual; it has affirmed my being as a woman in my culture. Accordingly, the question I am to answer relates to determining what factors one must take into consideration while conducting

research in Indigenous communities—and whether these factors are different than in non-Indigenous communities. If so, how are they different, and why?

This research was designed to use various sources of knowledge pertaining to survivors' stories of their experiences in an IRS, and how others may learn from this knowledge as together we move forward to improve Indigenous people's health and well-being in various aspects of societal interactions. I primarily relied upon qualitative data from semistructured interviews and a literature review of historical, educational, political, and medical aspects of the interactions with Indigenous people for some 500 years now.

Indigenous Methodology and Methodologies

During a graduate student session held at the University of Calgary, guest lecturer Margaret Kovach, author of the 2009 book *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, stated, "Indigenous methodologies are Indigenous knowledges—still practiced" (personal communication, March 24, 2017). At this lecture Kovach also posited, "Indigenous methodology involves relationships, which then is part of one's experience, and creates one's worldview or reality" (personal communication, March 24, 2017) from within that specific knowledge system and language. Hence, for Siksikaitsitapi people, the methodology and methodologies are foundational when researching and inquiring about the people, culture, and language from within the Siksikaitsitapi context. I illustrate this concept in Figure 6.

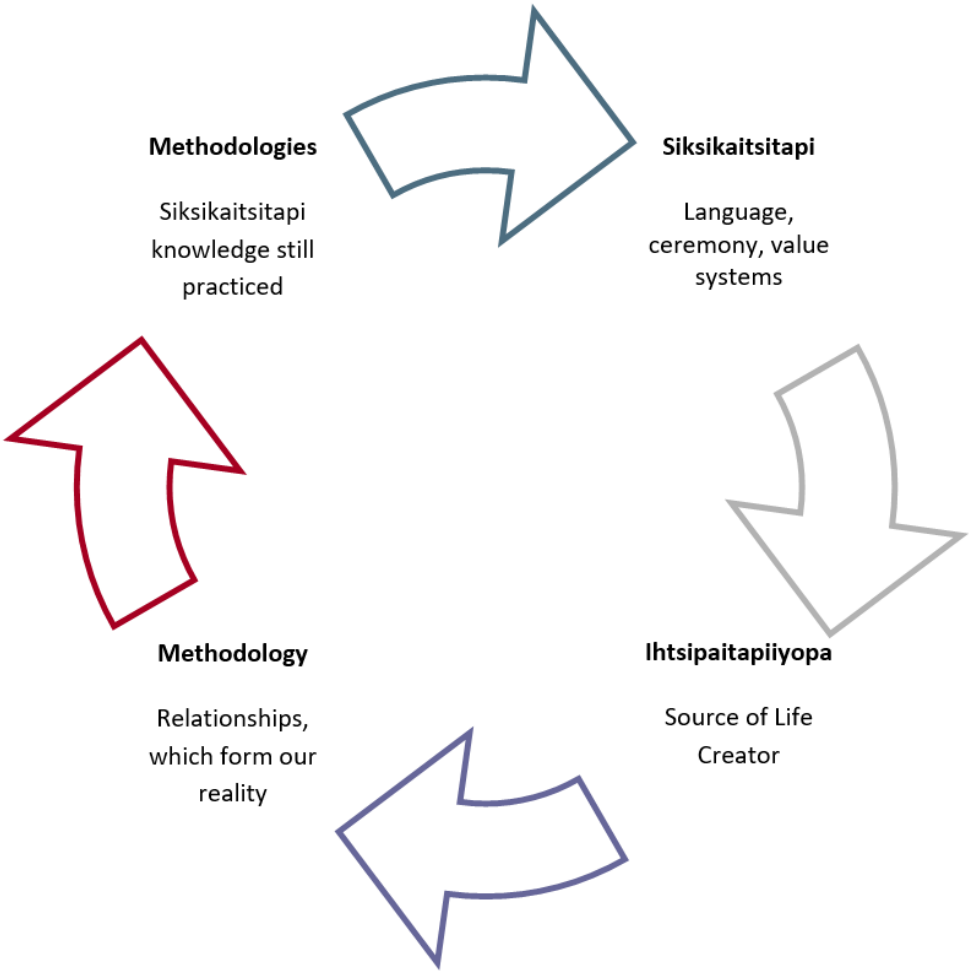

Figure 6. Siksikaitsitapi methodology—conceptual framework.

I have developed this framework to provide an understanding of the ebb and flow, or fluidity, of ceremony, connection, and knowledge, all encompassed from within Siksikaitsipowahsin. For this fluidity to occur, and to promote Siksikaitsitapi kiipaitapiiyssinnooni, the transfer of knowledge paves the way to have continuity and clarity for practicing, speaking, and understanding from within a Siksikaitsitapi context; to transmit the teachings; and to practice the ceremonies, for the relational responsibilities each Siksikaitsitapi member has, such that future generations can learn and then transfer the knowledge in turn, for generations to come (see Figure 6).

Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa provides the teachings for our way of life; our stories are streamed from this source of life. The language, Siksikaitsipowahsin, is experiential; thus, our methodology and knowledge are crucial when transferring our teachings to the next generation. The key lies in the cultural protocol and language transmission. The vehicle to speak the language and transmit the stories for kaamotaani, survival, is integral in keeping the language and traditions intact and truly from within a Siksikaitsitapi worldview and practice (Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin).

To demonstrate the infusion of Siksikaitsitapi worldview and practice, while conceptualizing ways of knowing, being and doing, Bastien (2004) shared this infusion,

> Traditional learning prepares children to survive in their world. Among *Siksikaitsitapi* survival has various meanings. In fact, most prayers are finished with the term "*Kaamotaani"* [surviving of all perils], the intentions for long life. It is also used when someone has successfully overcome grave challenges and imbalances. *Kaamotaani* can be translated literally as "survival" and is also used to mean "to be complete with a specific challenge in life, being receptive to the challenges and obstacles of life" . . . an understanding of the process of *coming to know* the connections of alliances that will enhance and nurture these intentions. . . . Education is teaching children the ways to survive as a people. (p. 127)

Reiterating this notion, Wilson (2010) shared Weber-Pillwax's definition of Indigenous methodologies as "those that permit and enable Indigenous researchers to be who they are while they are actively engaged as participants in the research process" (p. 9). Further, "this way of being not only creates new knowledge but transforms who researchers are and where they are

located" (Wilson, 2010, p. 9). Wilson also addressed relationality as it applies to relational accountability as a researcher:

> An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. . . . [Hence,] you are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research. (2010, p. 9)

Using the conceptual framework, one would know that one has abided by the natural and cultural laws when it feels good and when one knows it to be like that, *Aissksiniph.* This is further exemplified from within Siksikaitsitapi worldview:

> Language describes the relationships that create the identity of *Siksikaitsitapi*. It is in these relationships of responsibility that we become human beings in the *Siksikaitsitapi* way. These ways, values, roles, and responsibilities of *Siksikaitsitapi* are held in a sacred way within the language. (Bastien, 2004, pp. 130–131).

Indigenous Methodology Within Qualitative Research Methodologies

Drawing upon other Indigenous authors and researchers as my guide, in this chapter I reiterate what many have stated—that Indigenous worldviews, epistemologies, ontologies, axiology, and reflexivity since time immemorial are foundations for conducting research that practices and continues those specific worldviews. Research, as defined from within a

Siksikaitsitapi context, means transfer of knowledge or we have come to understand.[15] In essence, authors such as Little Bear (2002), L. T. Smith (1999), Bastien (2004), LaPier (2017), Wilson (2008), Kovach (2009), Graveline (1998), Archibald (2008), and others have regarded Indigenous knowledge as research and as the foundation that governs all aspects of our lives in relation to those around us—humans, animals, plants, air, water, and the cosmos. Our language creates the basis of our understandings of our relationships, as well as the interconnectedness of those relations. I am positioned in a place, as a graduate student, to have access to written documentation of Indigenous knowledge through print text and technological advancements such as the Internet. As well, I have connections to and relationships with my family, tribe, and animate and inanimate beings. This positioning aids in my validation, verification, and translation of the worldview of Blackfoot Confederacy people. This research process, or transfer of knowledge, has assisted in my own understanding of what research entails and the project at hand. Blackfoot people have been affected by foreign policy, wars, disease, the IRS system, the apology, and the IRS compensation, and our way forward has been influenced by the TRC (2015) calls to action.

What does this mean to Blackfoot people? Were the policies that have been adapted or created for the betterment of Blackfoot people? The basis for how this specific research study was undertaken was based on Siksikaitsitapi worldview, knowledge, and practice, and, for academic purposes, Siksikaitsitapi epistemologies, ontologies, and pedagogies. Kovach (2009) clarified, "Most significantly, tribal epistemologies are the centre of Indigenous methodologies,

[15] I am using Bastien's definition of *transfer* in the sense that research is like knowledge transfer within a Siksikaitsitapi worldview. Transfer: *Ai'pommaootsp*—we have gone through a transfer (Bastien, 2004, p. 229). Transfer: *Pommaksiistsi*—ceremonies that transfer knowledge.

and it is the epistemological framework that makes them distinct from Western qualitative approaches" (p. 25).

At this point, one may also discuss the decolonization process of social constructs, words and word usage, meanings, and how Siksikaitsitapi in particular, or Indigenous people in general, relate to one another. L T. Smith (1999) stated,

> Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. . . . [Rather,] the decolonization of research methods is about centring our concepts and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes. (p. 39)

Further, Porsanger (2004) wrote, "The process of decolonization requires new, critically evaluated methodologies and new, ethically and culturally acceptable approaches to the study of indigenous issues" (p. 111). Thus, this research project began as an examination into IRS that tells the stories of survivors from the Blackfoot Confederacy. As I continued with the learning, the understanding, the positioning, and the analyzing, it became apparent, or maybe it unfolded, as to how Siksikaitsitapi worldview would be at the centre of the methodology I used to help create an understanding that is positioned at the core of Siksikaitsitapi epistemologies and ontologies, leading to foundational pedagogies for reviving, maintaining, and sustaining our way of life—Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin.

A pathway for understanding the decolonization process while still meshed with qualitative research methodologies can be characterized as follows:

> The notion of quality is essential to the nature of things and refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing—its essence and ambience. . . . Qualitative research thus

> refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. (Berg, 2001, pp. 2–3)

One can align qualitative research methods with Siksikaitsitapi methodologies because both employ meanings, concepts, relationships, symbolism, descriptions, and connections, all defined from within a specific language system. A reminder to the readers at this point is that I am a researcher from within the Siksikaitsitapi worldview, and as such I "recognize that research cannot be value-free, and [I] try to ensure that values in the research process are acknowledged and made explicit" (Bryman & Bell, 2016, p. 17). Additionally, I have provided statements to inform the reader that as a researcher and as a member of Siksikaitsitapi, I "forewarn readers of [my] biases and assumptions and [I] explain how these may have influenced [my] findings" (Bryman & Bell, 2016, p. 18).

Complementary to Bryman and Bell (2016) and Berg (2001), Kovach (2009) detailed, "Denzin and Lincoln add to this understanding of qualitative research by saying: Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (p. 26). In conjunction, Kovach (2009) also accentuated the reflexivity of qualitative research (p. 26). Thus, as a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy and as a researcher, methodology (and life in general) is integral to knowing what is and comprehending how I come to understand knowledge, in relation to a Siksikaitsitapi worldview.

Positionality of Self as a Researcher and as a Siksikaitsitapi Member

While preparing to undertake this PhD program, I had not realized the impact this research would have on how I view and perceive the world around me. I was not pushed or pressured into this program; it was merely a choice I had made, though I did not make the

decision lightly. I simply did not know how the teachings and lessons from within this program and my personal learning journey would play such a vital role in my life. I realize now that it has changed me and my perspective, and it has aided my own growth and healing in numerous and abundant ways—and that flows outward to my family, my tribal relations, and my work. Now, as I walk forward knowing these teachings, I am better for it.

My undergraduate degree was completed in psychology in 2000; with it I was going to save the world. How naïve I was. After working on my reserve as a counsellor, I pursued another degree in sociology. I completed a Master of Arts in 2005. The life experience I acquired from the textbook theory, policy, and other research projects, in addition to my own research conducted with participants—which included both youth and elders from the Blood Tribe—ignited further ideas and revelations. I had acquired new knowledge, or maybe unmasked what I had already known inherently of the workings of our marvelous and mysterious lives as Blood Tribe people. I am grateful for my choice and know that I have been guided by Kaaahsinnooniksi on this academic path for some time now.

With that said, my journey has led me to where I am situated today. I have always been guided—I just have to allow my life to unravel as it may. I also realize that this history, and the policies that govern Indigenous people in Canada, affect me, and always have. As I researched many areas, in health, education, policy, cultural knowledge, history, and theories, I began to think how much I was affected and that certain outcomes were due to this untold Indigenous history, the altering and sometimes outlawing of traditional ways, and how the non-Indigenous oppressive policy continuously imposed upon us as Indigenous people impacts my life today.

This chapter gives voice for me, as a researcher and as a Siksikaitsitapi woman, in my position in Canadian society today.

Research Inquiry—Indigenous Worldview

Understanding the context of how specific communities within tribal systems conceive holistic well-being, health or ill health, the language system, and societal norms is integral to quality research methodologies and outcomes. Even as skilled and learned as she had become, Bastien (2004) described that her Western teachings were not sufficient for her to go back to her community to tackle and alter poverty and difference (p. 44). She pondered this inadequacy and was left with "the need to acquire more knowledge" (Bastien, 2004, p. 45). She therefore went to the roots of her Being as a *Niitsitapi*, and gained the Siksikaitsitapi way of Being. The answer(s) to any question, problem, or conflict lies in the heart, the sacred circle, of that specific worldview. Furthermore, "Aboriginal health issues should be framed in their social, cultural, and historical context" (Smylie, 2000, p. 3).

Reiterating and reaffirming the connection and relationship Indigenous people have to their culture, the "concept of health is intimately related to the relationships people participate in. . . . This concept of health resonates amongst many First Nation populations throughout Canada, and must be realized throughout research, policy, and delivery of social services" (Tom Iron, as cited in Hutchinson, 2006, p. 108). Most, if not all, research inquiries, in any field, start with "why" and "how." Why are statistics of diabetes, for example, higher in one community or geographical area than another? How could researchers understand this issue, and what method might work best? What is the first step to take in order for this research to be realized?

How has the Indigenous population in Canada survived genocide, oppression, marginalization, and apathy? We have survived; we have overcome—*Kaamotaani*:

> Stand on the back of the Turtle, our mother, and look at the land and wonder what it would have been like if Columbus would have been successful in his pursuit of India and

> avoided the eastern shore of this continent. Wipe your Indian hands on your Levi jeans, get into your Toyota pick-up. Throw in a tape of Mozart, Led Zeppelin or ceremonial Sioux songs: then throw back your head and laugh—you are a survivor of a colonized people. (George Longfish, as cited in Haig-Brown, 1995, p. 285)

The following subsections outline methods one may adopt while conducting research with Indigenous peoples, cultures, and ways of life.

Guidelines to conduct culturally sensitive and appropriate research. The following is a synthesis of the thinking of various scholars, authors, medical professionals, and Indigenous practitioners who have itemized and explained culturally appropriate and ethically sound methods to execute and document Indigenous methodologies. These methods respect, honour, and pose much benefit to Indigenous peoples as they move forward to a holistic and balanced life. An underlying natural law for Indigenous people is the virtue of respect. This is exemplified in *Research as Ceremony* (Wilson, 2008): "Evelyn Steinhauer quotes a personal communication with Cora Weber-Pillwax, who says, '[A] researcher must make sure that the three R's, Respect, Reciprocity and Relationality, are guiding the research'" (p. 58). The three R's give voice to specific cultural protocols and provide a pathway for researchers to do checks and balances during each stage of their research. Furthermore, Steinhauer (2001, as cited in Wilson, 2008) detailed,

> Respect is more than just saying please and thank you, and reciprocity is more than giving a gift. According to Cree Elders, showing respect of *kihceyihtowin* is a basic law of life. Respect regulates how we treat Mother Earth, the plants, the animals, and our brothers and sisters of all races. . . . Respect means you listen intently to others' ideas,

> that you do not insist that your idea prevails. By listening intently, you show honour, consider the well-being of others, and treat others with kindness and courtesy. (p. 58)

This section provides guidelines for researchers to conduct culturally appropriate research with and for Indigenous people. A framework to examine and use within one's scope of research can be found in *A Holistic Framework for Aboriginal Policy Research* (Kenny, 2004). Using this framework, Kenny (2004) discussed historical challenges and stated that Aboriginal people have had negative experiences with research due to the intrusion of outside "experts" going into their communities. Some obstacles have included lack of partnerships with communities, researchers in control of all aspects of the research, no meaningful participant involvement, lack of trust in researchers, failure to obtain informed consent, conflicting worldviews of researcher and participants, and research methods that are incompatible with Aboriginal culture.

Kenny's (2004) framework provides specific criteria that researchers need to adhere to for a culturally relevant and accepted research project:

- Have a knowledge base and recognition of various holistic approaches.
- Establish sound partnerships—grounded in empathetic relations that recognize and affirm shared interests.
- Undertake preliminary research about the community, people, history, and culture.
- Involve Aboriginal participants and communities such that "the rights of the community being investigated . . . actively reflect Native commentary and assessment throughout all phases of research" (Kenny, 2004, p. 11).
- Incorporate local experts with traditional knowledge, along with those who possess related academic background on topics of study, as an integral part of research initiatives.

- Gain trust. This criterion is paramount to effective research; “trust is crucial . . . and the researcher must have a deep sense of responsibility to uphold that trust in every way” (Kenny, 2004, p. 11).

Using the above criteria has affirmed and assisted my own path forward in both my academic and personal life.

Similarly, Atkinson (2002) provided a clear and concise guide for conducting Indigenous research. Researchers may wish to adhere to the following list of guidelines as a benchmark. By incorporating these principles and functions into their research, they would honour the worldviews of Indigenous peoples and do so ethically, responsibly, and sensitively:

- Having Aboriginal people themselves approve the research and the research methods;
- Knowing and considering the community, the diversity, and the unique nature that each individual brings to community;
- Understanding ways of relating and acting within community, including principles of reciprocity and responsibility;
- Ensuring research participants feel safe and are safe, including respecting issues of confidentiality;
- Establishing nonintrusive observation, or quietly aware watching;
- Fostering deep listening and hearing with more than the ears;
- Practicing reflective, nonjudgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard;
- Learning from the listening to craft a purposeful plan to act with actions informed by learning, wisdom, and acquired knowledge;
- Acting with fidelity in relationship to what has been heard, observed, and learned;
- Being aware of and connecting the logic of the mind and the feelings of the heart;

- Listening and observing the self as well as the relationship to others; and
- Acknowledging that the researcher brings to the research his or her subjective self. (Atkinson, 2002, p. 59)

Being reflective during each stage of one's research creates a deeper, clearer understanding, not only of the research questions and process, but also about one's own personal life and journey. How did my voice and identity affect the outcome of the questions formulated for this project? With continual reflection and reference to Siksikaitsitapi voices, my internal and external awareness helped to shape the social construct, which I respectfully share with the reader.

A challenge is to have individuals be learned, skilled, and trained in culturally sensitive research, particularly given that health, healing, and illness are socially and contextually specific to the language systems of Indigenous communities. To corroborate this point, L. T. Smith (1999) clarified,

> One of the problems . . . is that the methodologies and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ, all become significant acts which need to be considered carefully and critically before being applied. (p. 39)

Researchers must thus be cognizant of the Indigenous community as a whole—its history, culture, language, value systems, and health issues—in addition to the researchers' own culture and worldview. This concept is illustrated in the following quote:

> Culture involves the shared practices and experiences that we construct and express in our social relations and communication. Identity is not formed, then, in internal conceptions of the self, but in the adoption of changing representations and narratives that

we generate, experience, and express in our individual and social experience. (Valaskakis, 2000, p. 76)

To take health as an example, Aboriginal medicine is based on specific traditions. As a medical system, it accepts that the medicines, techniques, and knowledge of the past were effective because they have been time-tested, and, in some instances, shared with humans by the Creator (Waldram, Herring, & Young, 1996, p. 214). This way of perceiving health has been practiced by many Indigenous people (Bastien, 2004; Battiste, 2002a, 2002b; Graveline, 1998; Wilson, 2008).

Above all, researchers must also realize and respect that each community is different. As Graveline (2002) commented, "One of the things that I've found with research over the years is that research can only be successful if we are responding to what the communities are asking for instead of sticking to our own agenda" (p. 5).

Cultural safety—knowing oneself. One area originally explored by Maori people regarding how services were delivered to their people was *cultural safety*. As Oda and Rameka (2012) detailed, "The necessity of cultural safety is rooted from cultural diversity, and is based on awareness, understanding, acceptance, respect, and empowerment of individuals within their individual, family, or community cultural circumstance" (p. 109). Although their research pertained to nursing, the concepts are broadly applicable to other research areas. They posited that "to achieve cultural safety practice, . . . education is essential to promote self-reflection and awareness of cultural safety and practice" (Oda & Rameka, 2012, p. 109). In addition, they divided cultural safety practice progression into three steps: cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, and cultural safety, where culturally safe practice is defined and determined by

clients. Emphasis is placed on nurses (or in the current context, researchers) understanding the power dynamic between them and their Indigenous clients (Oda & Rameka, 2012, p. 109).

Oda and Rameka (2012) added that culturally safe practitioners "focus on self-awareness and the emphasis is on what attitudes and values . . . [they] bring to their own practice" (p. 109). In other words, those who can understand their own culture and the theory of power relations can be culturally safe in any situation. Cultural safety is good practice when conducting research. Hence, researchers need to be aware of themselves while they conduct research in an Indigenous community. They need to understand the dynamic of the process of retrieving specific knowledge in a community that may be foreign to them. With this approach, the practice and foundation of Indigenous oral tradition becomes a testament to the research project. Struthers (2001) detailed that oral knowledge brings a metaphysical presence and a natural, holistic, intuitive, and spiritual response to the research content (p. 126). By extension, a "qualitative research approach is more compatible with traditional ways of knowing, as it examines relationships and the whole" (Struthers, 2001, p. 126).

Knowing oneself is a reminder of the balance and harmony that Little Bear (2002), Bastien (2004), Battiste (2002a, 2002b), Alfred (2009), and Graveline (1998, 2002) brought to the surface as they discussed knowledge transfer and acquisition. Graveline (1998) shared, "That which the trees exhale, I inhale. That which I exhale, the tree inhales" (p. 57). As I thought deeply about this project and all that it encompassed—the research, the theory, the Blackfoot Confederacy stories, the survivor stories, and my own story and responsibility as both researcher and member—it became apparent "that everything is connected to everything else in one way or another. . . . No experience, no action is complete unto itself; everything is fundamentally

relational" (Johnson, 1997, pp. 189–190). I am a part of this project; I am part of the survivor stories; I am part of the knowledge systems; they are all part of me. What a marvelous revelation.

These relations, the relationality of who we are as part of everything else, are conveyed in the following passage:

> We are objects of culture—described, valued, and limited by its ideas about who we are and how we ought to think, feel, and behave. We are also subjects of culture, the ones who believe, who value, who expect, who feel, who use, who write and talk and think and dream. We are creators of culture, part of an endless stream of human experience—sensing, interpreting, choosing, shaping, making. We're the ones who make culture our own so that we often can't tell the point where it leaves off and we begin, or if that point exists at all. We are recipients of culture, socialized and enculturated. We are the ones who internalize ideas, taking them inside ourselves where they shape how we participate in social life and thereby make it happen. And this thing we make happen is at the same time the cultural force that shapes us as we happen. (Johnson, 1997, p. 155)

Based on the methodological framework I have articulated, this study was designed to inquire into IRS. Research questions were posed specifically to ask questions about the IRS compensation and apology, gaining the stories and perspectives of Blackfoot Confederacy survivors, as part of the crafting and design of an Indigenous (namely, Siksikaitsitapi) framework. Reiterating the above and relating it to this Wise Big Writing, "this thing we make happen is at the same time the cultural force that shapes us as we happen" (Johnson, 1997, p. 155).

Research Participants

The interviewing process started in May of 2012 and ended in the early part of September 2012. The participants for this research were recruited from the three tribes within traditional Blackfoot territory: Kainaiwa, Siksika, and Piikani Nations. All were survivors of an IRS. They were informed that participation was voluntary and signed an informed consent form (see Appendix A) in accordance with university policies on research with human subjects (University of Calgary, n.d.). The 16 participants (9 female and 7 male) were between 59 and 90 years of age. I explained that their names would be kept confidential, and only I would know their identities. I was humbled and honoured to have the stories of these 16 IRS survivors.

I am a member of the Blood Tribe, or Kainaiwa, and the interviews presented an opportunity for me to increase my awareness and understanding of Siksikaitsitapi worldview, culture, language, and relations, specifically in relation to the topic at hand, in addition to documenting some of the knowledge the survivors had. From their stories, I have increased my understanding of how things were before,[16] during, and after residential schools.

The participants were not randomly selected; they were chosen through convenience and snowball sampling for their experience and attendance at an IRS in Canada. Convenience sampling, also referred to as accidental or availability sampling, relies on the availability of subjects—those who are close at hand or easily accessible (Berg, 2001, p. 32). It is sometimes the best way to locate subjects with certain attributes or characteristics necessary in a study (Berg, 2001, p. 33)—in this case, those possessing cultural knowledge. The convenience sampling also reflects an important feature of reserve life. On the reserve, personal relations and

[16] Residential schools were already in existence when many of the elders interviewed were infants; however, many of their parents and grandparents were still alive and were able to transmit specific cultural knowledge to these elders without the influence of the schools or the technology (media, computers, TV) that affect young people today.

face-to-face communication are still important. Reserve residents are less concerned with one's official position than with who they know and which family one is from.

Snowball sampling can also be referred to as accidental sampling (Babbie & Roberts, 2018, p. 150); it involves research participants spreading word of the study through their network. This method is utilized when the members of a "special population are difficult to locate" (Babbie & Roberts, 2018, p. 150). Not many survivors will come forward voluntarily to share their story. The aforementioned techniques were appropriate for this research due to the topic to be researched and the geographical area of this specific population. The survivors' recollections, either through lived experience or from communication with earlier generations, were a key reason they were selected.

After reaching prospective participants through convenience and snowball sampling, survivors were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria. First, they were all members of the Blackfoot Confederacy—Siksikaitsitapi—who could describe how IRS affected them and/or their culture, how the people and culture changed after the imposition of residential schools, and how they themselves view the people and culture today as a result of the IRS era. There was no motivation to have an equal representation of males and females. Participants had a variety of beliefs in relation to cultural knowledge and religious affiliation, and, due to their various age categories, they potentially would assist in understanding different eras of an IRS. They did not have to hold any certificate or degree because traditionally, and as noted in some academic publications, elders hold specific/sacred knowledge, as learned from their elders (Council on Aboriginal Initiatives, 2012, pp. 9–10).

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions of the Research

Given the topic at hand, I chose a small sample size, but this design choice limits the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the nature of my method and the characteristics of my sample limit future replication of this study. As a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy, I knew individuals within the communities who acted as gatekeepers to inform me of survivors who met the criteria I was seeking; however, this level of access may not be the case for other researchers when desiring to gain knowledge about IRS, survivors, or the aftermath. Given the unique qualities I already had as a member and the experience I gained while writing my master's thesis, this access may have been a taken-for-granted notion on my part; the lifeworld that I am a part of. Other researchers may, for example, be challenged with seeking such a sample.

Undertaking qualitative research using stories as the foundation for a specific method and methodology, along with an analysis based in an Indigenous framework, is not a typical or traditional academic method. My position as both researcher and member, and the cultural lens I see from, uniquely situated me with an advantage to gain access to this population, gather data, and formulate a Wise Big Writing. As I state that, I am mindful of my own bias and the lifeworld I participate in, again as both researcher and member, and these considerations too may have limited this study.

Given the geographical area the Siksikaitsitapi occupy, and the number of questions that formulated each conversation with the survivors, I delimited the scope of the research to address and evaluate the IRS compensation package and the federal government's apology to survivors. Furthermore, the participants were selected based on specific criteria: They attended an IRS, they

were willing to share their story, and they were members of the Blackfoot Confederacy. These delimitations helped to contain the scope of the research.

Finally, some assumptions underpinned this research. The first was my assumption that survivors would be uniquely qualified to comment on this specific topic. In addition, I assumed that they would remember accurately what happened to them and that their recollections would be truthful.

Confidentiality and Ethics

All participants were made aware of the informed consent form (see Appendix A) and were asked to voice any concerns or questions they may have had before the interview started. If they did have questions, they were answered in advance of the actual interview. It is still not common in the life of Siksikaitsitapi that a researcher conducts interviews or seeks knowledge about the culture, even a researcher who is part of the culture. The survivors did not mind if their names were used in the final paper; however, I stressed that I would keep all names confidential. I informed them that the consent form was a part of the procedures mandated by the University of Calgary's (n.d.) human research ethics guidelines. It is worth noting that these measures were necessary to meet the university's ethical guidelines for research; they replace the kind of face-to-face or personal knowledge that is common on First Nations reserves. In such communities, it is important to know who people are in order to judge what they know.

In some instances, I read the informed consent form aloud, and the survivors asked questions if they did not understand the meaning of a word or term. They were quite open to this conversation as we moved forward. Using conversation within the interview process is part of Indigenous practices and to me was an aspect of ethical interviewing. Kovach (2010) stated, "Indigenous knowledges comprise a specific way of knowing based on oral tradition of sharing

knowledge . . . [that] Indigenous researchers, the world over, identify as storytelling, yarning, talk story, re-storying, re-membering" (p. 40).

As both a community member and a researcher, I was obliged to proceed ethically if a survivor knew one or more of my family members, or vice versa. It was not possible to remain anonymous or keep all aspects of a conversation truly confidential. I therefore blended my cultural knowledge and ethical guidelines; they both mirrored the genuine concern and practice of respectful and culturally safe dialogue to occur between the survivor and the researcher. All survivors were willing to participate. They obliged to answer to each question asked, they welcomed me into their living rooms and kitchens, and that is how one knows there was affinity and kinship. Aistomatoominniki, the "coming to know one's heart and mind" was at play, when one is grounded in and attuned with traditional cultural knowledge. The research felt natural. It felt as though the ancestors guided these interactions, and as the survivors and I said our farewells, we left each other with a smile.

I am connecting community and people. The profile of the Blackfoot Confederacy within this Wise Big Writing depicts a factual history and genuine understanding of Siksikaitsitapi people, culture, and worldview. Through this work, readers will have a clearer picture of who Siksikaitsitapi people are and how these events impacted their lives for several generations in a harmful way. Moreover, readers will also understand how the IRS era continues to have long-lasting generational effects that point to the urgency of facilitating systemic reconciliation and change. The connection of community and people must be realized if impactful, positive, and collective healing is to be had for Canadians and Indigenous people alike.

Data storage and handling. All collected data were stored in a secure locked box. I listened to and transcribed the audio recordings: No other person had access to the data or

knowledge of where they were stored. As the owner of the data collected, and as part of my membership in Siksikaitsitapi worldview, I honour what I have gathered, as it has assisted in knowledge production within this research project. The data will be stored for five years from the final submission of the dissertation, after which they will be deleted.

Minimizing harms and maximizing benefits. I followed the University of Calgary's (n.d.) human research ethics guidelines, in addition to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement's* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2012) chapter on research involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada. The questions I asked were not in any way created to ask directly or indirectly about any harm the survivors experienced in an IRS. Rather, the questions were geared towards further inquiry of the IRS compensation and apology. However, once the interviews/conversations started, participants not only provided answers to the intended questions, through their stories, but also detailed other areas of the Blackfoot culture and worldview.

Being a First Nations researcher, and directly affiliated with the Blackfoot Confederacy, I understood the protocol of approaching these individuals within the Siksikaitsitapi context. The answers to some questions provided explicit details of some of the abuses these survivors endured as children in an IRS. Even during those specific times, however, the harm was mitigated by having their story shared and heard, as the survivor and I sat together, and as we continued our trustful and respectful conversation.

Procedure

Setting. The majority of the interviews took place in the survivors' homes, with four exceptions: two were held in the survivors' office setting, one was in a restaurant of the

survivor's choosing, and one survivor came to my home. I travelled to the three First Nations reserves to conduct most of the interviews. Due to where I resided at the time the field research was conducted and completed, I was not far away from approximately one third of the survivors' residences.

Due to the three Nations being within Blackfoot territory, I was familiar with the geography of each reserve. In some instances, participants provided me directions to their home. At three homes, I was able to interview both the husband and wife—as both were survivors of an IRS—such that six interviews were conducted with married couples. A few participants chose to be interviewed at their workplace. These participants agreed to join the project due to my mother's work relation with them several years prior. My mother had assisted me with some contacts on the Piikani Nation, and as a result, I was able to interview five survivors there. After contacting my mother's former colleagues, I was invited to an elders' meeting on the Piikani Nation. I attended that meeting, shared my intention, and received positive feedback from other attendees. I was given the names and phone numbers to contact additional prospective participants, and in turn, I was able to conduct three more interviews.

I used one other informant to contact survivors from Siksika Nation, combined with snowball sampling and convenience sampling. I interviewed the majority of survivors from Siksika Nation. The remainder of the participants were from Kainai Nation, and I was already acquainted with them as knowledge keepers and as survivors of an IRS.

Siksikaitsitapi—Blackfoot protocol. The interviews were conducted with cultural sensitivity at the forefront, and Siksikaitsitapi protocol was followed; hence, respect guided my method and conversation. There were cultural dimensions relating to approach, time, and behaviour. When approaching elders for something (e.g., advice, guidance), one does not just

come out and ask bluntly. One must ask in a manner that respects the person and culture. I offered tobacco as my initial gesture of gratitude and respect. As well, I provided gifts in the form of household items and/or blankets.

Most of the survivors offered tea, coffee, or snacks. I had lunch with one survivor at a restaurant of her choosing. One of the female survivors made bannock during our conversation—I did not mind, and she was comfortable with checking her bannock during the interview. Another survivor gifted me with earrings and perfume. She was also very pleased that I was pursuing a PhD. These gestures are symbolic of traditional Siksikaitsitapi values—sharing and generosity—that depict good relationships within the culture, in addition to acts of reciprocity as part of sacred ways.

I informed participants that I would audio record the interview, as this would allow our time together to flow with minimal interruptions. I did not want to stop and write, stop and write. That approach would not have been productive or meaningful, and would have interfered with the personal connection with, and respect for, the interviewee. All participants agreed to be recorded. Due to tribal affiliations and relations, before starting the interviews, we visited or conversed about our families and other such topics.

Translations. Parts of each survivor story, approximately 40 percent, were spoken in Siksikaitsipowahsin. Fluency in the Blackfoot language today is not as common as it was 40 or 50 years ago. When Blackfoot was spoken, I understood, but I also asked some family members to translate, if it was possible, from Blackfoot to English, and vice versa. In addition to translation, some of the Blackfoot terminology needed to be explained in detail, so as to grasp the contextual meaning and use of certain words or phrases. I used Frantz and Russell's (1995) *Blackfoot Dictionary of Stems, Roots, and Affixes* for both translation and writing, in addition to

Bastien's (2004) *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi*. An advantage for me as a Blackfoot researcher was how I came to understand the words when spoken in Blackfoot. I understood the context; if I did not understand a word, I asked for clarification.

Conversational method. As I would start asking the questions, I often realized the participants and I were carrying out a conversation as they were sharing their story. It was not a standard *interview* process; rather, it was comfortable and familiar. This conversational method "is of significance to Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition. . . . It is relational at its core" (Kovach, 2010, p. 40). Kovach (2010) further detailed, "The conversational method aligns with an Indigenous worldview that honours orality as means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition" (p. 42). As is the ancient practice within Siksikaitsitapi worldview, this form of oral tradition was foundational to this research project. It guided the process of gaining knowledge from survivors as to their experience at an IRS, and as I was and am both researcher and member, I was and am witness to this transmitted knowledge as positioned within a relational Siksikaitsitapi paradigm.

> Continuing with the notion of conversations as storytelling, Kovach (2010) recounted: Thomas (2005) utilized a storytelling methodology in her graduate research on the experiences of individuals who attended Kuper Island Residential School. In reflecting why she chose stories as a method for her research, she reminisces on the stories her grandmothers passed along to her, how these stories shaped Thomas's core being, and that such stories were "cultural, traditional, educational, spiritual, and political." (p. 43)

In her article, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” Kovach (2010) detailed elements of the conversational method found within Western qualitative research. However, when used in an Indigenous framework, conversational method evokes several distinctive characteristics:

1. It is linked to a particular tribal epistemology (or knowledge) and situated within an Indigenous paradigm (for this project, the Siksikaitsitapi epistemology);
2. It is relational;
3. It is purposeful (most often involving a decolonizing aim);
4. It involves a particular protocol (e.g., gifting of tobacco), as determined by the epistemology and/or place;
5. It involves an informality and flexibility;
6. It is collaborative and dialogic; and
7. It is reflexive. (Kovach, 2010, p. 43)

Summarizing the above, and aligning with my tribal affiliation to Siksikaitsitapi, “Knowing why we are carrying out research—our motive—has the potential to take us to places that involve both the head and heart. . . . We need to know our own research story to be accountable to self and community” (Kovach, 2009, p. 120). Further, “conducting research on or about Native peoples in a culturally sensitive manner can be extremely rewarding to the researcher and participants, especially if done by another Native” (Struthers, 2001, p. 126). This method affirms that the reward is reciprocal, sacred, relational, respectful, and grounded in the Siksikaitsitapi paradigm (as reflected in Figure 6, Siksikaitsitapi methodology—conceptual framework).

Each participant was familiarized with the topic and given a short summary as to why specific issues and aspects of the culture were being explored. I had a set of interview questions for the survivors (see Appendix B); however, different words at times were used to simplify the questions in order for some to understand. As such, although I followed the interview guide to a degree, I let the conversation unfold and respected how the survivors wanted to share their story. I was guided by the participants' answers, keying into how eager (or not) they were when specific questions arose. Practicing patience, and guided by their cues (e.g., body language, tone, silence, openness, facial gestures), I often followed their lead. As Atkinson (2002) stated, "The researcher, an Aboriginal woman working within her community, understands responsibility of her actions with fidelity and ethical clarity to meet Aboriginal community needs in the research she is undertaking" (p. 19). She also described the principles and functions of *dadirri*, which made sense to me as they are similar to Siksikaitsitapi teachings. Dadirri includes

> the knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to community; ways of relating and acting within community; a non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching; a deep listening and hearing with more than the ears; a reflective non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard. (Atkinson, 2002, p. 19)

Interview questions. The survivors were asked approximately 11 questions (see Appendix B), depending on what they were willing to share, how one question related to another, and how the conversation was moving along. Questions 5 and 8 were omitted due to time constraints but may be revisited at a later time, in a different study. The questions were loosely followed; participants would share stories, and if they had already given answers to questions not

yet asked, I did not repeat those questions. Furthermore, as some began to share their story, they did just that: They shared their story and stated, “That’s it.”

I devised the questions not only to give voice to survivors’ stories, but also to provide a pathway for learning from, and about, survivors’ ways of knowing and being during their attendance at an IRS and in their life thereafter. I asked specific questions about the compensation package and the apology for insight into these two key themes. Other questions paved the way for background information relating to their experiences, and how I might further analyze their specific responses. Utilizing the Siksikaitsitapi methodology ensured this analysis was respectful, was honouring, and gave voice from within their Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin lens.

In general, this research is not common, and thus, their stories shed light on how Siksikaitsitapi survivors remember, feel, and relate to others, and the larger society, as a result of their attendance. Many participants were comfortable with me as the researcher, and I did not sense tension or uneasiness during the conversations. In fact, many of the men shared grave experiences of their attendance at an IRS. Although my questions did not ask specifically whether participants had experienced any types of abuse, they shared openly if there had been abuse. Again, I was honoured and felt privileged to hear their stories.

In one conversation, a male survivor shared his traumatic experience of sexual abuse over a prolonged period of time during his attendance at an IRS. I felt the tears roll down my cheeks as he was remembering, and we shared that moment together—in silence, in a sacred manner. I will never forget that moment. He gave me, without knowing, much gratitude and strength to carry on with my endeavour. It is through these stories that I can now say how truly grateful I am, and how this journey, for me, has opened the door to heal my own soul wounds.

One of the other male survivors sang an ancient song as he remembered his time with his grandfather prior to attending an IRS. He sang me that song as we conducted the interview in his living room. My heart was filled with joy and gratitude. What a blessing for me to have been in contact with these individuals. In the context of this project, I use the term *survivor*, as they have survived; however, they are also the teachers, healers, knowledge keepers—for me, us, and Siksikaitsitapi practice.

Transcription methods. Almost all qualitative studies involve some degree of transcription—the data may be tape-recorded interviews, recordings of focus groups, video recordings, or handwritten field notes. For this research, I relied upon the tape-recorded interviews and the field notes I detailed after the interviews. As I drove away from my conversations, I spoke into the recorder and shared my thoughts, feelings, and gratitude. Most often I would be teary-eyed, as my heart and my spirit would be in awe to have had such an amazing interaction with knowledge keepers.

Each interview was transcribed onto computer. Transcription lasted anywhere from a few hours up to 10 hours, depending on whether the survivor had spoken Blackfoot and the length of the story. Extracting data from the stories, opinions, and perspectives of the participants was not an easy task. It required me to become the reflective nonjudgmental other who took into consideration what was being seen and heard, equally.

Conclusion

Siksikaitsitapi worldview (Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin) encompasses all reality for its members. Throughout this project, it was made clear how language, Siksikaitsipowahsin, is infused in the daily lives of Siksikaitsitapi. Despite the oppression, direct and indirect, and the policies which have hindered, clouded, and marginalized its members, the Siksikaitsitapi people

remain resilient and grounded. They remain determined to protect their language, which guides, protects, and reinforces their epistemologies, ontologies, pedagogies, relations, relationships, relationality, and cultural continuity. I hope it does so for generations to come.

Chapter 4: Survivor Stories

> Connectedness positions individuals in sets of relationships with other people and with the environment. Many indigenous creation stories link people through genealogy to the land, to stars and other places in the universe, to birds and fish, animals, insects and plants. To be connected is to be whole. (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 148)

> When I came into this world, as a full-blooded Blackfoot female, I learned prayer (Survivor 2).

In this chapter, the direction I acknowledge is the north and the season is winter—for rest. We look to elders for guidance, and we learn love from within our cultural teachings and connections. We are fortunate to have the eagle for this direction, for the eagle carries our prayers to the Creator. Our prayers end with *Misommipaitapiiyssin*—a long life.

This chapter provides elements from survivor stories. In addition, I emphasize specific details that include ceremony, family, language, and abuse. Many Indigenous authors and researchers are decolonizing their work and methodologies, their analyses and frameworks, and how they exemplify individual perspectives via storytelling or other methods. As both a researcher and a Blackfoot member, I used an Indigenous method and methodology. I infused methodologies that are complementary to Siksikaitsitapi ways of knowing, conversation, and oral tradition as part of the research process, in addition to using Siksikaitsipowahsiistsi (Blackfoot words) where emphasis was needed for translation or conceptualization. I want to clarify that I am not throwing out Western methodologies or ways of knowing or being. Yet as L. T. Smith (1999) asserted,

> [Decolonization] does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centring our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes. (p. 39)

The key phrase in L. T. Smith's (1999) quote is "from our own perspectives and for our own purposes." In 2005 I wrote, "When one asks an elder for information, the response given is often in the form of a story and one has to read between the lines of the story for an answer" (Fox, 2005, p. 125) or teaching to then take away. Some survivors responded in great detail, which is no surprise given that Blackfoot people learn from and through storytelling. As such, for some questions, I have inserted extensive quotes that may add to readers' understanding of each survivor, offer a snapshot of his or her experience in an IRS, and clarify the aftermath. My intention here is to assist in readers' reflexivity,[17] as individuals and as members of Canadian society, on what the survivors have lived with every day of their lives since leaving an IRS.

I present the stories from survivors chronologically following the Siksikaitsitapi process of transferring knowledge to others, to then learn from, or affirm, or teach, or respect, or honour, or love from within Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin (Blackfoot way of life). Presenting their quotes verbatim contributes to a snapshot of the two lifeworlds of Indigenous people and shows how language can be learned and remembered at a tender age. I have translated the Blackfoot words

[17] According to Johnson (2000), "Reflexivity is the process of referring back to oneself, and it is applied to both theory and to people. As applied to people, reflexivity refers to the human ability to think of and refer to ourselves as if we were someone else. The statement, 'I like myself,' for example, is reflexive because 'I' is both the subject of the verb and its object. Reflexivity is a crucial human ability that, according to symbolic interactionism, makes possible the development of the self and the ability to participate in social life in relation to others" (pp. 255–256).

into English where applicable. I use S-1 to S-16 to refer to the survivors. If a survivor's number is not included under a question, it is because that survivor did not answer the question directly.

Answers to Question 1

Question 1 was, "Has attendance at an Indian Residential School affected your life? In what way?" For many of the survivors, their answer was "yes." The quotations below convey their direct answers:

> S-1: Yes, with discipline. Once we left, we had difficulty with parenting. I didn't show affection; we didn't know how to show love.
>
> S-2: To a certain point, in the way of low self-esteem: never considered myself to be really who I am. Behind a mask, hurtful—the real me is completely different. I feel that I'm not good enough. I still have fear in me. A big factor was fear; I was damaged.
>
> S-3: I was able to further my education. The experience was positive. . . . They are particular about how to clean. So, my skills are very disciplined. I feel I'm too detailed. Emotionally, yes, it was always hard. At home, yes, we were disciplined, but not in a harsh way. My mom might slap my hand, but she told me why certain things were not allowed. Whereas in school, if you did something wrong, we got strapped, or stand in the corner or in the hall. It was degrading.
>
> S-4: We usually get punished; get beaten up if you don't know the language [English], the words. I will say, it affected me, but I'm still Native. One thing we stress all along, everybody that went to IRS, they know discipline.
>
> S-5: We were taught discipline, religion and . . . how it affected me [long pause], like right now I can't even think about it. I was scared all the time. So now, when I do something, even now I think, "Am I going to get into trouble?"

S-6: Yes and no. I had a good home; my parents went to IRS. As far as discipline wise, we had at home, disciplinary parents. We respected them. With me going to IRS, I had to adjust. The part that's hard, going to the school on Sunday night, I cried. And you go back home Friday. I didn't find it very fun. I was young as far as religious beliefs; my parents taught us the religion also.

S-7: St. Paul's school changed my brother's life! From better to worse; still bothers me. When I see that school, memories come back—I seen and heard physical abuse (but also sexual abuse). I was there for about a year, and I jumped off the third story. I broke my hip, and it's still out of place today. There's no TV, cell phones. The night before I jumped off, I moved to junior boys' dormitory. We were looking out the windows, no screen or window pane. One of my friends, [D], had died in 1948. He said, "Who's gonna be the first one to jump off there?" I said, "I'll be the first one!" It must have stayed in my head. Later, that night, I walked to the door, I walked to that window; I was sleep walking. One of my friends, [E], tried to grab me with my nightgown, but I already went down. I fell in the bush; otherwise I would have broke every bone. A man, [F], a cleaner who worked there, they knew someone jumped out. They notified the adults/supervisors. I was crying and they brought me to bathroom; broke all teeth; water was just red/blood. I went to first aid room. Bad memories and experiences. Kids were beaten by supervisor, Miss [P]. She slapped children with keys . . . you were controlled so much. Punished somehow . . . scrub floors, other chores. They hired the worst people to work there.

S-8: When I was to go to school, I just cried. If I didn't go, they will jail my father. My younger sister didn't go to school yet, she was a bit younger. They said if my younger sister went, I would go. My sister and I, we were just holding each other; afraid of the

unknown. I felt alone; since my grandmother left. We only got to go home once a year, summer holidays. I don't remember much til later on. I forget. . . . I was getting sick, and I was in a big room; my younger sister would sneak up to see me. We had four meals; porridge was burned. The only food I liked was mac 'n' cheese. I enjoyed it so much that I tried to make it in my adult life but couldn't. At nights I would sleep in sweat due to my illness; I would ask for spare pajamas but didn't get any. I was developing TB but they would not tend to me. I was alone in that room so much of the time.

S-9: Mostly, all of it we didn't put ourselves in there, we were put in there. That's why it was hard for us. We didn't know the language, the English language. We just know our language. That's why it was hard on us, learning the White people's language. The way I felt, I didn't fit in there, sometimes I think something is missing. I wasn't free to do anything. I couldn't talk my language. You'd get punished for speaking it. They are very cruel. I thought they were going to teach us these things, instead they beating us black and blue. I had to fight my way around to get by. The young ones come to me to defend. I don't know how many times I got a whipping for that. I was trying to explain what the strap was made from—the old combines, the leather that is used for the wheels to go around. I feel good after I talk about residential school. You can't forget it; it's there in you. But you can help yourself by talking about it.

S-10: Well, like I keep telling people, when I went into residential school, I was crying. When I left, I was crying. So, my life was like that, crying every day. In the residential school when I was sent in there, I was taught to swear, to abuse children, to pick on other children, to laugh at and call down other children. And ah, so we were picked on, my brothers and sisters, my uncle . . . oh Jesus, he went through hell and back. I cried every

day, and I could see my house not far from residential school. I'd sit there and look out the window—there it is. When I left, I couldn't read; I couldn't speak proper English until I was about 27 years old.

S-11: My mom had passed away. So, I was about five or six when I was taken to the IRS. I was at the school for about 11 years. I worked half a day, in school half a day. It wasn't good. I got angry cause my mother passed early. I was an orphan. The older ones did things that weren't good. They whip me, the belt like from those machineries; they use the leather strap on little kids. I was lonely most of the time I was at the IRS. Once in a while chief and council come into our dining room and check on our food. . . . That's the only time we have a good meal. Cause they know chief and council is coming. Check over our food, what are you grumpy about. . . . Then we couldn't say anything. We couldn't say anything, or we will get punished.

S-12: Oh, big time because, it's affected every part of my life. Because my parents were not allowed to raise me according to our traditions, everything I learned was pretty much boarding school. Then you go to residential school, you always protect yourself, so you learn to lie, to be stingy, you learn to be conniving, all these things you learn to survive. You learn to steal; you learn bad things that you wouldn't do at home. At the school, because we were hungry, we steal bread from friends. Some kids would have more than others; someone would steal your toilet paper. Gee, somebody stole my toilet paper. We only got three squares . . . little 5- to 6-year-olds, only having little amounts for the washroom. Some would have diaper rash, some of them got inflamed, nuns would get mad at them for not cleaning themselves; but how can you with three pieces of paper? I

mean we were degraded. You know the *fear* and the *loneliness* are the two things I remember the most.

S-13: At residential school, you know, when the bell rings, and you go running inside. I was running inside, and one girl, she was trying to beat me. I beat her, and then she just slapped me with her sweater; that was the start of my troubles. It irritated my eyes; the wool got into my eyes. I was in there about 10 years, I started when I was nine years old, and I left when I was 19. When they took me to the hospital, I was almost blind. My eye turned yellow. They said, "You better transfer her to Calgary. She's just a young girl, and it'll be bad for her to go blind."

S-14: We didn't have a say; it was forced on us. Our parents would go to jail. It was all forced. My life today, as a whole right now, being in an IRS, it has changed me in terms of, I'm a workaholic. . . . We were made to work; cooking, sewing, stuff like that. As a result, I expect my kids to do that, too. You'll find a lot of survivors my age, we're all like that. We're perfectionists, workaholics, especially from Crowfoot School, because the nuns were there, because we didn't want to be . . . well, we had to be good at our "jobs". You pray in the morning, you pray before you go downstairs, you pray before you go to class; after recess; before lunch; after supper; before bed. One time I think I counted 26 times a day. Yes, right til we get to bed, I thought I was a big sinner! [Laughs.] All this time, "How come they made us pray 26 times a day; my knees." Us [meaning the Indian way] we sit down, at a relaxed state, we pray. I was abused—take my finger. When I came out of school, I didn't want to use my left hand. When I first started school, they used to tie my hand behind my back because I was a lefty. I was trying to write with my right hand; they used to hit us with a ruler on the knuckles 'cause we couldn't write

that good. When I started typing, I missed letters. The nuns, in school, we were running down the halls; I had my hand on the door, they were metal doors. The nun said, “Get back in your room”; she slammed the door and my finger was there; it was just bloody, and I pulled my hand off. The nun said, “That’s what you get for running.” She sent me upstairs and my hand was bloody; my finger was swollen. I was like that for two days. They didn’t report it. My grandpa found out; Father Sherif was the one who told him. They took me to the hospital, and there was nothing that could be done; they cut off my finger. Next morning, I woke up in the hospital; I could hear my dad swearing downstairs. I was so upset my finger was cut off; what happened? My dad took me out of school, but it was too late. The other time, I was really sick; they didn’t take me to the hospital. My grandfather found out. He said, “I’ll take you to the hospital; they should have told me.”

S-15: The dysfunctions, the nightmares; I’m afraid of the dark. How can you put a price on something, where you were literally removed from your parents at age seven, put in that school until June of the following year, 10 months you didn’t see your mother or anybody? No Christmases, no thanksgiving, no Easter, nothing; we were slaves.

S-16: I would say yes, for at least the first 10 years of my sobriety, it affected me. I didn’t look at it when I was drinking. I did the party scene. I was closed but outgoing; but that was my way of not letting people get close to me. Even though I was laughing, I was lonely. Without my brothers, it became hard. We had a supervisor who was using boys regularly; screwed them up badly. I was assertive. I learned English fast. That helped, I think. I have four older brothers; I’m the youngest. I think we were experimented a lot in kindergarten; we ended up in the hospital a lot. They injected us with something; we’d

end up being really sick. I always wonder about that. Why did they always inject us? I ran away twice; I was five years old [laughing]. I was brought back both times. My uncle told me, "If you don't go to school, your parents will go to jail." So, I stopped running away.

The survivors also shared perspectives of what they experienced with their parents and grandparents prior to attending an IRS. Many stated that they spoke Blackfoot at home prior to attending an IRS.

S-3: We were poor; we slept together. I slept with my grandparents. We had a close-knit family. Emotionally, I feel like I was affected at IRS. We had our own bed; we couldn't sleep with others. They thought it was wrong, . . . but we liked to be close.

S-7: My grandfather was a warrior; he was shot several times, and he lived to tell his grandchildren. My grandfather had a lot of horses and cattle. I was raised with horses—I love horses. We had a log house, and so did my grandparents; I would stay with them. I used to sleep with my grandfather; I'd hear him sing at night. [The survivor sang me the song and moved me to tears.]

S-8: All along I thought I was my grandmother's daughter; *Kiipiitaipooka*. I had my own food; my grandmother cooked for me. That's how it was [in the Blackfoot tradition].

S-9: The only thing that I kept going was my culture, like prayers, like the grandparents and the parents taught us about life. We had our own world of what God gave us. That's where we were taught to pray. That's why I kept going in there: I kept praying a lot.

S-10: My grandparents, because they raised me, taught me to respect, to help people, not to swear, and to be *Kimapiipiitsinn—kind, show kindness.* I loved my grandparents. As

soon I left that school, like on Fridays, I went home, I was free again. I was happy, joyful, because I was with my grandparents. I spoke Blackfoot all the time.

S-14: I learned it [love]; I came from a family who showed me. My mom cracked the whip; my dad was "Come, my girl." My grandmother didn't go [to an IRS]; my grandpa did. Grandpa said he went til Grade 2. They knew love. During the summer, when we get home, we like to spend time in Washington. My grandmother would have her tent outside. My grandpa sets it up. They have camp stones—table and chairs, makes a shade for her. She will be cooking fry bread and stuff. He takes us berry picking. We always have bannock and saskatoons, that's our snack. You always want to be around grandma. We'd sleep outside with her. I go home to my grandparents.

S-16: Learning how to use our hand signals; our Blackfoot ways. We had hand signals, so we still could communicate. Even today, I went to school with a guy, and I know he speaks fluent Blackfoot, but if another person shows up, he will switch to English. I tell him, "You know Blackfoot." He says, "Yeah, I know." I would talk to old people, and I'd continue to learn the old Blackfoot. I'd ask them about Kainai, Siksika, and Piikani . . . we have a bit of a difference in our dialect. Out here, when a person says, *Stonataakemma* [the slight difference in pronunciation and emphasis], Kainai has a little bit of "Texas twang," maybe because they are further south [laughing]. Talking like a Texan in Blackfoot! The language can be reborn, the Blackfoot immersion school; language school. In a comfortable setting, where children can be saturated with it. We don't have to satisfy anyone with a curriculum.

The survivors' diverse answers and stories in response to the first question shared a number of similar characteristics and outcomes:

- Feeling fear and loneliness;
- Being closed up but outgoing—having buried feelings;
- Experiencing dysfunctions in adulthood;
- Not wanting to go on their knees (as it reminds them of residential school);
- Not having a choice and having attendance forced on them;
- Not being able to say anything for fear of punishment;
- Feeling that going to residential school was like going to jail;
- Not being allowed to speak their language—and getting punished for speaking it;
- Knowing that if they did not go to an IRS, their family would be jailed;
- Being scared all the time;
- Getting beaten if they did not know the English language;
- Feeling that emotionally it was hard;
- Not knowing how to show love; and
- Still feeling fearful and damaged.

One can undoubtedly state that the ratio of negative to positive outcomes is extreme. Survivors' stories provide context as to how the separation of a child from parents and extended kin can lead to individual, intergenerational, and historical trauma. Experiences of separation, punishment, hunger, loneliness, fear, and abuse are all indicators and manifestations of adult dysfunction, addiction, and either internal or external shame and guilt (or both). Much of this dysfunction is visible and commonly experienced in First Nations families and tribal systems.

Answers to Question 2

Question 2 was, "Has the IRS impacted your daily life; for example, your Blackfoot language practice and transmission to your children? And grandchildren? Do you think this has affected your community? In what way?"

S-1: Yes, it has. We could not speak Blackfoot at the IRS. My children were not taught to speak Blackfoot. My husband speaks it and my grandmother. We learned to speak a new language, and we went to church where we spoke Latin.

S-2: Yes, it has affected our community not speaking the language. Our history in fluent Blackfoot—it's broken into Blackfoot English. Blackfoot English, not the real Siksikaitsitapi. . . . Something that was taken away from us in IRS [was that] the students that attended weren't allowed to speak the language. But deep in my mind I used to talk to my mom and dad, in our language. I never lost the language. To hear my grandchildren, they are into our traditional ways, our spirituality. And I do hear them pray, and it is nice to hear them. They know the language.

S-3: Oh, definitely. We spoke Blackfoot at home; I didn't know English til I went to school. We couldn't talk Blackfoot; we were punished. Of course, we are sneaky; we start talking Blackfoot when they weren't around. My children never learned Blackfoot. Now I'm sorry we didn't teach them.

S-4: When we first went to school, we were forbidden to talk our language; [we would] get punished. So, kids just mingle there, like zombies. I say all the time, the seven years I was there, it was like prison. They have a yard; it's like a prison. This one I attended, the yard was not any good for recreation/play things. We just walked around in the yard after school til supper time. Sometimes sent to bed right after supper, even in the springtime.

That's—the way it affected me, [I] kinda have a hatred for someone in a "superior" position, but to me, I didn't lose my language. . . . I just kept talking it.

S-5: I didn't have a chance to get into the native culture. Gone at 15, and when I came back, my parents were gone [passed away], so I didn't have anyone to teach me.

S-6: I speak it [Blackfoot] fluently; I tried to speak it to my kids, but my wife, she was raised different. I'm surprised we didn't speak French [laughing]. We understood more Latin because of the church service. I'd always speak it; I don't think I would ever lose speaking Blackfoot.

S-9: A lot of us didn't know how to cope with this [loss of language]. We still feel like we have a supervisor here; we have to watch what we say. Now, like my grandkids, I talk to them in Blackfoot. Some have no idea what I'm saying; others do. They start to say things, but not fluently. Language is lost. . . . I think it has happened to a lot of young people. I don't force them to talk Blackfoot. If they want to learn, they ask.

S-10: I do not talk to my children in Blackfoot. I try to teach my granddaughter, my children. The reason why I didn't really teach them Blackfoot is because I was married to a Caucasian. I think our language is just about gone. I think the school [IRS] took away a lot of our language.

S-11: Yes, we all talked Blackfoot. Some of them [other IRS students] didn't even talk English. It took a long time. Some of the older kids try and teach us; they know we're not supposed to speak Blackfoot. The matron has a strap, if she hears of us speaking Blackfoot, she'll use the strap on us. They make kids use the four-letter word all the time. If they make you explain it . . . *Paaahkoonstsis*. My daughter, she talks good Blackfoot.

S-12: But for me, during those days, I was still trying to get over it [the hurt and trauma]. Because we practice the culture, I started practicing the culture at a very young age. And then it came to me: if you don't have the language, you don't have the culture. So, it [writing, speaking the Blackfoot language] came the other way . . . I've written the language, I'm trying to preserve the language; I've got a Blackfoot language nest now. When we go up to the Sundance, we still have our ceremonies in Blackfoot, and it's important to feel the language, and flow with the language. All the teachings we need come from the language. That's how we communicate through the language. Because of our language being only synthetic, it has this movement, and unless the kids understand this movement, it will be pitiful if they don't ever get it. Oh, big time. When you don't feel the language and the kindness, you know, all of that, then you're really pitiful. Residential schools make you feel really ashamed of being Indian. We're still suffering from it today.

S-14: The one good example, those elders were teaching us about the old Sundance prayers. They say the rituals are the same as when they pray the high mass in Roman Catholicism. It's the same how they prepare things. But then White people say we're heathens; devil worshippers. They twisted everything. That's what I found out.

S-16: No, my wife went to Catholic residential school, and she said the children need to speak English first. I reluctantly went along with it. My kids kinda became half and half. It's fragmented. My late wife, we were both fluent. We split up, and I was single. I gotta find someone who speaks Blackfoot. I found a woman with that criterion. I don't think the language will die. I'm 60, and I think I'm in a good position to help revive the language. The young ones want to learn. How do we do this? Revive the language?

From the responses to Q2, many of the survivors had hope that the Blackfoot language will persevere. Many spoke Blackfoot before entering an IRS, and even after being punished and dehumanized for speaking it, they retained it, and they can still speak it today. One can attest to knowledge of Blackfoot having a definite protective factor—to inherently know their thoughts, that their reality comes from within the Blackfoot context, and that thus they understood the old ways, the traditional ways, and spiritual connection. When learning and adjusting, or trying to learn and adjust, to the English language, the different perspective and context, the different meanings, and the foreign reality did not make sense, nor should it have to those young members of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Yet many were pointlessly punished, on countless occasions.

Several survivors responded in support of the Blackfoot language being part of their sense of self, their history, and their transference to the generations that follow:

- "I never lost the language" (Survivor 2).
- "Of course, we are sneaky; we start talking Blackfoot when they [nuns, priests, church workers] weren't around" (Survivor 3).
- "But to me, I didn't lose my language; I just kept talking it" (Survivor 4).
- "I speak it fluently" (Survivor 6).
- "Yes, we all speak Blackfoot" (Survivor 11).
- "I don't think the language will die" (Survivor 16).

Answers to Question 3

Question 3 was, "Has the IRS impacted your spiritual belief(s) in any way? Explain."

S-1: Yes, it has. We went to confession daily while we were at school. Roman Catholic. You had tunnel vision; you had to be dedicated. I'm open now in my later life. I attend sweat lodges and I attend church, so I practice both beliefs.

S-2: When I went to IRS, I already knew my spirituality, as a very young child. Living with my grandparents, my parents—who were already IRS products—we knew the rosary, but we knew our spirituality. I'm very fortunate my grandmother knew Siksikaitsitapi—they maintained our spirituality. I prayed my heart out all the years at IRS. I was always missing our spirituality. In IRS, they said I was gonna go to hell, I was always afraid of that, I was gonna be on fire because I was a sinner. All these scare tactics they used on us . . . amazing that we are still here. I am a survivor . . . I won't burn . . . we make our own hell on earth [laughing].

S-3: Not really. I wasn't in any other religion. What I learned at that time, I thought the Roman Catholic was the only church.

S-4: Like I said, they taught us to respect, to believe in the church and God.

S-5: We go to church quite often, go in the morning and in the evening. We prayed a lot.

S-6: I was raised Catholic; this is how I was raised. We farmed and ranched, we were always busy. Once in a while, we'd go to a pow-wow. My dad went to Sundance, but I didn't go. I don't know that way. I talk to the Lord, Creator.

S-10: I'd say, thank God I had the old people. I was raised by my grandparents. My heart is Blackfoot. My heart is the land, the stars, the universe, the moon, the sun, the land we lived on. One thing I will always remember is the one word I was told by my grandfather: we are the children of the stars, left on earth. That's where we come from. That's why our stories, *kakato'siiksi* [stars], the seven brothers, and *ipissowaasi* [morning star]. Everything had to be done before the sun went down. Because a Sundance was for him. In my day, when you talk to an *iikskiina* [Horn Society member], they were kind; never said a bad thing. They were strong in their prayers; they taught us respect through their

actions. That's how I learned how to not walk between two people, not cross in the middle. I'd walk around their conversation. Now this generation, they walk right in the middle. I walk behind them, never in front; I don't touch their back. These things I was taught by the grandparents, through their action. The bundles [sacred society, related to Aako'ka'tssin] give you a reason to exist, because we are not alone, because of the spiritual animals out there. "All the beings." We're above, we're not below . . . we are equal. We call ourselves, *Niitsitapi*, the real people.

S-11: Yes, it did. Today I don't take part in any Indian ways. My dad was involved in native spirituality. He travelled to other reserves to take part. My brother was in it, too. I'm not involved. Yes, I didn't believe in native ways because of what they told us in the IRS about our spiritual ways.

S-12: I was 14 years old, and I told my dad I didn't want to be a Catholic anymore. I was very fortunate that I had a father that told me, "Ah, just go find a religion, and whatever religion you find, carry it good." So, I studied, Bahá'í, Buddhism, Mormonism. Then my mother told me, because I had a Mormon grandfather, that my Mormon grandfather, one of his teachings that he left with our family, was never to allow his children or grandchildren to join the church. Jesus taught love; Jesus taught people how to use their spirituality to heal people. Our ways were about healing and being good together, and trying to achieve this spiritual place where you were in touch with your creator, not scared.

S-13: My mother was religious. We always went to church. My dad was a member of the Horn Society. You know, my grandfather was the leader of the tobacco dance; the principal didn't really tell them to stop. My grandfather, him and his group, they just kept

practicing it. I was not part of the Horn Society; but they always camp. My husband did join the Horn Society.

S-14: I always told my kids, "I love you." . . . I went in there [the IRS] at six years old; I must have been a really big sinner. That was drilled into us. When we left residential school, we didn't go to church. We were tired of praying. I never want to see that church again; I don't want to go on my knees. Even a tipi, I don't want to go on my knees; it reminds me of residential school. It had a negative—well, a negative attitude towards prayer. But I started praying on my own later in life. I went to the Indian religion.

My intention in asking this question was to refer to spirituality from within the Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin context—ceremony in sacred societies; rituals of smudging, sweat lodging, and coming of age; and various songs and chants with or without drumming. However, the responses referred to Catholicism or other Christian beliefs; few survivors answered regarding traditional spirituality of the Blackfoot people. This outcome may be a result of the intergenerational context of missionizing who we are, and thus interfering with the social context of that traditional sense of spirituality. Many Indigenous people, I think it is safe to say, are not aware of their own social constructs (or at least not from within a sociological lens), where they stem from, why they think the way they do, or why they behave the way they do. Hence, their social reality is inherited from the experiences of their parents and environment, or at least the generation before them, and the transmittance of negative contexts or not truly genuine Blackfoot ways due to indoctrination at an IRS or being alienated from Blackfoot cultural ways. Reading the responses of these survivors, it is clear that seven generations of political policies are foreign to Blackfoot people have deeply affected them. Few are truly practicing the ways of

Siksikaitsitapi. This devastation to the social context further marginalizes the Blackfoot people and hinders them in many realms of everyday social realities.

A few responses exemplified the sacredness of ancient and ancestral—Kaaahsinnooniksi—ways. Survivor 10 said, "I'd say, thank God for the old people, [and] the bundles give you a reason to exist. . . . We call ourselves, *Niitsitapi*—the real people." Survivor 12 said, "I need spirituality in my life. That's something I was raised with." Survivor 2 commented,

> I'm very fortunate my grandmother knew Siksikaitsitapi—they maintained our spirituality. I knew what the Sundance was; being at the Sundance . . . I used to see my Grandpa having sweats. The protocol of Siksikaitsitapi, for preparing the sweats, was that women prepared everything, . . . yet the men just came and had the sweats.

Answers to Question 4

Question 4 asked, "How has the IRS compensation package that was offered to survivors affected your life?"

> S-1: I had to relive the trauma, and recollect the abuses that I experienced there. In my eyes, it wasn't enough. They paid off the Chinese. We are treated like dogs . . . as if to say, "Here's some money, you should be satisfied!" Money cannot heal pain. You are never the same after abuse.
>
> S-2: You know, I was abused in IRS. I didn't go for more compensation. To me, that money isn't gonna do a damn bit of good. It didn't do me any good; just paid a few bills. . . . I got $13,000. The government knows how to use us; they know how to try and do away with First Nations people. But damn it, we're survivors. They're not gonna kill us.

We're gonna survive . . . we'll have the biggest tsunami here, and we'll survive it [laughing].

S-3: Well, I hadn't planned to apply for that money. There was more positive than the negative. When they said there was a common experience, it helped us financially. We paid some things off; we bought some things for the tractors and for our trucks. To me, when I got the strap or when I was disciplined, well, I was naughty. I didn't apply for the other part [independent assessment process].

S-4: To me, and my wife, after we got our money, we didn't go for more, because there are some that try to get more. We just took what was given to us. Some people got around $100,000, but I got $31,000.

S-5: We didn't gain anything, but we paid some bills, and we had some money in the bank.

S-6: They say everyone who went to IRS, they say "entitled." Then they started cutting back the years. What about my mom, dad, grandparents? They are entitled, too!

S-7: Compensation wasn't even enough . . . took many things and treat us like nothing. In my school time, I got punished for many things. If you were just outside of the play room, you will be punished. Electric wire out in the playground . . . we're prisoners! That's a miserable life in residential school. Seventy years ago, that I went to school; I forgot some things, but it comes to me every now and then.

S-8: No, I don't know if I will receive anything! I want to know; [not knowing creates] a lot of uncertainty and frustration. Since 1997 I have been going to lawyers.

S-9: Then I thought to myself, "We went through this." This time, we don't owe anybody; the government owes us. I think a lot of us were kinda afraid to get this money.

Some were saying “evil money,” but I didn’t see it that way. Well, we are being compensated for being there. . . . They can’t pay for hurt, I know that.

S-10: What I did with my money, I gave each of my kids almost half of my money. No matter how much they give us, it’ll never be enough. Because, yeah, they said they were sorry, but they never said why. Getting beat up, getting locked up. One little room. I was reading that about residential school. It really struck me. One of the Indian Affairs agents, he said, “What’s here?” [The school administrator answered,] “This is where we put kids who are really bad.” He saw a little girl, chained to the floor, in her own feces, almost dead. In the Indian agent’s report, he wrote, “She looked sick.” Then he left.

S-11: I didn’t believe it til I got it [the compensation]. I tried to run away from the boarding school. I swam across the river; [walked] through deep snow. I was about seven years old.

S-12: Well, it made me feel like a whore again, that I was being compensated for all the bad stuff that was done to me. The way that they [government] did it, they made us feel like we were liars. We tell them our story and then they argue with us and they say, “This is not that big of a thing.” Anybody who went to residential school, it doesn’t matter: you got a scar out of it. It doesn’t matter the degree of the scar, but it affected your life.

S-13: Yes, it was $33,000 or $34,000. Well, I just received it. I didn’t go further.

S-14: The compensation was like, more or less, to just shut me up. I got $60,000; if you try to compensate me for all the days in school, what is it, $1.50? [We were both laughing]. How much is that? That’s how much I’m worth! [Researcher calculated the payment at $13.69/day.] Oh, that’s all I’m worth [laughing].

S-15: For them to try and say, “It’s worth this much,” that’s full of shit. It’s a lot of crap; I’m still bitter about the whole goddamn process. It screwed us Indians, and the only people that lawyers, chairmen of committees, and the only ones who benefitted were them. In the end, we got left holding the bag. Not much was in it; we got crumbs. . . . And the crumbs—very little payment/compensation—wasn’t worth shit. When I accepted my payment, I felt like a whore. I could have stood on the streets of Calgary and got more money. That’s how I feel.

S-16: It’s not worth any amount of money. But for White people, that’s how they measure things. No amount of money can compensate what we lost. We are *Niitsitapi*; we’re not something they want us to be. We also have a spirituality that was lost. We’ve become a less-than society due to loss of language. I got my money, spent it on my kids; it’s gone.

Other comments when survivors were asked this question were:

S-1: But I ask, how do you forgive? The abuses we experienced, I don’t know if this pain will ever truly go away. They [abusers] can burn in hell!

S-6: I’d be satisfied if all of us got a million, not just twenty thousand. They [the government] sent us to IRS, they are converting us, they kept taking the land away. I would be satisfied with a million.

S-8: They get heartless people [the government]. They [lawyers] are getting a lot of money.

S-9: This helped me; I shared with my kids . . . to share is to love. You talk about it, you understand yourself.

S-10: I think the ones who deserved that money are all gone. My grandparents would have got lots of money. . . . [The compensation is] a little too late. The apology doesn't mean nothing; money doesn't buy happiness. It's only there for a moment, and then it's gone. Maybe others did okay with the money, but the majority just blew it.

S-12: They make us believe that our parents weren't good enough to raise us, and now, when they know they've done wrong, we've proven they've done wrong. And they took a big part of our culture and our self-esteem away. That's the biggest thing they took away from us; our self-esteem, when you become ashamed of your own people, your own ancestors. It'll take years, maybe even another century to straighten that out. And all because they were so greedy. They were so greedy for our land, and even the little bit of land they left us. They couldn't just leave us; instead they've tried everything to exterminate us, to do everything to destroy us physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally. How could that ever compensate me? I didn't get to spend every night with my mom and dad and my grandmothers. Thank God for my grandparents, my holy parents, that got me through life differently.

S-14: We're still here. The money didn't do much; it didn't help. Alcohol, pills, drugs were still available. Liquor stores benefited, not us. They [liquor store owners] were so happy we got money; we got nothing. An older member said he had a liquor bill of $2,000.

S-16: No amount of money will change anything.

The reader may see the mixed emotions here, and may even feel what the survivors had experienced. It was not easy for them to share; however, I do think that I, as a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy, made a difference in how they answered each question. Most were

genuinely open to sharing. As painful as the memories were, they did not hesitate. In fact, the tears that were shed were shed together.

Answers to Question 6

Question 6[18] asked, "Where were you when the prime minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, announced the apology to the survivors of IRS and their families and communities? How were you affected by this specific nationwide television/radio broadcast? In your opinion, has it changed any aspect of your life? Explain." Survivors' answers were as follows:

> S-1: I was in Edmonton, at a CHR conference. We watched it. It was emotional, and I cried. I had mixed feelings. The PM's apology wasn't sincere; it wasn't from his heart. He read it off a piece of paper. I've done a lot of inner healing on my own, asking Creator, guide me, show me a sign where I'm going wrong. I had to change my way, my rigid upbringing of my children. Power of prayer helped me to change my way. Using cultural and spiritual well-being and Western way of prayer.
>
> S-2: My question to that would be, did it come from his heart? Was it his [PM] own thinking? Or did someone tell him what to say. It's gotta come from the heart. A real person would stand up and say what's from his heart.
>
> S-3: I was at home; I didn't listen to the whole thing. When he announced that, I question, how sincere was he? I guess it's good, brings some relief, but how sincere?
>
> S-4: I didn't even hear it [laughing]. . . . I don't know where I was. The only thing I heard about it was that it was too short. He just said his apology. . . . That was it.
>
> S-5: We were just home watching TV. Just the news brief. We didn't even budge [laughing]. I didn't even think about it after. Just the same ole, same ole [laughing].

[18] As a reminder, Questions 5 and 8 were omitted.

S-9: I was home.

S-10: I got nothing to do with the government.

S11: I heard about it, but I didn't watch it. They got a lot of money, but it didn't come to us. . . . Government always takes money and what we get is just a little. They help themselves, and then only a few bucks come to the reserve.

S-12: I was in Medicine Hat, Elk Waters in Saskatchewan, and there I go to this history in the hills. I was in that history in the hills, so we took a break, to go listen to the apology. I cried. The next day we had to leave, and I cried because of the way of that apology was given. He didn't say, "I, Stephen Harper, apologize for the past atrocities inflicted on the native people of Canada."

S-13: Yeah, I listened. I didn't think much of it [laughing].

S-14: I could care less about that. It was a slap in the face. I found it ironic for the government; it took them all those years to say they were wrong. Yet, the Japanese when they sued the government; they gave them $10 million per person. Gee, I could have used 10 million, or even a million.

S-15: I heard the apology from the prime minister in the House of Commons. Where a select few people were allowed to sit in there. How many were abused, I don't know.

S-16: One of these days, get someone to translate it [the apology]. Get that person to tell them in Blackfoot. Translate first, translate properly. It would have been more meaningful. Closest term is like *reconciliation*. In our culture we give gifts; it's an action, we give. I'll do these things for you.

While reading their stories, the reader can conclude that the survivors did not value the apology, and that many did not think much of it. In fact, some did not watch it being televised,

nor did they desire to do so. One survivor stated it was “a slap in the face.” I ask the reader, how would you apologize to someone, if you knew you had done them wrong?

Answers to Question 7

Question 7 was, “From your perspective, what are some impacts on culture, language, and identity that arose from IRS?”

S-1: We were not allowed to practice beliefs; this was taken away from us. They told us if you practice them, we’d go to hell; that it was of the devil, it was evil. We lost our language; they prevented us from speaking our language—we were punished if we did. Our identity, I felt like nothing.

S-2: We’re given a cheque; go do this with your life. Government doesn’t give a damn what happens. You go to jail; go to residential school.

S-3: Some of the younger people don’t really know their identity, because of their environment, situation, some are lost. Apologizing, but a lot more work needs to be done. Why do we have third world reserves when Canada is so rich. . . . Canada turns a blind eye to it. Bureaucrats have much to do with it.

S-4: From the start, they were teaching us to not be involved in our culture. I’m still not involved with my culture. I shy away from the Indian way. I respect it; I just don’t participate. We didn’t talk about anything of our history or culture in school.

S-6: We had discipline, and we spoke Blackfoot. Before the schools, they lived in harmony, had spirituality, and had good ways. The White people come around forcing their policies, of course we rebelled. They had more people, and us, we had sticks and arrows [laughing]; they had bombs. Little did they know the weapons were our culture to kill animals for food; them it was the guns to kill people to take the land.

S-11: You don't go in-between when talking to people. . . . There are ways we need to learn manners. You sit in the teepee. . . . If you want to move around, go outside and close the doorway. You need to be polite. You don't interrupt; you wait until the other is done talking. It's rude to talk in front of someone.

S-13: My husband said, "We'll just teach our kids Blackfoot, so all of my kids speak good Blackfoot. I'm glad; but I kinda neglected my grandchildren from speaking Blackfoot. Some of them do, but not all. I know the old Blackfoot, I grew up with it. There are some words that have two meanings; you have to be careful how you say these words. The White people didn't know the value of life. To them, the value is the almighty dollar.

S-14: Of course, it impacted the community right across Canada. In a negative manner. Most of us [survivors] are relatively successful, but a lot of the people that were born in the same year, most of them met their demise shortly after they left [the IRS]—jail, alcohol, some died violently. . . . They never had a chance for a life or a family. It's sad. When we came out of there, we had nothing. It shows today, because of our dysfunctions, most of us were married, a couple of marriages. Today I have no relationship with my children; we didn't know how to love. It's these things my wife taught me that I learned from her 25 years ago. Today, now you're going into second-generation effects of residential school—alcohol, drugs, broken homes, changing partners like they change socks. It's sad, but who do we thank . . . the church, the government. . . . Then they say, "We're sorry. We'll give you a couple thousand, and you'll be alright."

S-15: Well, you know, most of us, our first language was Blackfoot. We knew very little English, if at all. Part of their policy was to eliminate the Blackfoot language amongst the

Blackfoot students; so, we couldn't speak our language. If you're caught speaking it, you'll get punished severely. If we could talk Blackfoot, then we never said anything. We'd just sit around silent; we didn't know English; we'd whisper in Blackfoot. It's trying to erase any kind of Indian/Blackfoot identity that you have to become a White person. Years later, as I got older, the person that sexually abused me, our supervisor, he instituted a policy. He had a black book with our names, each staff member had a colored pencil. If that staff member caught you talking Blackfoot, they'll put a colour beside your name. On Sundays, it is pay day . . . the supervisor will have lots of straps. They'll strip us naked, anywhere on your back you'll get strapped. He'll say, you got two blue, two yellow, two red. . . . That's how many straps you get.

A number of survivors made additional or tangential comments related to this question:

- S-1: The IRS teachings was the strap. We became robotic, no feelings or showed no emotions. This has been an intergenerational effect.
- S-2: When I was growing up, and my great grandma saying, in Blackfoot, it's so rich. You just envision the story, you envision what they say. Her grandmother told her, "One day, I'm not going to be here. I'm going to be at the happy hunting grounds waiting for all of you to come and join together." She pointed, maybe not your time, maybe not in your children's time, maybe in their grandchildren's time.
- S-4: We didn't talk about anything of our history or culture in school.
- S-14: Government throws money our way to pacify the Indians. The government doesn't realize the impact on our reserve. We don't even know the full impact. Most of us are not healed; they've never spoken about it. I have followed survivors that have not healed. My brother [Name] was older than me. I was there for two years. He

left, and he was terribly abused; he drank himself to death on the streets of our nation. I asked him one time, I said, “Brother, come to the house. I want to talk to you about IRS.” He says, “No, I don’t want to talk about it.” . . . He says, “You got five bucks? I want to get a bottle of vodka.” They killed him, they killed him when he was in there, and as clear as anything else. . . . Five years ago, when he passed away, they killed him because of what they did to him. I was a little boy, 7–8 years old; they locked him in a broom closet. I ran in there, he told me in Blackfoot, “Go get me some bread; I haven’t eaten anything for three days.” So, I ran into the kitchen, the bakery, fear of nothing, I grabbed a loaf of bread. . . . I started tearing it up and putting it in through the hole so he could have something to eat. [S-14 began tearing up]. I ran out, took off in the field, I sat there. I was praying, “Help us, and help my brother.” How cruel can they be? Years later, he succumbed to his abuse, his effects, lost his family, his home, drank every day just to survive . . . just to drink. Finally caught up with him. Those are the things the government doesn’t see, understand, or recognize the damage they did. That’s the impact. The impact they did to our nations. I’m just one that’s talking.

Of all the survivors to share their insights about this question, S-15 spoke at the most length about the impacts on culture, language, and identity:

S-15 shared, in IRS, they practically erased my Indian identity because of the many different things they did to us. Trying to make us not speak our language; the message is that your language is inferior. When I left, I was ashamed of being Indian; the social atmosphere is such that if Whites make fun of an Indian, I went along with it. I didn’t have anything to be proud of. Ten years that I was in IRS, I had no identity. I lost what I

was beginning to be taught at a very young age by my grandparents. My identity was lost in IRS. When I came out, I was so mixed up, so confused, "a perfect apple Indian." It took years to complete that circle. By the time I came back and met my wife, that I started to come back.

You cannot turn the clock back; you cannot get back what you lost. The damage is done. Those are things that government doesn't understand . . . the collateral damage they did to us; our community and now second and third generations. I'm an alcoholic; I'm not ashamed to admit to that. I was sexually abused, I was physically abused. I had nightmares until I was in my forties before they went away. I didn't know how to love, how to be tender. . . .

The closest I came to committing suicide, I used to patrol that reserve I worked on—fishing, camping, and they had to have proper permits. I was sent out to check out a place. I was hung over. I got to a certain spot that I liked, I stopped, I was hung over, I was depressed. I turned the key off; I flipped the switch to unlock [referring to his shotgun]. This is the ancestral burial grounds of my ancestors . . . what a beautiful place to die. They wouldn't have to take me far. I took my shotgun; I put it to my mouth. . . . I fell asleep!!! And thank God I did. I put my shotgun back in there and locked it. That was the closest I came to committing suicide. . . .

When I came home [from the IRS], I was in the front room. I was playing by the stove. They [his mother and some other women] were talking. The best way is to say this in Blackfoot, "My son came home, and he is not the same; they did something to him; they hurt him." She knew it; she knew I was not the same. How many mothers recognized their children were not the same? I have a sister, she stays in Edmonton. You

know what my sister told me, she says, "You know, [S-15], I cannot take anything back, what I lost in IRS, my virginity . . . so I drink to forget it!" There goes my sister, she went talking and talking but I could do nothing to help her. I have a cousin, every time he has a few drinks, he starts crying. But you know, when I think about it, he was in IRS when I was; he probably has a trauma he has not dealt with. (S-15)

Answers to Question 9

Question 9 was, "From your perspective, what are some impacts on culture, language and identity that arose from the apology?" The survivors' responses were short yet to the point:

S-1: The apology was not sincere, so how can our community forgive if the apology was not from the heart?

S-3: If he was really sincere, he would look at the overall conditions on the reserve, and not just research, cause we are researched to death. . . . Do something positive.

S-6: No, it's not an apology; it should have been the Queen. She sends her son.

S-15: How do you apologize to people for doing that to them? There is no justice for survivors. There's nothing. I don't care about the money; I had a good time but it did nothing. It did not restore what I lost.

Respondents may have been exhausted emotionally and mentally by this point, as the questions asked were leading them to remember events, experiences, and feelings from many years ago. From reading their responses, the majority of the memories were not positive. Underlying questions that arise from their answers are related to reconciliation. Has it begun? Given the deplorable conditions on reserve, are circumstances changing for the better? And again, how should one apologize for intentional wrongdoings? I am grateful for the participants' dedicated spirit to continue with the interview until they knew I had asked the last question.

Answers to Question 10

Question 10 was, “Is there anything further you would like to share with me?” I was a bit taken aback at the survivors’ eagerness to share yet more with me. They were encouraging, inquisitive, and enlightening.

S-1: There was no follow-up after our hearing for compensation. Where is the continued help that we need? They gave us money, and then what? Again, is this supposed to satisfy us? Money can’t cure our trauma, or our children that have been affected.

S-3: Out of this whole thing, the prime minister has to be sincere; really do something for positive change, especially on-reserve. Less in jail, less in children’s services. Create equality. Put monies to children who are mentally and physically handicapped. People need to treat us equally.

S-6: Today, IRS is coming back. Were still caged, reserve boundaries. Cutbacks, with the treaties: we shouldn’t have cutbacks due to the treaties being signed. Government told us they are going to take care of us forever . . . no cutbacks! How it affected me is that I don’t trust.

S-9: I think mostly, you covered things. It’s hard to say these things. It helped me especially. We need to help ourselves. I need to forgive more. The people that did things; but they are not here.

S-10: For me, here I know a lot about our history. I always wanted to, like you, to go to university. I love learning. I love history. I find the Bible as history. But ah, like I said, I wanted to go to school. This is what I tell my son, I tell him, “You’re so smart, you don’t want to use it.” He is accepted to go to school now, his grades are very good. I still wish I could go to school. How my world would have been different if I went to university! I’m

one of the very first people who worked at a museum. My job there was to open doors for the people, native people; there was no one there to speak for us. I worked there for 10 years. Get that education, like you guys. It's time we beat the White man at their own game. When I tell about my stories, they say it's not like that; it says in this book. To them, it's the book. The story I talk about, came from one source, when there's many of us. There are four tribes; within the same tribes, their clans, and then families, and they have stories. When me and my auntie talked about the seven brothers, we looked each other; I thought they were orphans. This other story said . . . and the other story said, Napi, I found two people that said the same thing . . . he took the gooseberries, he ate them—he has blue eyes. Which Napi are you talking about? The trickster, the one we pray to, or your husband? So, you say, "Napi, crazy one. *Ayo Napi Natoosi*." So, within our stories, within our history, there's not just one answer, there's many. You'll find that out on your journey. I'm learning all the time, every day I'm learning. All these files are for my children. That's where I come from; this is shit. There are about four to five doing this; there are a few university students helping me out, there are teachers/professors helping me. There was a time when the old people said, "Our spirit is going away, then our spirit will come back." Our spirit is starting to come back. We're living on our own. Even in our treaties, that old man told Crowfoot, "You got two choices: you can fight the White man, he'll kill you all. Or you can live on this land; and your spirit will leave, but it'll come back."

S-11: I'd like to see our people, to understand us; to take the traditional way. I'd like to see the manners to come back. To help the small ones to grow up and have a better life; to have their parents and grandparents. To learn manners; to not talk back. We don't have

[the respect] anymore. I'd like the kids to keep learning. Can you watch these boys; they are crazy. A bunch of kids came around, I watched them. Next thing I knew, those kids took their clothes off . . . maybe the parents gonna give us shit. They were playing in the mud; they said, "Please don't tell our mom." . . . I didn't tell their mother. We didn't watch those kids too good; they were all naked and playing in the mud [both laughing]. You have to discipline your kids, even the animals; you have to feed them and take care of them.

S-12: Yeah, I think I'd like to make one more comment about how they did the compensation. Okay, if you're going to compensate, you just compensate. You know, you think, well, these Japanese are foreigners to this country, how come they got treated this way? Then put yourself or you're put in a position you think, you're less than. When I think about our people, how generous they were with their spirituality and helping people out, what they expected back from the newcomers. You know, they were so lied to from the get-go, that's I think a big frustration from our people. Having to go through and prove this compensation. Hey, you did something wrong to us. Instead of encouraging . . . you know, like here, you look into the fields, even in our treaties, our old people used to say, "A plough up,[19] that's what we gave them." And yet all these things that were taken away from us, instead of enhancing us. These bloods are becoming good farmers, let's build them up, you know, let's do what we promised them. We promised them, implements, cattle . . . okay, they are going to be really hard-working. And yet we can't find work even if you go in mainstream society, and all the hoops we had to jump through in boarding school. Well, if you do this or do that, you can come in mainstream

[19] As stated in Treaty 7, "for every three families, one plough and one harrow [was given]" (Humanities Computing and Media Centre, n.d., para. 20).

society and jump through all these hoops . . . well, maybe you stay on the reserve. You know, we don't want to give you a job out here, but yet we'll call on somebody from Somalia to do the work . . . to clean hotel rooms. And all the sugar beets too, we will call the Mexicans to do the work. That wasn't part of our treaty. That was another thing I want to add; the lies they told us about getting educated and getting jobs in our homeland. Very tough.

S-14: The University, they should be more like in the Aboriginal groups. They should have more information of Aboriginal people in the universities. My son says, all other ethnic groups want recognition. Nothing about us. Make your voice heard [S-14 is advising me]. I want you to be proud of who you are. There has to be a balance. They are quick to point fingers at drunken Indians. Well, they should think, "Why is he drinking? He's teaching us something." You know that [Indigenous] girl who has been missing? The police, they don't give a damn. Yet, a child went missing in the city, all of Canada knows, until they are found. Yet this girl, no one knows; police aren't looking. What about her parents? There's another girl that's been missing for 20 years; no one knows what happened. The government doesn't care; another dead Indian. If it's a White person, send out people to look for them. You, you're the voice for us. So, you fight!

S-16: I like these pow-wows they have. But I think it needs to be a lesson. Just like the Holocaust; they have centres. We need to have an IRS museum and curriculum that we put together. That we teach; it's history, not a very good history, but its history. Just like Japanese history in Canada. I spoke in small town, at the high school, about traditional storytelling. A lot of those kids asked about IRS. They want to know. They were amazed I survived. English word, trauma, Blackfoot would be *Iiksooskwiam*, a big

event/happening. *Iikskaapii* [really important and can't be ignored]. You can, like, let's say I almost got into an accident, *Iiskaastitooki*. One time, I was working with the elders and youth, I went to talk to some elders. They asked me to talk to them about the pipe; they wanted to hear what I had to say even though I was younger than them. I shared what I could, *Isskoohtsi.* Or training 20 women; *Iikskaapii*, men and women are different. I changed the way I talked in that session with women. Trauma, to us, it's a big happening that you "walked through." So, for a lot of us, we walked through IRS, we walked out of it. Some don't share, only to a certain point; they don't want to talk about the shame. The *survival* was the main thing. Now we maintain the survival mode . . . we don't talk, we don't trust, we don't feel. Well, Brave Dogs know. We are told stories in our sacred societies. We are doers (Brave Dogs). We're guys who are crazy enough to do things—*Kana'tsomitaiksi*. We look after our territory; settle differences and disputes.

Answers to Question 11

Finally, Question 11 asked, "Is there anything you would like to ask of me as researcher? As a Blackfoot member?" For this question, I was honouring them, their experiences, their knowledge, and their position in Blackfoot culture. They had reached an age where they could share, honestly and openly—and they did. This is genuinely an epitome of both honour and humility.

S-1: I hope you keep moving forward with your research, keep sharing what you learn. We need to be heard; our stories need to be shared so people understand us better. They [need to] understand our experience and the destruction it has had on our people and communities.

S-3: That something good will come out of your work. Always to help our reserves. It's hard, like I was saying, 30% are doing well . . . then there are those who abuse the system, get into trouble. But the good majority are good . . . they need to be recognized.

S-4: After you're finished your schooling, are you going to work with all this, the stories, or what? What are you going to do? Lawyer, doctor . . .

S-5: Are you going to put it all together? I wish you all the best; I'm sure you're doing good. We will keep you in our prayers.

S-9: Like I tell you, you want to find out things. Every detail you can find, that's good. But it's up to the person if they want to share. The trust, where do you think you're going to get it? People have got to trust. Take a chance. . . . They say life is beautiful; . . . well, when you look at it, it is! My mom always said, "Tell the truth about life."

S-10: Ahh, just keep going. Teach our children. Never quit learning. Always know where you come from, know your clan, know your family. I don't know what your next journey is after you graduate.

S-11: I'd like to encourage you. This will give us a little boost, to how it was. But to keep practicing our way of life. Other reserves are working on our way of life. Keep praying, and you'll understand each other. People who are married, pray and try and understand one another; make it easier for each other. Try and work things out . . . don't go to sleep with a bad temper. Wake up in the new day. If it's a nice morning, enjoy the day; pray for a good day. Be proud of our people. I got a lot of friends on the Blood reserve. It's a long time that I've seen them. I have relatives in Standoff; maybe they are all gone.

S-12: Yeah, how many of these interviews have you done? And you're going to produce a book from this? Well, it's a really wonderful thing you have done. You know, my

brother pretty much went through what you're going through. But again, you're having to prove you're as good as anyone else. You know, having that, a little bit of uncertainty; well they might not accept what I'm doing. Hey, I'm here, I'm doing this . . . all the students that I see, man, the things you have to go through. I'm glad I received an honorary degree. I'm gonna try for an honorary PhD, so I don't have to go through the shit these Indian students have to go through. I've been working with someone who has been really screwed around. Let's get everything we can out of this one. . . . You know, I would have used that experience when they tried to look down on me, for the simple fact that I'm Indian . . . nothing more. One of the misconceptions that's a real biggie for them is that we don't pay taxes. Their own census is that native people paid $13 billion, $9 billion went back to the government. Okay, why am I still homeless? . . . Why do I have to rent a house? We have good mortgage rates, $350 a month, but when you live on $276 a month, how can you pay for your own house? You see these foreigners coming in and they get more than our pensioners. . . . They are getting free education, free Medicare; they get $33,000/year. Our old people are getting $24,000 a year. You should come in as a refugee; all our old people should apply for refugee status [laughing]. Those are the things that make us suffer. All the information that is given to our students. You have to educate. You become a bridge. You can share this knowledge, give a different perspective.

S-13: I forgot to mention, the little ones go to school all day [at the IRS]. At a certain age, we are assigned to jobs, the cleaning people—kitchen, dining room, girls' side, boys' side. The boys have farming; they learn about farming. There were cows, and they milked cows. They even churned butter. The boys, they do that; the girls in the kitchen.

> We baked our own bread; we had a special cook there. And the laundry, there is a supervisor there. Then the following week, we change shifts. Class A, B, then grade 1 . . . by 18, they just let us go.
>
> S-16: What I would suggest is to use some Blackfoot terms in there, in your dissertation. It becomes unique and it becomes Blackfoot. If we said this all in Blackfoot, we'd be done by now [laughing]. So, the translation takes time.

Taking on this Wise Big Writing was an incredible journey. I have received many teachings along the way in all realms of my life. My want for the reader is to open your heart and mind, to "hear" the stories and "feel" the teachings. As political leaders have stated, residential schooling will never happen again—as a consequence, these stories from survivors are truly priceless.

Storytelling

As much as this study has been undertaken to provide IRS survivors' stories and perspectives framed within a limited number of questions,

> insider researcher has to be as ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. . . . It also needs to be humble. . . . It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position. (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 139)

Hence, my perspective, my analysis, my understanding, and my position have all played a role to further convey the story of each survivor. Furthermore, "As a member of the community, the insider researcher is often viewed on a more equal footing, minimizing the power differential between the researcher and participants" (Blythe, Wilkes, Jackson, & Halcomb, 2012, p. 9). Specific elements of each story can speak to, and answer, many questions

pertaining to the IRS experiences and outcomes for each participating survivor—and for the thousands of other survivors whose story may never be heard. The apology, the compensation, and the TRC (2015) calls to action are avenues to learn from and provide data for governments of all levels, and for each tribal nation.

How can Canadian citizens learn, and how do all parties transcend the teachings, together? How can the Canadian government and the citizens of Canada correct the wrongdoings of the past and share tools of healing for all Canadians? Can Indigenous and non-Indigenous people create avenues for storytelling, sharing oral history, and connecting with one another—and in our first languages? What a vibrant and wonderful feeling we as Siksikaitsitapi people would have, to hear, speak, and share stories in our native language! In most cases, the context of a story and teaching are exceptionally different when translated than when told in one's mother tongue. In the context of questions such as these, in the next chapter I turn to the themes and lessons in the survivors' stories.

Chapter 5: Results

> Within the traditions, beliefs, and customs of the American Indian people are the guidelines for mankind's future. It is this spirit of the continent, of all continents, that shines through the Indian anthologies and glimmers in the Indian communities in grotesque and tortured forms. The vision of stability of the community is found by non-Indians who venture into the reservations, and yet in viewing the remnants of Indian religion they understand neither Indians nor themselves. White American and Western industrial societies have not heard the call of either the lands or the aboriginal peoples. In the appalling indices of social disorder of the tribal peoples Westerners see only continued disruption and, being unaccustomed to viewing life as a totality, cannot understand the persistence of the tribal peoples in preserving their communities, lands, and religions. (Deloria, 1973, p. 300)

> Who will find peace with the lands? The future of mankind lays waiting for those who will come to understand their lives and take up their responsibilities to all living things. Who will listen to the trees, the animals and birds, the voices of the places of the land? As the long-forgotten peoples of the respective continents rise and begin to reclaim their ancient heritage, they will discover the meaning of the lands of their ancestors. That is when the invaders of the North American continent will finally discover that for this land, God is Red. (Deloria, 1973, p. 301)

For this chapter, the direction we look towards is downward—to earth, to the ground we walk upon. The traditional teachings tell us, prepare us with the knowledge and skill to ensure

that the ground we walk upon is revered and protected for future generations. This is part of Indigenous spirituality: languages are spiritually interconnected with the land, and values and relationships are intertwined with language (Brant Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000). Spirituality feeds us, nurtures us, guides and teaches us. If we do not take care of the earth, what results is destruction, which includes decreasing food sources in addition to water and air contamination and pollution. We have felt the wave of the changes on earth in the last 50–60 years, which has been a short timespan to have then created so much destruction. We also include the cosmos—the ground, water, animals, and all that rely on the elements to survive. The virtue is honesty, and the sacred animal is the horse, *ponokomita*.

Themes

This chapter conveys, from the survivor stories, the two principal themes around which I organized the data: the IRS compensation package and the apology. Reflecting on and analyzing the survivor responses, a sense emerges of the jagged worldviews (Little Bear, 2002) they often experienced. This finding may be especially apparent when language and identity were part of the question and answer.

Theme 1: The compensation package. Question 4 related most directly to this theme ("How has the IRS compensation package that was offered to survivors affected your life?") As a related question, I also asked participants if they understood why the compensation was given. Relevant quotes from the survivors are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Survivor Quotes on Theme 1: The Compensation Package

Subtheme	Relevant survivor quotes
Relive trauma	I had to relive the trauma and recollect the abuses I experienced; I lived my life in fear—behind masks; Made me feel like a whore.
Not enough	It wasn't enough (3); Not worth any amount of money; I'd be satisfied if we got a million each; I don't know if I'll receive anything.
Family	I shared with my family (3).
Effects	You are never the same after abuse; They took a big part of our culture and self-esteem; How could that ugliness that I had to live with, ever compensate me; The fear, the guilt; How could they ever compensate me—I didn't get to be with my mom and dad each night; That's a miserable life in IRS.
Statements	The abusers can burn in hell; Money doesn't buy happiness; They make us think our parents weren't good enough to raise us; They say "entitled," then they cut back years; The people who had it the worst are dead.
General comments	We knew the rosary and spirituality; Apology doesn't mean anything; They're [government] not going to kill us—we're going to survive; Anyone who went to IRS, you got a scar; Money cannot heal; Some were saying "evil money"; Since 1997 I've been going to lawyers.
Grandparents	My grandmother knew Siksikaitsitapi; I went to IRS and starved for her [grandmother] teachings; Thank God for my grandparents, holy parents—they got me through.
Spirituality	I was always missing our spirituality.
Payment	Common experience payment—I received this but didn't apply for the other part; My wife and I—we got our CEP; Yes, it was $33,000 or $34,000—I didn't go further.

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the number of times the statement was mentioned.

The survivor comments shared in Chapter 4 provide evidence as to how poorly monetary compensation, whether the CEP or the independent assessment process, fosters healing for abuses experienced. Many stated that they relived their trauma, and specifically that "money

doesn't buy happiness." They detailed that the compensation was not enough, while at the same time stating that they missed their spirituality. Their comments included statements such as "Money cannot heal pain"; "I lived my life in fear"; "We didn't gain anything"; "I think the ones who deserved that money are all gone"; and "Anybody who went to residential school, it doesn't matter, you got a scar out of it." One specific statement that needs to be highlighted was, "The abusers can burn in hell." These responses and their tone clearly indicate that no amount of money can wipe away the travesties, provide a clean slate, or create a new beginning: "Even though it [compensation] helped in a small way, it cannot take away any emotional, mental, physical, or spiritual wounds."

Similar honest and matter-of-fact responses were provided by survivors in Reimer et al.'s (2010) qualitative study on IRS: "Money is just compensation. Healing was separate" (p. 87); "Why would cash make it better? No, there has not been a healing effect from the money. There have been no changes in my well-being" (p. 87). When asked during the interviews about the IRS settlement agreement, most participating survivors in my study stated that they shared their compensation payment with family, paid a few bills, or spent it frivolously. Not one of the survivors used the money to invest, purchase a home, or make a similar long-term acquisition. One is left to ponder why. Was the payment not enough? Who were the prominent decision-makers when it came time to determine the cost of the 10 plus 3 formula?[20] These questions may be left for many individuals to speculate upon for years to come.

Theme 2: The apology. Question 5 asked, "Where were you when the prime minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, announced the apology to the survivors of Indian residential schools and their families and communities? How were you affected by this specific nationwide

[20] This formula paid $10,000 for the first year of attendance at an IRS plus $3,000 for each subsequent year or part thereof (Reimer et al., 2010).

television/radio broadcast? In your opinion, has it changed any aspect of your life? Explain."

Table 3 shows relevant quotes from the survivors on this theme.

Table 3

Survivor Quotes on Theme 2: The Apology

Subtheme	Relevant survivor quotes
At home	I was at home, I didn't listen to the whole thing; I was home—I watched it.
Didn't watch it	I didn't even hear it; I don't know where I was [laughing]; We were home watching TV—the news brief [laughing]. We didn't even budge; I heard about it, but didn't watch it.
Emotional	It was emotional for me and I cried (2); [I had] mixed feelings.
Didn't care	I got nothing to do with the government; I could care less about that—it was a slap in the face.
Practiced self-healing	I've done a lot of inner healing on my own, asking Creator, guide me, show me a sign where I'm going wrong. I had to change my way, my rigid upbringing of my children. Power of prayer helped me to change my way. Using cultural and spiritual well-being and Western way of prayer.
Not sincere	The apology sounded hollow—it was bullshit and condescending towards survivors of the IRS; PM's apology wasn't sincere (4); He read it off a piece of paper; My question to you—Did it come from his heart? It's gotta come from the heart; Too short; It should have been the Queen and the Pope; We should have had letters from these people; Closest term is like reconciliation; In our culture we give gifts—it's an action.
Other comments	I was in Edmonton at a conference—we watched it; I was in Medicine Hat—I go to this history in the hills; Yeah, I listened—didn't think much of it; I heard the apology from the PM in the House of Commons; The apology was a good way of *Ahkistimskaasii*—it was done nationally.

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent number of times the statement was mentioned.

Although many Canadians viewed, heard, and talked about the federal government's 2008 apology to IRS survivors and their families, survivors' answers to Question 5 portray a distinctly negative view. They were not positively affected by the June 11, 2008, broadcast.

Some stated that they were at home but did not tune into the broadcast. Others stumbled upon it while watching the news, whereas a few took time out of their schedule to tune in.

The consensus was that the apology was not sincere: “He [Prime Minister Stephen Harper] read it from a piece of paper.” Blackfoot culture is not about writing words down, then reading; an apology is about speaking from the heart with utmost truth, sincerity, and honour. One participant thought that it “should have been the Queen and the Pope” to say the apology. Why the Queen or the Pope, you might ask? The signing of the treaties, specifically Treaty 7, was between the Crown and First Nations chiefs, and Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state. Additionally, IRS were run by churches, and the Pope is the highest-ranking authority of the Catholic Church.

Another response was “in our culture, we give gifts—it’s an action [when we apologize].” When we apologize, it is genuine and humbling; not said and forgotten. A gift would be a blanket or some other revered object. When one is truly sorry, one would offer sacred objects, such as tobacco or a meal, for example.

Lessons From the Survivor Stories

Focusing on whether having attended IRS has affected the survivors’ lives, it can be concluded with ease that yes, the IRS system did affect their lives, profoundly so. Many stated that they had negative behaviours after their initial start date, and even after they left. They grew up to lack parenting skills, with minimal mental health awareness. One can arguably state that their jagged worldviews (Little Bear, 2002) while in attendance later affected their adult years. They had little knowledge of disciplinary methods from within a Siksikaitsitapi context. Additionally, they experienced trauma and emerged with emotional scars. Many left with little educational attainment.

Furthermore, one can confer that the transmission of the Blackfoot language was greatly hindered: They could not speak it freely, nor did the majority of them transmit it to their children. Reinforcing the context of the Blackfoot language with understanding the values of Siksikaitsitapi methods, they stated their native language is rich and meaningful, and they had positive attachments to their grandparents' pre-IRS attendance. They stated that while attending IRS, foreign languages were imposed upon them, thus moving their sense of identity further from the core of Siksikaitsitapi ways. Relating these themes to Bastien (2004) and Little Bear (2002), the straying from the essence of Siksikaitsitapi ways was detrimental in their adult years, especially relating to their emotional and mental health (e.g., decreased healthy relationships, marital breakdowns, and loss of connection to culture and others).

Their thoughts and feelings about how the IRS experience affected their spiritual beliefs and connections could be summed up as follows: non-Blackfoot rituals were practiced instead of Siksikaitsitapi ways, as stated by one of the survivors. Imposing the above themes becomes clear that straying from our heritage, or becoming unbalanced, creates the negative effects of loss of cultural connection and continuity; loss of speaking the language and understanding from within the Siksikaitsitapi context. Thus, the jagged worldviews (Little Bear, 2002) result, as do a lack of healthy ways of knowing and being as a Siksikaitsitapi member.

Thematic Analysis Using Siksikaitsitapi Methodology

For the last section of my analysis, I apply the Siksikaitsitapi methodology as an analytical tool in this research. In addition to the initial thematic analysis I conducted, I engaged in a second round of analysis using the domains of the Siksikaitsitapi conceptual framework (see Figure 6) that I created for this research. In order to apply this model, I organized the findings into each of the domains, which are Siksikaitsitapi—Language, ceremony, and value system;

Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa—Source of Life/Creator; Methodology—Relationships which form our reality; and Methodologies—Siksikaitsitapi knowledge still practiced. By analyzing my findings using the Siksikaitsitapi methodology I created, I am adhering to my insistence on meaningful Indigenous methodologies that move beyond informing information gathering and rather guide the analysis and understanding of information. Figure 7 details the Siksikaitsitapi methodology, with analysis from the survivor stories, and can be used as a teaching tool.

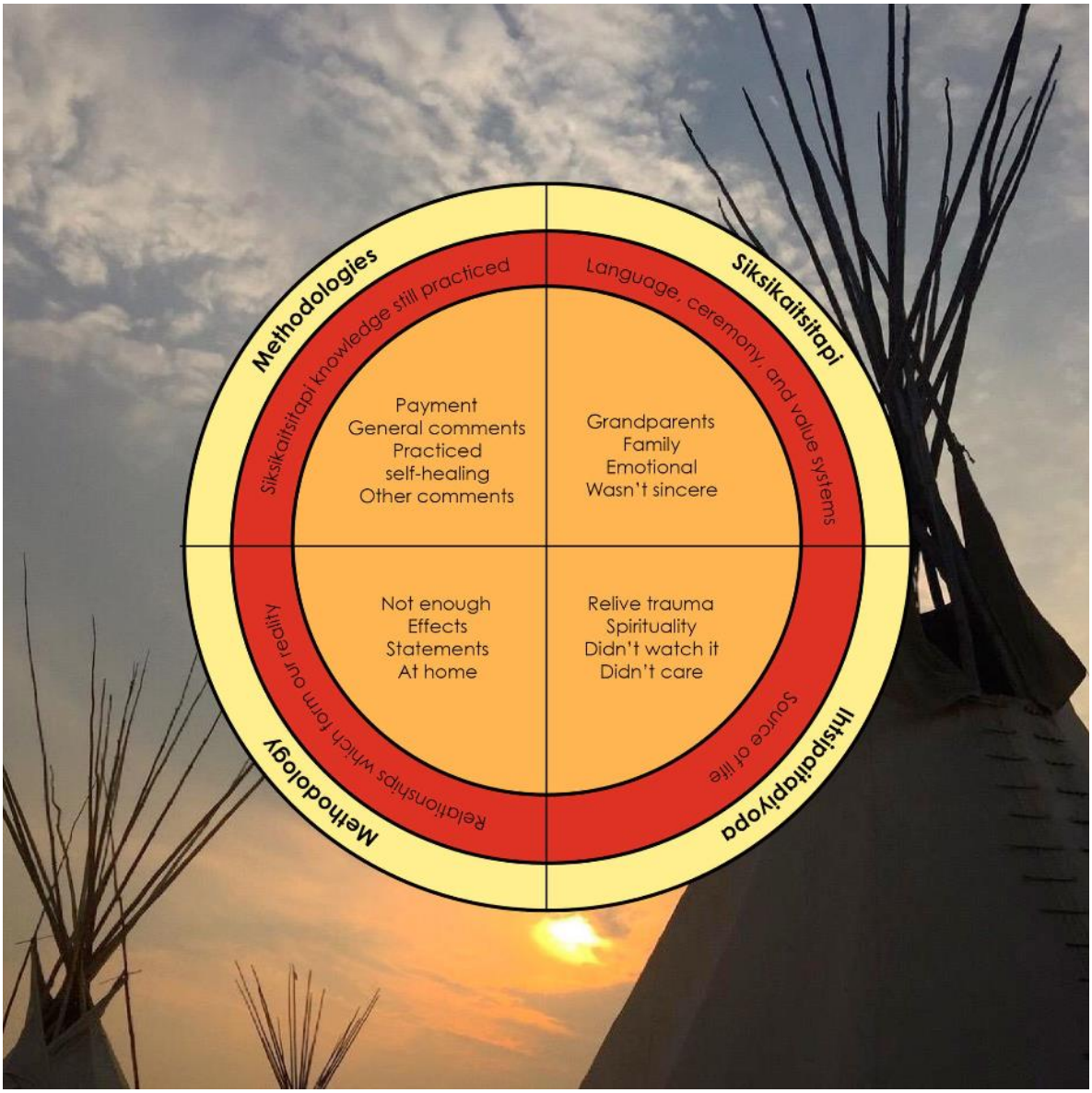

Figure 7. Diagram of Siksikaitsitapi methodology analytical tool.

I have developed this framework to provide an understanding of the ebb and flow, or fluidity, of ceremony, connection, and knowledge, all encompassed from within Siksikaitsipowahsin, Blackfoot language. For this fluidity to occur, and to promote Siksikaitsitapi kiipaitapiiyssinnooni, the transfer of knowledge paves way for continuity and clarity for practicing, speaking, and understanding from within a Siksikaitsitapi context; to transmit the teachings, and to practice the ceremonies, for the relational responsibilities each Siksikaitsitapi member has, such that future generations can learn and then transfer the knowledge in turn, for generations to come. The four headings of the Siksikaitsitapi methodology, and the subthemes that relate to each, are in no particular order due to its fluidity.

Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa (Source of Life). The subthemes under this heading are as follows:

- Relive trauma;
- Spirituality;
- Didn't watch it; and
- Didn't care.

These themes, arising from the survivors' accounts, are intertwined with one's connection to Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa. That connection is of utmost importance, as Indigenous peoples believe we are tied to a Greater Power that is beyond our physical being; it is spirit. Survivors' trauma and pain are felt at the core of their spirit, and it is the spirit that needs this transformational healing (Duran, 2006). Spirituality is integral to how one's aura, persona, or personality is conveyed and observed by others. The practice of spirituality has been hindered throughout the generations due to various assimilationist policies, such as IRS.

Survivors who did not watch the apology or who did not care steer indicate that they no longer believed in the government's promises or expressions of concern. As Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa is

one's source of life, survivors longed for that connection during their years at an IRS. Without this connection, according to the elders' stories, teachings, and prayers, how can one act in accordance with the cultural laws of one's ancestry? As time has passed, and with each generation living inherited and experiential traumas related to the aftermath of IRS, it could be that survivors and members of Blackfoot Confederacy are living each day, the best they can.

Now how do we connect to Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa? We must start prenatally; we must maintain cultural continuity, which includes our ceremonial practices at the core of who we are. We must teach and transfer this knowledge in a sacred manner at home, in schools, in community organizations, and at each government level. With this framework, we can ensure that pathways of connection can have a ripple effect of change, for the betterment of all people. The promotion of Siksikaitsitapi kiipaitapiiyssinnooni is integral to foster connection to the Source of Life, Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa.

Methodology (Relationships which form our reality). The subthemes under this heading are as follows:

- Not enough;
- Effects;
- Statements; and
- At home.

How do we form our realities? Where does this reality and the relationships we establish stem from, and how does it affect our growth and development? When discussing the compensation package, survivors stated it was not enough. Most left the IRS with emotional scars. Some may never fully heal from these scars, yet they continue to be content. Money cannot erase the traumatic memories, yet for some, it allowed them to share with their families,

which is a form of generosity within the cultural traditions of Siksikaitsitapi. Inherently, all survivors had kindness in their hearts that they had lived thus far to share their stories with me, and to provide a pathway for others to learn from. In the crux of trauma, our connection and relationship to and with each other and our Creator prevails. It is beyond human reality; it is spiritual, as shared by Bastien (2004) and Little Bear (2002).

Then how does one form relationships? One forms them by being immersed in the culture, which includes those relationships formed from birth to death, within the language systems that shape one's reality. Little Bear (1994, 2002) stressed the fluidity of the culture; that Siksikaitsipowahsin is verb oriented, and those elements help mould each member. We then create our reality in relation to our environment, which includes everything outside of us (Johnson, 1997). Although the survivors were punished for speaking Siksikaitsipowahsin, their early years and pre-IRS attendance had been influenced by the language and the relationships they had formed, and they had already started creating that reality from within a Siksikaitsitapi context.

Methodologies (Siksikaitsitapi knowledge still practiced). The subthemes under this heading are as follows:

- Payment;
- General comments;
- Practiced self-healing; and
- Other comments.

The annual Aako'ka'tssin is still practiced today. The three tribes, Piikani, Siksika, and Kainai, still gather each year during the summer months for Kana'kaaatsiiks (Iitsskinnayiiks, Maotokiiks, Kana'tsomitaiksi, or any one of the societies) for ceremonial rituals, songs, dances,

and transfers. We come together, to give thanks, and to ask for continued prosperity in terms of good health, respectful relationships, and long survival. When the survivors were young, they were not immersed in this natural way of life. They had experienced traumas that affected their spirit, their relationships, and the knowledge they rightly should have been embodied in, yet were at times severely punished for speaking and practicing this natural way of life for them.

As adults, and older members of their tribes, many had come back to the old ways, Siksikaitsitapi kiipaitapiiyssinnooni, and stated that "using cultural and spiritual well-being" was of way of practicing self-healing. The layers of trauma still are needed to be unmasked and removed so as to allow their spirits to be free and to truly be Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin (the life or lifeworld of Niitsitapi—Blackfoot-speaking real people).

Those who foster and fund reconciliatory programs and services in all realms of Canadian society need to understand the process of how these programs are drafted and taught. Further, these programs need to be understood from within an Indigenous lens or epistemology: aistomatoominniki, coming to know one's heart. This way forward not only provides modes of healing and reconciliation, it also acknowledges and accepts that there are many pathways for learning, teaching, and coming together in our multifaceted and multilayered society.

Siksikaitsitapi (Language, ceremony, and value systems). The subthemes under this heading are as follows:

- Grandparents;
- Family;
- Emotional; and
- Wasn't sincere.

Kaaahsinnooniksi, our grandparents, shared and transferred knowledge whole-heartedly to younger generations. The naturalness of their relationships was part of the practice of Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa: the ceremonies, the legends, the relationality, interconnections and interrelationships, and the language through which we understand the world around us, and within us. The emotional sensation one feels when ceremonial prayers and songs are practiced and said is intangible. It is spiritual, and it is connection to Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa. The apology was not sincere; there was no spiritual connection conveyed in the speech that was read. The survivors longed for the heartfelt apology; their spirits longed for the acknowledgement of the hurts to transform the hurts to go back out into the universe, and then for contentment and love to fill their spirits. The transformation of the negative energy, the guilt and shame that survivors have carried, is needed. This can be executed only from within their specific cultural context, Siksikaitsitapi kiipaitapiiyssinnooni. Coming back to spirit is what many humans desire, yet most do not realize this desire on a conscious level.

Siksikaitsipowahsin (language), *aaopaatoom* (ceremony), and *kimmotsiisinni* (values such as compassion, kindness, caring, and generosity) are interconnected and transferred in the everyday reality of Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin. These elements, fused with *ksahkomma iikatsimapsiwa aawatsimihkasatawa* (sacred relationships), form the Siksikaitsitapi worldview, Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin. These integral ways of knowing and being were hindered and distorted during survivors' IRS attendance. Yet, as many First Nations elders stated at a National Elders' Gathering in 1993, "The voice of the land is in our language" (Brant Castellano et al., 2000, p. 29). To support the important and foundational element of language, elders from across Canada detailed, "Aboriginal languages are spiritually interconnected with the land; that they embody values and relationships; that survival and forgiveness, love and laughter, are all intertwined with

the authentic language of a place and people" (Brant Castellano et al., 2000, p. 29). It is my hope that for each new generation, we teach using a Siksikaitsitapi methodology, a teaching pedagogy from within Siksikaitsitapi kiipaitapiiyssinnooni; to genuinely be immersed and embodied from within our own cultural lens. I long for that day when we can freely practice and live Siksikaitsitapi kiipaitapiiyssinnooni.

Conclusion

If, in fact, one were to compensate and apologize from within an Indigenous lens and context, or specifically a Siksikaitsitapi one, the action part of the compensation and apology would have been felt at a deeper level. There could have been soft edges relating to the terms of the compensation, such as eligibility to invest in the overall health and well-being of survivors and their families, the development of ways in which survivors could invest the compensation received, the teaching of financial planning, and the receipt of payments over an extended period of time.

Additionally, apologizing from a Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin context would have allowed the apology to have been felt at a spiritual level. Beyond the initial broadcast, the government could have continued with visiting each First Nations reserve and IRS building to hear the stories, meet the survivors and their families, and learn more about who they are in terms of family, connection, and cultural traditions. As a few survivors mentioned, "He [the prime minister] read it from a piece of paper." If the apology had been given from the heart, and not simply read, I think it would have made a difference in the hearts and minds of the survivors and their families. The intent and spirit of the apology would have been felt at that spiritual level, when Stephen Harper stated, "We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions and that it created a void in many lives and communities, and

we apologize" (as cited in Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008, p. 1). If action had been taken after June 11, 2008, the survivors' comments may have been different, and even positive. The apology could have been viewed as an element of and a genuine step towards reconciliation, and an indication of the federal government's accountability and responsibility for the intentional, hurtful, and wrongful acts perpetuated against the Indigenous people of Canada.

The survivors shared their perspectives as adults, but they attended IRS as children. Their memories in that reflection are what all parties can learn from as we lean towards continued truth and reconciliation. As children, they were not held, taught, or nurtured from within this framework—that Creator is the all-being relationship which guides our connections to everything else. That this relationship forms our reality and how we see everything and everyone around us; how we learn, speak Siksikaitsipowahsin, and practice everything encompassed within Siksikaitsitapi knowledge systems; and how we continue to practice and transfer this knowledge habitually for each succeeding generation. This lack of being nurtured within their Indigenous context left many gaps in forming a natural and positive Siksikaitsitapi worldview, and even created distortions (jagged worldviews) in their reality for years to come. However, as many of the survivors shared, in their adult years, and for some in their elderly years, they have come full circle. They have begun to speak Siksikaitsipowahsin and have reconnected with their spirit, as they again began to practice, to varying degrees, Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin.

Siksikaitsitapi methodology may appear to be specific to Blackfoot Confederacy people (Siksikaitsitapi kiipaitapiiyssinnooni). However, this model could be used by other Indigenous groups, by various levels of government, and by social justice or health and healing organizations, to name a few. Embracing the four elements of language, source of life, methodology, and methodologies creates an intentional way forward, as we continue to bridge

the gaps, build culturally safe and respectful relations, and genuinely help those on their healing journeys.

The survivors wanted more; they deserved more. We can learn much from an Indigenous lens when we have a framework to conceptualize what is working and what is not; what has worked and what has not. This understanding is important for future programming and services that reach Indigenous populations and that target issues in the aftermath of the IRS experience. I posit that if people want to see the staggering statistics that plague Blackfoot Confederacy members improve, we are left with no choice but this: "The process of decolonization requires new, critically evaluated methodologies and new, ethically and culturally acceptable approaches to the study of indigenous issues" (Porsanger, 2004, p. 111). The Siksikaitsitapi methodology—conceptual framework (see Figure 6) is a good place to start, especially where reconciliatory actions are to happen genuinely. The voices of the survivors, the intention in their tone, and the softness as they shared abuses are indicators of spiritual strength and of the blood memory of our ancestors' sacred knowledge systems. The survivors' kindness in sharing lunch and tea, and their nonchalant manners of "turning their bannock," is truly a testament to the courage they have exemplified, whether they realized it or not. The connections I have built while undertaking this project have helped my own journey, as both a researcher and member.

Chapter 6: Implications

> When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission makes its tour of the country and hears the stories of people who endured the pain of residential schools, I hope it hears more stories like mine—of people who fought against the resentment, hatred, and anger and found a sense of peace. Both the Commission and Canada need to hear our stories of healing instead of a relentless retelling and re-experiencing of pain. They need to hear that, despite everything, every horror, it is possible to move forward and to learn how to leave hurt behind. Our neighbours in this country need to hear stories about our capacity for forgiveness, for self-examination, for compassion, and for our yearning for peace because they speak to our resiliency as a people. That is how reconciliation happens.
>
> It is a big word, **reconciliation**. Quite simply, it means to create harmony. You create harmony with truth and you build truth out of humility. That is spiritual. That is truth. That is Indian. Within us, as nations of Aboriginal people and as individual members of those nations, we have an incredible capacity for survival, endurance, and forgiveness. In the reconciliation with ourselves first, we find the ability to create harmony with others, and that is where it has to start—in the fertile soil of our own hearts, minds, and spirits.
>
> That, too, is Indian. (Wagamese, 2012, pp. 164–165)

This chapter is focused on the upward direction—the sky, the winged beings, and the cosmos. It is also Spirit—Creator, Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa. And without ceremony and acknowledging my connection to this Higher Being, I am not sure I would have taken on such a task to begin with. It is also a chapter of generosity—and I share this project with you in the hopes that you

may walk away enlightened in some way. *Sspoopii*, or turtle, is the animal we give thanks to and acknowledge; Turtle Island is our protection, our longevity, our life, our survival.

Why did I undertake this Wise Big Writing, this Mokakyomahsinaksin? And why has it taken me longer than many graduate students to complete? I do not have a definitive answer to either question. I do, however, have my own experience with which to answer the aforementioned questions.

I have been born unto a loving father and mother. Both of them attended an IRS; specifically, St. Mary's Immaculate Conception Indian Residential School, Blood Reserve. Wagamese (2012) wrote,

> I am a victim of Canada's residential school system. When I say victim, I mean something substantially different than "survivor." I never attended a residential school, so I cannot say that I survived one. However, my parents and my extended family members did. The pain they endured became my pain, and I became a victim. (p. 157)

After I read Wagamese's (2012) words and allowed the teachings to be absorbed, as well as feel the sadness and hurt many victims have felt, I could conclude only one thing—I am not alone in how I feel as a victim of the residential schools. My parents have paved the foundation for me to be who I am and where I am today. I am grateful for their courage and determination; their hard lessons; their tenacity and resiliency; their gentleness and warmth. It has taken me many years to understand the big schema of it all—and through this undertaking of a PhD program, it has made all the difference in a preeminent way.

I am an extension of the survivors' stories, of Kaaahsinnooniksi, and in turn, my children are infused with Kaaahsinnooniksi stories, teachings, and worldview. It is through these stories, teachings, and transfer of knowledge that we learn life lessons—the good, not so good, and yes,

even the ugly. Nonetheless, we walk our journey, our sacred journey to be part of the big schema of things—the connections, the ceremonies, and the changes that may and will occur along this path.

If we, as Indigenous people and the general Canadian population, were to reflect upon historical accounts and experiences, and genuinely acknowledge the many undertakings, such as the boundaries of a First Nation reserve or the operation of an IRS, we would know that bigger forces enabled these specific and longstanding processes to continue—to the benefit of whom? To the detriment of whom? To relearn is to acknowledge that what we know at present may not be beneficial or positive to a particular group of people. In Chapters 1 and 2 I reflected on Siksikaitsitapi worldview—language, teachings, connection, and specific cultural protocols. Throughout history, both pre- and post-Confederation, the knowledge that was taught from mainstream society, print and oral, was not specific to, for, or about Siksikaitsitapi people, territory, history, or language. Thus, relearning traditional cultural protocols is essential for the overall growth, development, and connection individual Blackfoot Confederacy members need to unmask the horrors that are plaguing them. As Johnson (1997) so poignantly wrote, "The more I see of other cultures, the more aware I am of my own culture as a culture, and that things aren't just what they are but are what my culture makes them out to be" (p. 51).

The following sections discuss a theoretical avenue that I have formulated from all components of this research project: the literature review, Siksikaitsitapi worldview, survivor stories, and researcher–member reflection. I align this chapter with the Siksikaitsitapi methodology—conceptual framework (see Figure 6) from Chapter 3. If there are elements that hinder or threaten an individual's natural connection to Siksikaitsitapi ways, then it affects the

whole of that individual, and can affect the naturalness of tribal ways of knowing, being, and doing.

The Historical and Sociological Context of Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin Breakdown

A common theme throughout Indigenous territories has been colonization, oppressive policies, and forced assimilation. Chapter 2 discussed the history in North America after 1492. Figure 8 provides a visual to refer to in this chapter of the gradual destruction and regeneration of the Siksikaitsitapi people over the past 500 years.

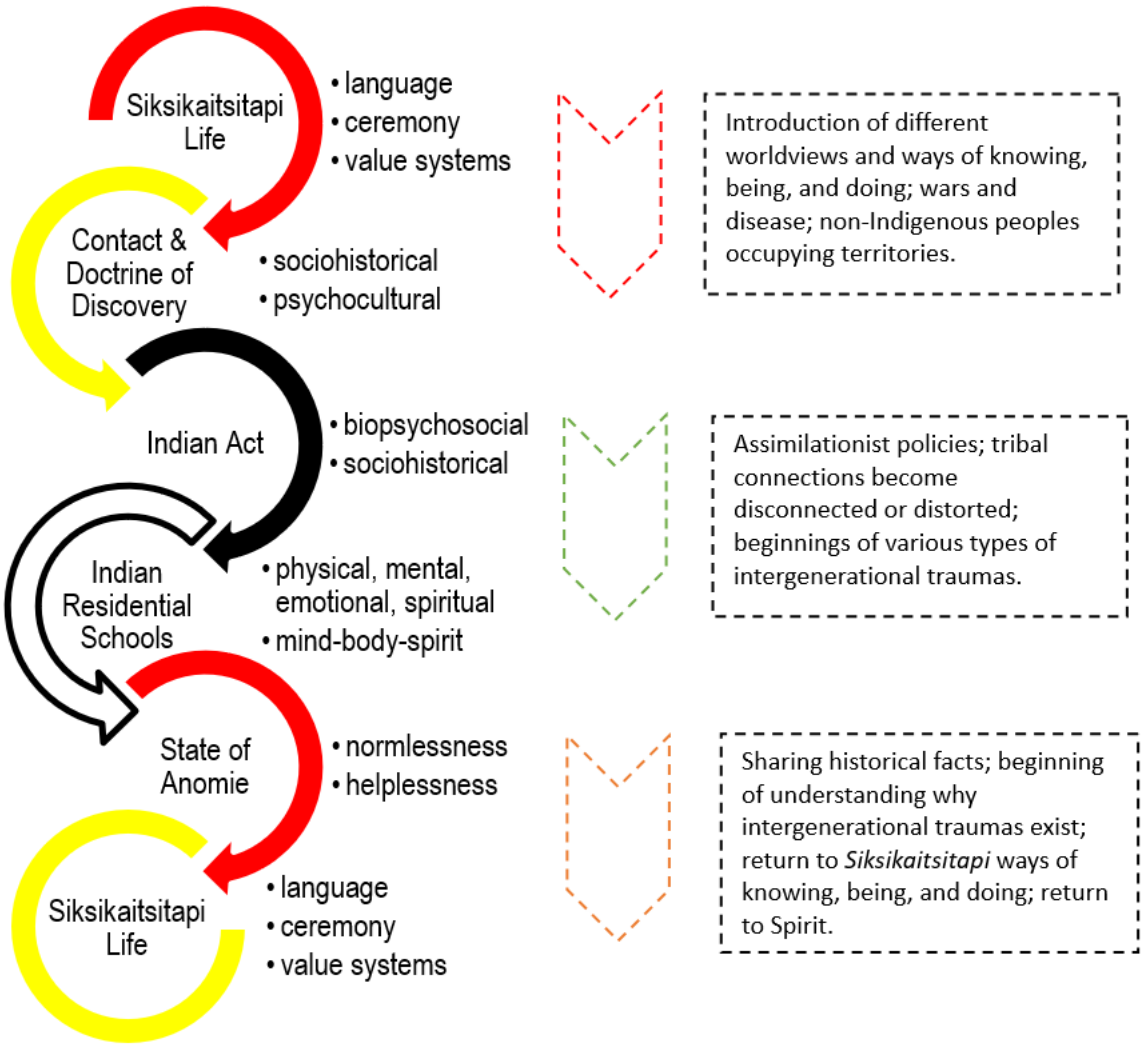

Figure 8. Historical context of the gradual destruction and regeneration of Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin.

The beginning, for Siksikaitsitapi, is of ceremony, creation stories, and connection. Figure 8 details the beginnings that threatened the destruction of Blackfoot Confederacy people—their land base for survival, their language and all that is encompassed within, their values and belief systems for continued existence, for continuity, for respect. The disproportionate statistics (such as high rates of poverty and unemployment, low rates of educational attainment both at high school and postsecondary levels, and increased rates of ill health, especially diabetes, heart disease, and obesity) that are talked about, analyzed, taught, and spread throughout the media have many wondering, why is this so? Each civilization began with specific instructions to live, connect, talk, sing, pray, and transfer to each other and for one another. This research project detailed the Siksikaitsitapi language (Siksikaitsipowahsin), way of life (Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin), and teachings (Nitaisstammatsokoyi) as related to the participant stories. It also discussed a select number of survivor stories from which all may learn, and in some way heal, as those stories are read and reflected upon.

The next section discusses an interconnection of a sociological lens with an Indigenous worldview; namely, Durkheim's theoretical work, (as cited in Dohrenwend, 1959), relating to his theory of suicide. But why use this interconnection? From sociological practice, a takeaway would be,

> We [as individuals] are always participating in something larger than ourselves, and if we want to understand social life and what happens to people in it, we have to understand what it is that we're participating in and how we participate in it. (Johnson, 1997, p. 13)

Assisting readers with this bigger schema of societal issues and how we as human beings participate in society, as it shapes us, aids not only in understanding complex issues outside of ourselves, but also in understanding ourselves and how we are enmeshed within this web of

complexity. Hence, as related to the Siksikaitsitapi historical context, we have to understand what we are participating in and how we participate in it. It is "the relationship between people and the systems" (Johnson, 1997, p. 155); the relationship of Siksikaitsitapi and the colonial systems that threaten Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin.

Interconnection of a Sociological Lens With an Indigenous Worldview

As mentioned in an earlier section, my master's degree is in sociology. I was fascinated with this discipline for several reasons. First, it helped me understand my own social constructs, in addition to how factors outside of myself have shaped my identity. Second, an eye-opener for me was Durkheim's theory of suicide (as cited in Dohrenwood, 1959), and how outside forces shape us as individuals. Reiterating the interconnection of spirit, language, and values lays the foundation for one's identity, yet it is also a reflection of the system in which one operates. For Siksikaitsitapi members, whereas precontact cultural practices were intact, these practices became increasingly threatened, especially during the IRS era.

> Durkheim was one of the founding fathers of sociology. As Thompson (2004) stated,
>
> It is arguable that Emile Durkheim contributed more to the founding of modern sociology than any other individual before or since. He defined and demonstrated its method in a series of brilliant studies, most notably: *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), *Suicide* (1897), and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912). (p. 1)

The sociological lens offers an insight into suicide, and other inequalities and injustices that plague Indigenous populations, and why these phenomena have been—and still are—perpetuated throughout First Nations tribes, including Siksikaitsitapi members. Durkheim's theory aids in how Siksikaitsitapi might understand the systems we operate in, firstly from within

Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin, and then in colonial systems that oppress our natural practices. In *Egoism, Altruism, Anomie, and Fatalism: A Conceptual Analysis of Durkheim's Types,* Dohrenwend (1959) presented an analysis of Durkheim's conceptions of the types of "social environments which predispose individuals to suicide" (p. 466). These conceptions provide a historical context to better understand a few key areas, notably suicide, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and family breakdown.

Dohrenwend (1959) included the following definitions of *egoism*, *altruism*, *anomie*, and *fatalism*:

- Egoism is a state of society "in which the individual ego asserts itself to excess in the face of the social ego and at its expense. . . . This state is one marked by excessive individualism" (pp. 466–467).
- Altruism is a "state of impersonality in the social unit. . . . The individual has no interests of his own. . . . He is rather trained to renunciation and unquestioned abnegation; . . . duty and honor are of paramount importance" (p. 467).
- Anomie is a state of "de-regulation and declassification . . . all the advantages of social influence are lost . . . moral education has to be recommenced . . . appetites increase, passions are unleashed, there is suffering, competition, a race for an unattainable goal. . . . This state is found in industrial sectors of modern society, but it is not restricted to them" (p. 467).
- Fatalism is a state in which there is "excessive regulation . . . such that futures are pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline. . . . The case of slavery provides an example" (p. 467).

With the imposition of forced assimilation through policy, IRS, treaty signing, and economic, political, and social marginalization starting in the 1800s and continuing through to the present day, the territories of First Nations people, including the Siksikaitsitapi, have been, and still are, being shrunk geographically. This minimization does much harm to Indigenous peoples: the land they walk on is part of them, and they are part of the land. Chapters 1 to 3 laid the groundwork for readers to understand the relationships, the taken-for-granted notion through ceremony, and by transmitting values and beliefs, that connection to land is as integral to Siksikaitsitapi as are fish to water—one cannot separate the two. It is no wonder that seven generations of disturbance have led to the crux of high rates of suicide, poverty, unemployment, marital and family breakdown, and of a state of anomie.

Trauma and unresolved grief can lead to a feeling or sense of anomie, if left unaddressed and masked. A general picture of suicide, for example as compiled by the Centre for Suicide Prevention (n.d.), conveys the following:

- Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are the leading causes of death for First Nations youth and adults up to 44 years of age (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016).
- Approximately 46% of all Indigenous children are under 25 years of age (Statistics Canada, 2012).
- The suicide rate for First Nations male youth (age 15–24) is 126 per 100,000 compared to 24 per 100,000 for non-Indigenous male youth.
- For First Nations females, the suicide rate is 35 per 100,000 compared to 5 per 100,000 for non-Indigenous females (Health Canada, 2010). (Centre for Suicide Prevention, n.d., Statistics section, para. 1)

Additionally, the Centre for Suicide Prevention (n.d.) has clarified how the effects of colonization, government policies, and forced assimilation are still visible today:

> The effects of colonization and governmental policies of forced assimilation continue to cause acculturative stress and marginalization amongst the Indigenous population. These effects can be passed on from one generation to the next; this is referred to as intergenerational trauma. They can ultimately manifest in behaviours which may place individuals at risk for suicide. (Legacies of colonization section, para. 1)

It is time to acknowledge, admit, and redress these effects if reconciliation is to occur within the next generation. We do not want the next seven generations to be affected by unresolved colonial practices. The Centre for Suicide Prevention (n.d.) has also detailed the effects of colonization, which include but are not limited to

- Residential school experiences
- Forced adoptions and foster care
- Forced relocation from one community to another
- Denial of existence as people (as in the case of the Métis Nation). (Legacies of colonization section, para. 2)

If readers compare the abovementioned consequences of colonization to the conceptual analysis of Durkheim's (as cited in Dohrenwend, 1959) types of social environments (egoism, altruism, anomie, and fatalism), a state of anomie is clearly observed at present. Furthermore, Bastien (2004) and Little Bear (2002) have detailed how Siksikaitsitapi formed relations with all that was animate and inanimate, how their language encompassed all that they knew (epistemology and ontology), and how the ceremonies infused everything together. These were their longstanding protective factors—since time immemorial. When outside forces take those

factors away, with force or otherwise, a state of anomie develops. Siksikaitsitapi behaviours become a manifestation of egoism, anomie, and fatalism stemming from the broader society and seeping heavily into Indigenous people's way of life. I posit that what is happening today in First Nations territories, when young and old commit a quick or slow suicide, is *anomic suicide*—a sense of hopelessness, a state of normlessness, and a state of helplessness. Anomic suicide is not a fault of their own: rather, it is imposed on them as intergenerational trauma, as the colonial legacy, including the IRS era, and as gradual disconnect from Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa—Creator.

Referring to Figure 6, it is apparent how the gradual hindrance, which has been perpetual and intentional, has thus created "jagged worldviews":

> Colonization created a fragmentary worldview among Aboriginal peoples. By force, terror, and educational policy, it attempted to destroy the Aboriginal worldview—but failed. Instead, colonization left a heritage of jagged worldviews among Indigenous peoples. They no longer had an Aboriginal worldview, nor did they adopt a Eurocentric worldview. Their consciousness became a random puzzle, a jigsaw puzzle that each person has to attempt to understand. (Little Bear, 2002, pp. 85–86)

Let us piece the puzzle together, to ensure this dark history is lit with the fire of the Sacred flame, and we reach a place where we are jagged no more.

Relearning, Rebuilding, Renewing, and Restorying

Knowledge is relational. Hence, for renewing and restorying that is meaningful to Siksikaitsitapi members, history, cultural teachings (including value systems and ceremony), origin stories, and ways of knowing and being must be taught using Siksikaitsipowahsin. Members must unmask each layer until they are at their individual essence that derives from this specific territory, and that inherently is of Siksikaitsitapi descent. This rebuilding would align

with the Siksikaitsitapi methodology to ensure balanced individuals who can renew and restory their own paths, and be able to freely and honourably transmit this path to their children and grandchildren in turn, for their next seven generations.

Infusing the conceptual framework being applied throughout this project with how one understands specific issues, such as suicide, and coming back to understanding spirit, Duran (2006) stated,

> I ask the patient to make an offering to the spirit of suicide, which I introduce early on as the "spirit of transformation." I tell the patient that the idea of wanting to die is literally a misinterpretation of the soul's desire to transform. . . . During the session, I ask patients who are exhibiting suicide ideation to have a conversation with the spirit of suicide. The patients' approach to the conversation with all the mannerisms expected in a police exchange and ask the spirit of suicide what it wants from them. I then ask patients to leave an offering for the spirit of suicide as an expression of gratitude for the gift that this entity has brought. . . . I ask them to bless the suicide spirit, which completely changes the relationship with the energy. (p. 99)

How does one interpret the spirit of transformation and of suicide? This entails sitting with the spirit of, and allowing the teaching to come forward. To be able to sit with spirit, to nurture it, to allow that spirit to transform itself to joy, love, or other feel-good emotions.

One can clearly comprehend, and have a crisper and clearer picture of those vulnerable individuals who died by suicide, as well as those who are living a gradual, slow suicide via substance use and abuse, those who are involved with human trafficking (most of whom, if not all of whom, are forced), those who lead risky and dangerous lives, those who have been afflicted with various abuses, and those who were raised in foster homes. As Duran (2006) has

pointed out, “The patients realize that suicidal images have a transforming energy that literally can take them into the depths of their psyche, which has been suffering from personal and intergenerational grief” (p. 99).

Siksikaitsitapi members can restory if they align with the Siksikaitsitapi methodology presented within this project. It may not be the only methodology. However, for academic and organizational purposes, I have detailed what I understand from the stories, writings, and relations as rooted in Siksikaitsitapi Niitsitapiipaitapiiyssin. The connection with and to Creator—Ihtsipaitapiiyo’pa, the relationships that form one’s reality, the transfer of knowledge: These are the natural ways for Siksikaitsitapi individuals to receive the teachings of ceremonies and value systems from within a Siksikaitsitapi context. It should be done via the speaking and transferring of Siksikaitsipowahsin to and with the members. Rebuilding is necessary after the damage that has been done at IRS. Speaking the language, ensuring connections, and practicing cultural ways are perpetual paths to heal the colonial vampire bite that has infected Indigenous peoples. Duran (2006, p. 18) detailed traits of vampires, as observed in some lore:

- Vampires have a tendency to work at night and in darkness (as is the case with the sexual abuses in IRS, as can be read in Chapter 4 from survivor responses);
- They are part of a secret society (hush hush, do not tell anyone);
- They can be eradicated only by special spiritual means (ceremony, spiritual connection to Creator);
- When they bite a victim, the victim becomes infected; and
- The victim then becomes a vampire (inflict the same actions, hurts, and abuses onto others).

In turn, the afflicted individuals will struggle with relationships, will display negative affective behaviours toward self and others, and their spirit, infected by the vampire bite, can and often will lead them astray. Creating awareness and sharing specific cultural knowledge from and by Siksikaitsitapi members who know this progression and who can share in a sensitive manner are essential to decreasing rates of suicide, of unhealthy individual and familial disparities, and of a sense of hopelessness. Striving towards increasing the number of people who speak Siksikaitsipowahsin, who have healthy connections, and who practice Siksikaitsitapi aaopaatoom (ceremony) will ensure strong values and belief systems for generations to come. The vampire bite and infection—the *soul wound*—can be healed by practicing and performing Siksikaitsitapi aaopaatoom, thus being nurtured within Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin. Let us join this soul healing journey. Let us rebuild, renew, and restory, as we move forward together.

Relearning, rebuilding, renewing, and restorying can be profound and have lasting positive effects towards a renewed sense of identity and belonging for Siksikaitsitapi members. Charting the path now is critical. Changing the path from gradual cultural destruction to regeneration is crucial. From this time onward, mapping a renewed path for Siksikaitsitapi members, one they will intentionally choose, is the path to healing.

Chapter 7: My Journey

> The shape of existence would be circular, not *e*volving, but *re*volving. The past, present and future would always be essentially the same. Just as the four seasons come, go and always return again, so too each generation would come and go, never striking out on its own path . . .
>
> Thus, . . . it would be something like a relay race which never ends, each generation passing the baton to the next for its turn around the track, the old and new generations running side by side while the transfer takes place, the older one slowing as the newer one picks up speed. Each would go where the other had already gone, would come to see and hear and think what had already been seen and heard and thought by countless earlier generations. No matter who travelled it or when, the track would be common to all. It is little wonder, then, that the "track" would become sacred, for it would have been shared by all and have given sustenance to all since time beyond memory, just as it must provide sustenance into the infinite future . . .
>
> And, . . . this is more than just an emotional tie to the land; the land itself is a tie to the communal past, present and future. (Ross, 2006, pp. 104–105)

Discussion

The sacred direction for this chapter is within. I have arranged this Wise Big Writing, Mokakyomahsinaksin project, into seven chapters. Chapter 1 was east. Chapter 2 was south. Chapter 3 was west. Chapter 4 was north. Chapter 5 was downward—Mother Earth, plants, water, and land beings. Chapter 6 was upward—sky, moon, stars, Milky Way. And lastly, Chapter 7 is within—one's spirit, soul, essence, and connection to and with Creator—

Aapiistatookii ki Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa. I also honour the wolf, an animal that seeks one mate for life, and who protects the pack, young and old. Being humble and displaying humility in your daily life is an important virtue from an Indigenous, Siksikaitsitapi context.

The quote to start this chapter off is for intergenerational communication as well as the transfer of knowledge. It is cyclical and in unison with the surroundings, the plants, the air, the water, the animals—this transfer of knowledge has been what humans have adopted whether this knowledge is handy, practical, good, or otherwise. This concluding chapter takes the reader within, as this is my reflection of my journey within this Wise Big Writing project. As an academic researcher and Blackfoot Confederacy member, I have come to an understanding of how my experiences, both tangible and intangible, have led me to the present, with gratitude, humility, and in utter awe of the baton being passed on to me, from the ancestors and the ancients, Kaaahsinnooniksi. The wolf has guided me, consciously and unconsciously; I am grateful for the teachings. It has been a journey of happiness, sadness, contentment, pain, grief, and ordinary memories.

I was on track at the beginning, at my start date; it did not stay that way for long. Why? Let me fill you in. As I started researching more and more about IRS, Indian policy, and the stories of those who attended an IRS (including those who are part of this specific project), and as my parents became increasingly open to sharing their experiences, too, and of methods with which to start reviving Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin, Blackfoot way of life, my own soul wounds[21] were being mirrored back to me.

I could not see, at the beginning of the project, my own soul wounds. I had turned to counselling several years ago to admit, feel, share, learn, trust, and love myself and my path—the

[21] Dr. Eduardo Duran's (2006) book, *Healing the Soul Wound*, played a transformational role throughout this project and to the present day.

good, the bad, and yes, the ugly. How do I heal myself? How has this journey assisted in my soul wound healing path? I could no longer shelve or hide my own trauma, both intergenerational and experiential. I did not leave myself a choice; I had to acknowledge and work through my own pain, internal and inherited from generations upon generations of forced assimilation, of discriminatory policies, and of abuses due to not being able to grieve the losses of our ancestors, of our culture, of our language, of our land, and of our children. The embers of the fire are within each of us, and thus, I chose to let that fire burn after much healing and awakening, to complete this project I had started, and to share the knowledge of the survivors, of the ancestors, of my family and of myself, as we live our ceremony each day and walk in a sacred manner.

Personal Reflections

A second question to myself, as I write this last chapter, is how has this research project changed me, or awakened me? McIsaac (2000) affirmed,

> Indigenous knowledges are knowledges of experience and relationship that speak to lived, material, and cosmological concerns. . . . In the production of these forms of knowledge, traditional values, interest, and objectives articulate series of relationships (land/nature, spiritual, and human). . . . To sever these relationships is tantamount to genocide. . . . There is a moral imperative to become resituated as learners, and to engage in a process and relationship of learning that is based on indigenous knowledges. (p. 100)

The moral imperative was acknowledged, as part of my healing journey and researcher awareness. Cora Weber-Pillwax (2003, as cited in Wilson, 2008) also reflected on this moral imperative:

> Indigenous scholarship reflects inherited Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies and it is the responsibility of Indigenous researchers associated with a university to maintain

and continuously renew the connections with our ancestors and our communities through embodiment, adherence and practice of these. (p. 60)

This collection of authors' portrayals of their own perspectives ensures the reflective-researcher stance; it is all spellbinding; it fills the soul, enriches the mind, and deepens connections evermore. The authors within this document have affirmed that who we are is precious, where we are situated at this moment in time sets the grounding for generations to come (choose wisely and truthfully), and the direction we are heading is a good path; a sacred path for Indigenous peoples and cultures.

Many authors have mirrored my own thoughts, feelings, actions, and words in how we envision a path for Indigenous peoples, specifically for my own community. I have not discovered or philosophized any new ways of thinking: I have used the knowledge systems that were transferred to me, from those who come from all directions. I will continue to use their sacred knowledge and respectfully and Indigenously articulate the concepts of balance and harmony, and the relational tribal affiliations we have with our families, kinship, environment, histories, and language systems. Weber-Pillwax (as cited in Wilson, 2008) pointed out, "The source of a research project is the heart/mind of the researcher, and 'checking your heart' is a critical element in the research process" (p. 60).

A further question I asked myself: How has this journey assisted in my understanding of myself, of the IRS era, of policy, and of research?

Wilson's (2008) book, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, has affirmed my Being as a Blackfoot-Siksikaitsitapi woman. The teachings organized as they are within this book have grounded me. Research is ceremony, and if you have attended a traditional

ceremony,[22] you cannot explain how you feel; you just know there is transcendence between you and Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa, Giver of Life. As I have provided the "evidence" and "validity" relating to the connection of our Sacred Circle, the Siksikaitsitapi way of knowing, being, and doing—Siksikaitsitapiipaitapiiyssin—I must ground myself and feel with my heart, mind, and spirit in order for the outcome of this academic journey to be in alignment with my essence as a Siksikaitsitapi woman, and everything that it encompasses.

Survivor 2 stated, "When I came into this world, as a full-blooded Blackfoot female, I learned prayer." I was enlightened after she stated that. What an amazing connection I had with the women and men I interviewed. I gained much strength from their stories, and they affirmed what I knew in my soul—that Siksikaitsitapi aatsimoyihkaani (prayer) and aaopaatoom (ceremony) are aato'si (to have sacred power, i.e., healing powers). The survivors' stories affirmed what I inherently knew. My parents also affirmed this connection. After all these years, knowing what my parents experienced was a loss of connection, loss of emotional bonding to their parents, loss of language, loss of identity, yet they remembered love. And they remain my unsung heroes, my foundation, and my primary role models.

This knowledge I share with you will be read. But it may be also be used in some way, in order for a better, deeper understanding of our people and tribal relations in a respectful and balanced way. Respectfully, I acknowledge and understand what Wilson (2008) has posited: "If research doesn't change you as a person, then you haven't done it right" (p. 135). Accordingly, I follow with this question,

> What happens to research when the researched become the researchers? When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of

[22] For me, it would be the Sundance, nightlodge, or sweatlodge; or a feast to welcome a new year/season whereby families and homes receive blessings; or a fast/vision quest; or a name-giving ceremony.

> research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems defined differently, people participate on different terms. (L. T. Smith, 1999, pp. 183, 193)

My Story

As I walk my path, I acquire and breathe in the lived experiences—the knowledge I am so blessed to be in *relationship* with. The research I conduct will forever be part of me—I will be a part of the research. Indigenous research "*is* a life changing ceremony" (Wilson, 2008, p. 61). As a Blackfoot-Siksikaitsitapi woman, I live this ceremony every day.

One of the last conversations I had with my mom before she transcended to the Spirit World was one that I will hold sacred. Events leading up to this conversation include a presentation I had completed at the 2018 Hawaii University International Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Educational Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii. I made an intention to dedicate this particular presentation to my mom and dad, O'taikimakii ki Ihkitsikam. It was a wonderful, educational, and transformational experience. I met women from around the world, with whom I still connect. I heard several researchers share their personal stories as they had also walked full circle on their healing journey. As well, I would visit my mom, as often as I could, but especially on weekends due to where I reside.

Saturdays were our days together. My sisters and I would have our Saturday spa day with Mom. On one particular Saturday, my dad and brothers said they would be back later; I think they knew Mom and her daughters would do their bonding and storytelling. My sisters and I would play music for her—gospel, oldies, and pow-wow. She would have her hair washed, we would apply nice yet mild lotion on her face and arms, and we would try to reassure her that we would be okay. We would tell jokes in Blackfoot; it's so much funnier. I had printed a copy of

my presentation, which encompassed much of my research, and I had gone over it with Mom. I shared it with my siblings and parents. I had a photo of Mom, Dad, and me from our Christmas dinner at the hospital on the first page. I love to look at this photo. It reminds me that our time on this earth is but a blink of an eye, and I have been truly blessed to have been born unto amazing, strong-willed, and genuinely loving people.

I usually sat on the left side of her hospital bed when I visited. I was sitting there, and she was thinking for a short while after she looked at the presentation—the photos, the quotes—and she inquisitively asked a few questions. Yet it was the last question she asked that has meant so much to me. She very gently inquired, "Terri, my girl, how did you know how to present your research all the way in Hawaii?" I looked at her and replied with a smile, while tears rolled down my cheeks, "Mom, you taught me how. You taught me the way." She then just nodded her head softly, and smiled ever so sweet, as if to say, "Oh yeah, my girl, I did."

My dad and older brother got back to the hospital around 6:40 am on January 25, 2018. We were all anticipating her time was near. We started saying the rosary—which has kept our family together. Our mom was firm in her teaching of the rosary—either in the morning, afternoon, or evening, or especially during hard, painful times.

It was during the fourth decade of the Luminous Mysteries that Mom took her last breath, on January 25, 2018, at 7:04 am. She went Home, or as the old ones say, the happy hunting grounds. I am confident she has been smiling and showering her love onto us every moment since then. And I finish this project, which has awakened my soul to so much more than I could have fathomed.

I recently went to watch *The Mule*, directed by Clint Eastwood (2018). The movie is a drama, and if you are a fan of Clint Eastwood, many of his later movies are dramas, which I do

enjoy. I am sharing this short side note due to me asking my dad, on New Year's Day, how he liked the movie. He simply stated, "It reminds me of me." That is all he said.

I understood why he said that about halfway through the film, when Earl (Clint Eastwood) nonchalantly swears. The character has a somewhat laid-back attitude. I realized, "Oh yeah, he is kind of like Dad!" Towards the end, when Earl's ex-wife Mary (Diane Wiest) is taking her last breaths in this physical world, they share deep words that convey how much they loved each other. They were the love of each other's lives—as were my parents. She was breathing rapidly—as did my mom. Earl was by her side, holding her hand—as was my dad. Then with one final breath, she went to the Spirit world—as did my mom.

I cried, at that moment; it triggered my sadness. Then I realized: I can go to that sad place and be with sadness, and smile at the same time, knowing my mom is still with me, and knowing how much I have learned, endured, and loved even after her passing. I am fortunate to have been born unto O'taikimakii ki Ihkitsikam. That they survived and still loved—now their children know love, and can pass the torch, and hand off the baton to our children, and grandchildren, and theirs in turn. We can sing the songs (*ittahsiinihki*), dance the dances (*ihpiyi*), and pray together (*waatoyinnayi*).

My mom's photo is hanging on my bedroom wall, where I have my Gramma Poonah's and Grampa Mookakin's photo as well. My parents' 50th anniversary photo is honourably placed there, too, and when I leave my bedroom each day, I get to see them—and smile. We have experienced over 500 years of genocide, oppression, and marginalization on Turtle Island, yet as I complete this Mokakyomahsinaksin, I also know we inherently have the tenacity, resiliency, capacity, and spiritual strength to Survive, to ensure the baton is sacredly passed on to those who will run the race. We are all connected to everything, past, present, and future.

All my relations, means all. When a speaker makes this statement, it's meant as recognition of the principles of harmony, unity and equality. It's a way of saying that you recognize your place in the universe and that you recognize the place of others and of other things in the realm of the real and the living. In that it is a powerful evocation of truth. . . .

People say these words as an act of ceremony and here in this majestic light of morning you feel that ritual glow within you like an ember from a fire. All things connected. All things related. All things grown equally out of the one single act of Creation that spawned us. This is what you feel and this is what you mean. . . .

You come to realize too, that if we could all glean the power of this one short statement, we could change the world. We could evoke brotherhood and sisterhood. We could remind ourselves and each other that we need each other, that there is not a single life that is not important to the whole or a single thing that is not worth protecting and honoring. (Wagamese, 2013, paras. 5, 9, 10)

All my relations.

Iikaakiimaat, Misommipaitapiiyssin Kaamotaani

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Terri-Lynn Fox, PhD Candidate, Interdisciplinary Graduate Program, [telephone number], [email address]

Supervisor:

Dr. Cora Voyageur, Department of Sociology

Title of Project:

An examination into Indian Residential Schools: IRS Compensation, the Truth & Reconciliation, and the Apology—

Perspectives of Blackfoot Confederacy People

***Sponsor*:**

Red Crow Community College

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

To examine the experiences of First Nation members within the Blackfoot Confederacy as related to their perspectives about the Indian Residential School Compensation, the Federal Government Apology relating to the IRS, and the Truth & Reconciliation Commission. You were invited because of your attendance at an Indian Residential School.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked certain questions that will aid in this research project, however, the researcher encourages that you share information you freely wish to. The approximate time to complete this interview will be two (2) hours. There will be no follow up relating specifically to your interview; however, after all completed documents are accepted by the University of Calgary, the researcher will contact you to share the news of how your participation has contributed to academia.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time during the process without

any penalty or loss of benefits.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

No personal identifying information will be collected in this study, and all participants shall remain anonymous. No specific relation to the following data will be correlated to your individual interview.

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your age, gender and First Nations Reserve you are from (and if you've married outside of your reserve, please inform researcher).

Age:_____

Gender:_____

First Nations reserve:_____

Should you agree to participate, you will also be asked to provide the Indian Residential School you attended and the years you attended.

Indian Residential School attended:_____

How many years did you attend this Indian Residential School?_____

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

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

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

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

Due to the limited size of the potential participant pool, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and it is possible that others who know you may recognize your research participation regardless of any choices you have made in this consent form regarding confidentiality. There are no foreseeable risks, harms, or inconveniences to you should you participate.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Your interview will be treated in a culturally safe and respectful manner. Your confidentiality and anonymity is safe guarded by all measures.

Should you wish to withdraw during the process of the interview, with your permission, that part of the interview may or may not be used in the final document.

The main use of collected data will be to inform a doctoral thesis project.

The researcher will transcribe all interviews; language translation will also be completed by me, as the use of the

Blackfoot Dictionary will be utilized.

Collected data will be stored in a secure place with the researcher and until such time that the doctoral thesis is complete. The researcher may request, at a future date, if part of the interview may be utilized for other researcher purposes, provided that confidentiality is still kept.

Any and all information is kept confidential and in a secure place.

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature _____Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Ms. Terri-Lynn Fox,
Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies, Faculty of Graduate Studies

[telephone number], [email address]

And Dr. Cora Voyageur, Department of Sociology

[telephone number], [email address]

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-3782; email [email address].

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Has attendance at an Indian Residential School affected your life? In what way?
2. Has the IRS impacted your daily life; for example, your Blackfoot language practice and transmission to your children? And grandchildren? Do you think this has affected your community? In what way?
3. Has the IRS impacted your spiritual belief(s) in any way? Explain.
4. How has the IRS compensation package that was offered to survivors affected your life?
5. *How has the announcement of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission affected your life? Do you have knowledge of the mandate and objectives of the TRC? (Omitted)*
6. Where were you when the prime minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, announced the apology to the survivors of Indian Residential Schools and their families and communities? How were you affected by this specific nationwide television/radio broadcast? In your opinion, has it changed any aspect of your life? Explain.
7. From your perspective, what are some impacts on culture, language, and identity that arose from IRS?
8. *From your perspective, what are some impacts on culture, language and identity that arose from the TRC? (Omitted)*
9. From your perspective, what are some impacts on culture, language and identity that arose from the apology?
10. Is there anything further you would like to share with me?
11. Is there anything you would like to ask of me as researcher? As a Blackfoot member?