# Exploring the Role of Culture Among Urban Indigenous Youth in Montreal

**Elizabeth Fast**

School of Social Work

McGill University, Montreal

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**Meegwetch, Mikwetc, Tshinashkumitin**, **Qujannamiik**, **Welaliog, Niá : wen, Mąsi chok!!**

**Horelyú nuhghąnighila, Merci, Thank you!!!**

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# Abstract

A growing number of studies have shown that attempts to re-gain control over Indigenous identities attacked by colonialism, sometimes referred to as "decolonizing strategies" result in better mental health outcomes for Indigenous people (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Cornell & Kalt, 2007). However, this phenomenon has been less studied among urban Indigenous populations. Urban youth are of particular interest because they may be most at risk of grappling with their cultural identities due to the fact that they may not have the opportunity to come into contact with elders, extended family or community members to pass down cultural and spiritual practices, nor to learn about colonization and the importance of de-colonization. The research question is: "What is the role of culture among Indigenous youth living in Montreal?" This dissertation is an exploratory study using constructivist grounded theory. The mode of data collection for the study was semi-structured interviews with 20 urban Indigenous youth between 18-30 years old. An urban Indigenous youth advisory committee provided guidance to the project in order to respect the principles of ownership, control, access and possession.

In general, participants expressed a desire to learn more about their cultures and languages and sought out ways to do so in an urban setting. Participants generally fell into two groups: those that wished to learn more about their cultures, whom I termed "identity building" participants and those that wished to maintain their cultural knowledge, whom I termed "culture maintenance" participants. Participants that were able to learn more about themselves, their identities and their cultures expressed feelings of pride and positive identity. Supports and

barriers to identity building and culture maintenance are discussed, as well as implications for practice, policy and research.

## Résumé

Un nombre croissant d'études démontre que les tentatives vers un regain de contrôle sur une identité autochtone assaillie par le colonialisme, parfois appelé « stratégies de décolonisation » résultent en un état de santé mentale favorable pour les peuples autochtones (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Cornell & Kalt, 2007). Toutefois, ce phénomène a été beaucoup moins étudié auprès des populations autochtones urbaines. Les jeunes autochtones urbains sont d'un intérêt particulier puisqu'ils sont les plus à risque d'être aux prises avec leurs identités culturelles. Du fait, il se peut qu'ils n'aient ni l'occasion d'approcher des aînés, des membres de la famille élargie ou des membres de la communauté; acteurs ayant pour rôle de transmettre des pratiques culturelles et spirituelles, ni d'appréhender les notions de la colonisation ni de la décolonisation. Le devis de la recherche est ainsi « Quel est le rôle de la culture chez les jeunes autochtones vivant à Montréal? » Cette dissertation s'agit d'une étude exploratoire faisant usage de la théorie constructiviste ancrée. Le mode de collecte de données utilisé a été de conduire des entrevues semi-structurées avec vingt jeunes adultes âgés entre 18 et 30 ans. Un comité consultatif composé de jeunes autochtones urbains a servi de critère au projet en respect des composantes des principes P.C.A.P.

En règle générale, les participants ont exprimé un désir de mieux connaître leurs cultures et leurs langues, et cherchaient des moyens pour s'y prendre en milieu urbain. Les participants se classaient en deux groupes : soit ceux qui voulaient en apprendre plus sur leurs cultures, dont j'ai nommé « participants à développement identitaire » et ceux qui visaient à entretenir leur connaissance culturelle, ici nommés « participants à entretient culturelle ». Les participants qui

ont pu en apprendre plus sur eux-mêmes, leurs identités, et leurs cultures ont exprimés des sentiments de fierté et une identité positive. Les soutiens et obstacles au développement identitaire et l'entretient culturel sont discutés, ainsi que les implications pour la pratique, la politique et la recherche.

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# Introduction

## Who I am and Why I Wanted to Undertake this Study

I was drawn to studying Indigenous identity because of my Métis and Mennonite ancestry. Although three of my grandparents were Mennonite and one was Métis, my brother and I were not really brought up with any kind of cultural identity. I felt very much like an outsider in terms of the Mennonite culture and religion. My experiences as a visitor in my grandparents' church always left me feeling like I did not belong; all the other children spoke German and ignored me because I was a newcomer who was not very "Mennonite" (I lived in the city and not in their community, I didn't speak the language and I knew little about the bible stories). These experiences left me feeling that Mennonite kids were not very "Christian" – I felt they rejected me because I did not fit in. Although my extended family all went to church every week, my parents decided that my brother and I could choose our own religion when we were adults but that they were not going to decide what it is that we would believe in.

I was always curious about my Métis grandfather's ancestry and felt some kind of connection to my Indigenous ancestry. At seventeen I decided that I wanted to trace my grandfather's heritage. One of my mom's brothers was writing a book about being Métis in the military, my older cousin became director of the Association of Native Friendship Centres, and some of my aunts and uncles had started to identify as Métis. I went downtown by myself to the historical society had our family's genealogy done. I found out that we had several Indigenous women ancestors that married French fur-traders – Cree, Assiniboine, American Indian (only information provided in genealogy) and Dene women. Also included in the book of genealogy

was a copy of the scrip my great-grandfather received from the government that gave him a small sum of money to surrender his land rights.

I did little else at this point in my life to figure out who I was and how that related to what I wanted to do in life. When I began working in child welfare in Toronto in 2001, I started to see some of the social problems among the urban Indigenous population through my work as a front-line evaluator of child abuse and neglect. My frustrations working as a child welfare worker in Toronto and Montreal brought me back to university to try to sort out some of the ways I felt I had done more harm than good in my role as a social worker. When I had the opportunity to help coordinate a national study in First Nations communities on child abuse and neglect, I was able to witness many agencies that, although they struggled with inadequate funding models, seemed to have more holistic models for working with the families they served. These models included cultural elements that focused on healing from intergenerational traumas and being proud to be Indigenous people. The strengths of these agencies, directors and front-line workers led me towards wanting to better understand how culture can be a positive aspect in the identity of young Indigenous people.

In choosing to study Indigenous identity, I am in some ways studying my own struggles with my cultural identity(ies). It has also made it uncomfortable doing Indigenous research and deciding how I will identity. I have begun to understand that it is part of the relationship-building process to explain who I am and where I come from, and to recognize that self-identification will garner different reactions from people depending on their own life experiences. For example, some people have expressed that it is insulting to claim Indigenous ancestry if it is not a large portion of your cultural make-up. However, I now believe that it is my responsibility and right to claim all parts of my identity. My perspective regarding identity

has since changed and developed throughout this research process, which I will return to in the final chapter of this dissertation.

## Language and Terminology

In choosing to explore what culture means to urban youth, I am unable to be culturally specific, both in general implications, as well as with the terminology used to describe the youth in the study. I also realize that culture will mean very different things to youth from different backgrounds, but the rationale for working with a group of people called urban Indigenous youth is to understand how they grapple with their identities as people coming from the shared experiences of colonisation and urban living. Therefore, when describing the participants as a group I will use the term "Indigenous". I will only use other terms such as Aboriginal or Native or First Nations when the participants use the word themselves or if the document that I am writing about uses different terminology. I prefer the word Indigenous to Aboriginal because Aboriginal is a word that was more recently chosen by the Canadian government to help simplify constitutional and other legally defined rights, whereas Indigenous tends to refer more simply to self-identity.

## Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians provide strong evidence for the ongoing impact of colonial policies. The United Nation's Human Development Report found that if the Indigenous population in Canada were taken out as a sub-group they would rank 48$^{th}$ out of 174 countries for their level of overall development and 71$^{st}$ for education, whereas the rest of Canada consistently ranks in the top five on all measures of development and

education (United Nations, 2006). In addition, some Indigenous communities in Canada are affected by very high rates of suicide, drug and alcohol dependence and the resultant high rates of out-of-home placement of children (Assembly of First Nations, 2005; Tait, 2003; Trocmé et al., 2005). These disparities can be linked to government policies in Canada that have targeted the identities of Indigenous peoples by making efforts to assimilate their cultures. Some of the colonial tools used to assimilate Indigenous cultures were the displacement of people from their lands to confined tracts known as reserves, destruction of Indigenous forms of government, the 'Indian Act' and the residential schools system (Milloy, 1996; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996c).

In some instances, mental health disparities such as higher rates of suicide and addictions are even greater among Indigenous youth than among adult populations (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, & Adams, 2004). Both Indigenous and Western scholars point to adolescence as a crucial period of development (Brendto, Brokenleg, & Van Bokern, 1990; Erik H. Erikson, 1968) and this is particularly true for Indigenous youth who may be grappling with the double jeopardy of adolescence and the legacy of historical traumas (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

A growing number of studies have shown that attempts made to re-gain control over Indigenous identities attacked by colonialism, sometimes referred to as "de-colonizing strategies", reduce disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Communities that have made attempts to gain greater control of land and their own services have also been found to have lower suicide rates, reduced reliance on social assistance, reduced unemployment, the emergence of diverse and viable economic enterprises on reserve lands, more effective management of social services and programs, including language and cultural components, as

well as improved management of natural resources (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Cornell & Kalt, 2007). One form of decolonization is a return to traditional culture and spirituality. Two studies of American Indians living on-reserve found that greater levels of interest in culture and spirituality were associated with better mental health outcomes, particularly among youth (M. Walls, Johnson, K., Whitbeck, L. & Hoyt, D., 2006; Whitbeck et al., 2004).

The notion of decolonization, however, becomes complicated when terms such as traditional spirituality or culture are utilized without an analysis of the ways in which colonialism has pitted Indigenous people against one another (Abadian, 2006; Coates, 1999). One example of this complexity can be seen in the way that one faction of the Mohawk community of Kahnawake, the Mohawk Council, has responded to Bill C-31 of the Indian Act which reinstated the Indian status of thousands of women across the country. The council was so concerned about running out of resources for their membership that they determined that an individual had to be at least 50% Mohawk to be eligible for membership (Dickson-Gilmore, 1999). This decision, and the ensuing modifications to this rule have cause much debate and feelings of exclusion among different community members and factions (Deer, 2008).

Before attempting to understand how Indigenous cultural identity develops, it is important to understand what being Indigenous means in a post-colonial context for any person or group of people. Some studies have worked with urban Indigenous people in Canada to understand this phenomenon (Froman, 2007; Poliandri, 2007; Restoule, 2004; Tulk, 2008). However, few studies have examined the role that cultural identity plays in individual identity for urban Indigenous *youth* populations. Urban youth are of particular interest because they may be most at risk of grappling with their cultural identities due to the fact that they may not have the opportunity to come into contact with elders, extended family or community members to pass

down cultural and spiritual practices, nor to learn about colonization and the meaning and potential role of de-colonization. This dissertation will ask the research question: "what is the role of culture in the lives of urban Indigenous youth"?

## Definitional Contexts

**Definitions of culture**. There have been several authors that have attempted both to define and classify culture in the past two centuries. Kroeber and Kluckhohn`s classic work in 1952 collected over 150 definitions of culture, and became the foundation upon which many writers from different disciplines have built common understandings of culture (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). All versions of the word itself come from the Latin "colere" which means to til or cultivate the ground. Raymond Williams (1983) traced the history of culture to the German word Kultur and wrote that there are essentially three broad categories of usage in the history of the word: the cultivation of individuals and groups of people in terms of the general process of intellectural, spiritual and aesthetic development, a usage which began in the 18th century (Baldwin, Faulkner, & Hecht, 2006). The two other are more recent uses: a particular way of life - whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general and the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity (Baldwin et al., 2006).

Baldwin, Faulkner and Hecht (2006) traced several conceptualizations of culture, but agreed that most authors treat culture as some set of elements shared by people who have a social structure, with the latter referred to as society. Kroeber and Kluckhorn grouped culture broadly into six different ways it has been: Enumeratively descriptive (a list of the content of culture), historical (emphasis on social heritage and tradition), normative (focus on ideals or ideals plus behavior), psychological (learning, habits, problem-solving), structural (the pattern or organization of a culture) and genetic (symbols, ideas and artifacts) (Kroeber & Kluckhohn,

1952). The authors provided an analysis of each of these categories and came up with a summary definition: "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181).

**Definitions of identity and cultural identity**. The study of identity has been undertaken from a number of perspectives and theories (S.J. Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Weisskirch, 2008). Erikson (1950), introduced the concept of psychosocial identity in his ground breaking book, *Childhood and Society* important, for Erikson, is the extent to which this set of goals, values, and beliefs are internally consistent and, taken together, form a coherent sense of self. Concurrent with this psychosocial literature, a separate literature has developed around cultural identity and self-definition. Cultural identity focuses largely on (i) cultural values and practices, (ii) the ways in which one regards the ethnic or cultural groups to which one belongs, and (iii) relative prioritization of the individual and of the group (S.J. Schwartz et al., 2008). Because this study uses grounded theory as its methodology, both the definitions of culture and the theoretical models of identity and cultural identity will be used as guiding constructs only for the purpose of completing the literature review and documenting what is consistent and inconsistent with the youths' own definitions of culture, identity and cultural identity.

**Definitions of the term "youth"**. There have been a number of different ways that the term youth has been conceptualized. Erikson's stages of psychosocial development separate the period of adolescence from young adulthood (E.H. Erikson, 1950). Moriau (2011) provides

an overview of the artificial nature of age groups and explains how one does not necessarily mature from a youth to an adult at one's 18th (or 21st) birthday, but that there are a number of stages that one must work through – employment, education, family life, that are taking more time to attain in contemporary society (Moriau, 2011). In social work practice, the term youth is often used to signify the period of time between age of majority and gaining financial autonomy from one's biological family through housing and employment (see FNHRD, PARC, etc.). For the purposes of this study, youth will be defined as 18-30 year olds.

## Research Goals and Anticipated Uses of Research

The healing potential of culture (Torres Stone, 2006; Whitbeck, McMorris, Hoyt, Stubben, & Lafromboise, 2002) in combination with the risks when culture becomes an issue of competing resources (Dickson-Gilmore, 1999), as seen in the case of a community like Kahnawake, make urban Indigenous youth at risk of being excluded from the benefits of a strong cultural identity (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). Because many of the studies on Indigenous culture, identity and spirituality are conducted in the context of a single cultural group and most of the identity research has been undertaken with non-Indigenous peoples, this study will shed light on how culture is significant in identity formation for urban youth. This research may be useful for other youth serving urban organizations that already focus on promoting knowledge of Indigenous cultures and spirituality in order for them to obtain a better sense of how young people understand their cultural identity(ies) and provide them with other ideas on how to best provide resources for diverse cultures in an urban environment. For organizations that do not provide any cultural elements or only focus minimally on these components, this research may help to provide ideas or an understanding on what is a priority to young people and what factors help to promote or hinder identity development. This project may also inform future research

that focuses on targeting specific groups of youth that are at a high risk for addictions, mental health problems and involvement with the criminal justice system.

## Context of Urban Indigenous Peoples in Montreal

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Montreal is originally home to the Haudenosaunee, or "the people of the Longhouse", often referred to as the Iroquois. The land of the Haudenosaunee people spanned from New York State to the province of Québec. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the St. Lawrence Iroquoians established the village of Hochelaga at the foot of Mount Royal (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b-a). Today, Montreal is the largest city in the province of Québec and is home people from 11 different First Nations of Québec, Inuit, and other Indigenous that originate from communities across the country or that have lived in Montreal all of their lives (Native Friendship Centre of Montreal, 2002; StatsCan, 2005).

Indigenous peoples living in Québec live in a different context than those in other provinces, partly as a result of the particular political history of the province. The settlement of New France in colonial times with a substantial French speaking population surrounded by primarily English speaking provinces led to a tumultuous history, particularly for non-French speakers living in the province. The 1960s and the Quiet revolution saw the re-birth of Québec nationalism and the revitalization of the French language as a symbol that implied the assimilation of non-French speakers into the rest of the population (Dickinson & Young, 2002). It also masked the earlier history of the province by focusing on the colonial history rather than the original inhabitants of the province.

The impacts of focusing on a history that essentially began post-contact is the reaction of the Québec public and media to the Oka crisis in 1990. The town of Oka, Québec developed

plans to expand a golf course and residential development onto land which had traditionally been used by the Mohawk as a burial ground, marked by standing tombstones of their ancestors. The Mohawks had filed a land claim for the land and cemetary near Kanehsatake, but their claim had been rejected in 1986 (National Film Board of Canada, 1993; Pertusati, 1997). This dispute resulted in the death of an Sûrété du Québec officer and brought a lot of negative attention to all of the Haudenosaunee, as well as Indigenous people across Québec and Canada (National Film Board of Canada, 1993; Pertusati, 1997). The Oka crisis also led to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and greater attention to the shared challenges of Indigenous peoples across the country (National Film Board of Canada, 1993; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b-a).

## Organization of this Dissertation

This dissertation is presented in a manner that is required by McGill University Graduate and Postdoctoral studies. Chapter one presents my personal rationale for undertaking this study, defines the research "problems", presents the main research questions, gives a context for urban Indigenous youth living in Montreal and provides an explanation of how I will deal with terminology in this dissertation. Chapter Two provides a literature review that is based on the findings chapter, which is in line with the use of grounded theory. The literature review presents an overview of some pre-European Indigenous cultures in Québec, the major laws and programs inflicted on Indigenous peoples as a result of colonialism, the theories of historical trauma, a review of studies that have been conducted on cultural identity among ethnic minorities and Indigenous youth, including ways of healing from historical traumas, and an overview of Indigenous urban migration. Chapter three presents the methodological framework for this dissertation, including a background on the principles of ownership, control, access and

possession, and how they were employed in the context of this study, a description of the role of the youth advisory committee, and the sampling and member-checking tools employed. Chapter four presents the grounded theory that emerged from this study, supported by the responses of the participants on the role of culture in their lives. Chapter five discusses the findings of the grounded theory model and chapter six discusses the major implications for social work practice, policy, and research. The final section of the dissertation includes the references, recruitment materials and interview guide.

# Literature Review

In order to provide a context for the findings of the grounded theory model, this chapter will cover several topic areas from different disciplines. The first section on pre-colonial cultures and government-Indigenous relations will provide some specific histories of five Indigenous groups in Québec by drawing on anthropological, historical and political literature. The first section is to provide an overview only and is not meant to provide an in-depth historical context. The second section will cover post-colonial theories and constructions of race, the third section gives an overview of the Indian Act and Residential schools, trauma theories, as well as the relationship between colonial policies and laws and the impact on the cultural identities of Indigenous people in Canada. The fourth section gives an overview of urban migration among Indigenous peoples in Canada, with a focus on Québec and Montreal. The final section presents an overview of cultural identity research among youth and emerging concepts of pan-Indigenism.

## Pre-colonial Cultures in Québec and Government Relations Post-Contact

In the area now known as Canada, there are more than 50 culturally and linguistically distinct First Nations, as well as the Inuit, who speak several dialects of Inuktitut. Some estimates put the Indigenous populations at first contact with colonisers at over two million people in the area now known as North America (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a). All Indigenous societies had their own social and political organizations. The Latin term *terra nullius,* which refers to uninhabited land, was used by the first Europeans who came to North America to justify their entitlement to sovereignty over the land and all rights and title

to it. Once it became clear that the land was indeed inhabited, the colonizers extended the term to claim that although occupied, the Indigenous peoples had no form of government or political organization and thus they were better off being governed by those with so-called established political systems (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b-a).

The subsistence patterns of the varied Indigenous cultural groups in what is now Québec can be broadly divided into two groups: the seminomadic hunters of the Arctic, the Canadian Shield and the Appalachians and the semi-sedentary horticulturalists of the St. Lawrence lowlands. In the winter, the hunters divided into several small bands to catch caribou, deer, moose and bear. When these larger animals were not available, otters and beavers were hunted. In the spring, the bands re-joined near lakes, rivers, or the Atlantic Ocean (Dickinson & Young, 2002). The Iroquoian peoples were sedentary and lived in villages joined by trails. Their homes were Longhouses that had four or five fire places where related families ate, played, worked and slept. Villages had populations of about 1, 500 and occupied the same spots for about 15-25 years, until the surrounding soil and firewood had been depleted. Women worked in the fields, raised children, cooked, collected firewood and made pottery. The men cleared fields and prepared the new villages (Dickinson & Young, 2002).

Many Indigenous authors and speakers talk about a worldview that distinguishes Indigenous peoples from those of European or western ancestry. Douglas Cardinal, a Blackfoot architect and social activist, in a presentation to University of Carelton students, discussed what he has come to understand as a distinctly Indigenous' worldview. Although there are several differences among different Indigenous cultures, he asserts that an overarching worldview differs from a western, hierarchal worldview where humans and other creatures are in competition with one another, to a more balanced view, that sees all living beings as being part of a circle, where

everyone is equal. In the Indigenous worldview, living beings cooperate with one another and every being is born with all of the knowledge they require within themselves. Cardinal asserted that it is not people that are causing destruction to Mother Earth, but a worldview that sees nature as something that can be dominated that causes social problems and destruction to our planet. Cardinal asserts that an Indigenous worldview infiltrates every aspect of life and is thus an integral component of the pre and post-contact cultures of Indigenous peoples (Cardinal, 2012)

Although it is impossible to discuss the distinct cultures and societies of all Indigenous Nations in Canada or Québec, I chose to briefly discuss five examples of the pre-contact societies of some of the participants in the study; the cultures of the Inuit of Nunavik (Nunavik is the territory where Inuit live in northern Québec), the Haudenosaunee, the Cree people of eastern James Bay, the Innu (Montagnais), and the Atikamekw. It was more difficult to locate information on the specific history of the Mi'kmaq peoples in Québec. The other nations represented by the participants in this study came from regions outside of Québec and I will speak more generally about urban migration to Montreal from other regions of Canada.

**The Inuit.** Oral tradition is how the Inuit have passed their traditions between successive generations. The Inuit way of life is distinct in that it has allowed their people to live year-round, north of the tree line on the tundra. The Inuit used snow, animal skins, bone and stone to allow them to live, and their technologies were considered more complex than that of any other pre-industrial culture (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b-a). The periods of warming and cooling since 2500 BC caused the Inuit to move across the north several times (Fossett, 2001). Both Dorset and Thule cultures were ancestors of today's Inuit. Dorset culture, which included walrus and seal hunting, was at its greatest between 500 BC and 1000 AD, when the climate was colder than it is today (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples,

1996b-a). The Thule moved east during a warm period between 900 and 1200 AD. The Thule expanded across the Arctic to Greenland due to what archeologists believe was the accessibility of large whales. People of the Thule culture had houses built of stones and whale bone (Fossett, 2001; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b-a). Villages generally had several houses, with up to 50 people living in one village.

In the late 1660s England's Prince Rupert outfitted an expedition to go to Hudson Bay and in 1670 a royal charter was sent to Hudson Bay to look into trading. The charter gave the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) ownership of all the land draining into Hudson and James Bay, including Nunavik, and essentially ignored the rights of Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples living in the area. The company received complete control of both trade and government in the region (Films new media, 1993; Morantz, 2010). Trading posts were built at what HBC named Moose Factory and York. The French and British battled for control over the posts and ownership changed hands a few times throughout the 1700s and 1800s (Films new media, 1993; Morantz, 2010).

In addition to the HBC, many European countries sent whaling fleets to the Arctic regions. In Nunavik, commercial whaling began around 1750. Relations with the Inuit soured when a post was robbed and an employee was murdered; two Inuit were captured and killed when they tried to escape and in 1759 posts were closed because relations never improved. The HBC attempted to establish trading in 1830 when they built a fur trading post at Great Whale River (Morantz, 2010).

The Fur trade remained erratic in Nunavik, and in 1822 the post at Great Whale River was shut down. In 1830 the first post in the Ungava Bay region opened at Fort Chimo, and in 1837 at Fort George. The HBC hired Inuk interpreters and gave the employees guns, alcohol,

clothing, tobacco, tea, sugar, and other goods. With the assistance of interpreters, the HBC encouraged Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples living in the surrounding areas to hunt beluga whales and trade. Trade in Fort Chimo was still disappointing, in 1842 the company once again pulled out. Just a few years later, George Simpson, head of HBC decided to try again on East coast of Ungava Bay. Little Whale River and Great Whale River were re-established and the Inuit began to make trips to new posts instead of going to posts further south. Beluga hunting never met Governor Simpson's expectations and by the 1860s with few whales to be found the company stopped commercial whaling in area. In 1860 Fort Chimo was re-opened but concentrated more on furs than whaling (Films new media, 1993; Morantz, 2010).

In 1870 the Canadian government acquired Nunavik and in 1872 the rest of Rupert's Land and the North West Territories. This land transfer ended the authority of the HBC in the north and brought the Inuit under the authority of the southern government. By the 1870s Christian missionaries from the Church of England became more active in north, but as early as the 1850s missionaries visited Inuit at posts such as Little Whale River. In 1876 a permanent missionary, Minister Peck was posted in Whale River and a mobile church was delivered. Minister Peck devised a system of syllabics for writing Inuktitut and translated portions of the Bible's New Testament into Inuktitiut and taught Inuit parishioners how to read and write. By late 1880s, asfewer Inuit came to trade and the HBC abandoned its post. Once more, Reverend Peck moved the church and mission to Great Whale River and later established Mission posts on Baffin Island to serve his growing numbers of baptisms (Films new media, 1993; Morantz, 2010).

Inuit men worked on whale boats as crew members and helped navigate the seas and expeditions further north and west. They also hunted for the whales, and adopted guns, steel

traps and boats as payment for work they did. Many became tea drinkers, wore imported clothing and integrated sewing machines and accordions into their culture. Some Inuit women married whalers, and a growing number of children were born of mixed ancestry. By the late 1880s, whalers hunted in both the eastern and western arctic. No one foresaw the consequences of killing whales to near extinction. In addition, the whalers introduced foreign diseases that killed large numbers of the Inuit population such as smallpox viruses and later tuberculosis (Films new media, 1993; Morantz, 2010).

During the late 1800s, there were growing suspicions that the United States of America was trying to annex the north. In order to support its claim of ownership, the Canadian government realized it had to establish a presence. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police were dispatched to enforce Canadian law amongst the whalers and Inuit. By the early twentieth century, whale oil had lost its importance and the fur trade coming to an end in the far north. However, the fur trade further south was booming and a competitor, Reveillon Freres set up stores at Fort George and Fort Chimo. Within twenty years there were competing posts at nine locations in Nunavik. Both companies hired Inuit employees that acted as interpreters, pilots, and as un-loaders of ships. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Inuit had become increasingly dependent on trade goods and devoted less time to subsistence hunting and more time trading furs and oil. Many of the traditional activities were becoming increasingly rare, and foreign goods were replacing traditional goods. Bannock and other foreign foods became staples of Inuit diet and foreign diseases were rampant (Films new media, 1993; Morantz, 2010).

Up until the 1940s, formal schooling for Inuit children was sporadic. Families mainly lived in camps and came to fur trading posts only to trade or obtain supplies from hospital ships. As of 1940, the first permanent schools were created and it became mandatory for Inuit children

to attend school. Some schools provided hostels to allow parents to continue hunting while their children attended schools. However, parents disliked being separated from their children, and more and more began to settle permanently in order to be close to their children. Other factors that drove permanent settlement were the decreasing price of furs, and the availability of occasional wage labour, and the need for medical care (Vick-Westgate, 2002).

Mandatory education was one factor that moved the Inuit further away from traditional lifestyles, but other policies also caused long lasting damage to ties to the land and ways of life. In the 1950s and 1960s hundreds of sleigh-dogs were massacred by the RCMP, allegedly for reasons of public safety, but many Inuit claim it was a way to keep them in settlements and to discourage hunting (The Canadian Press, 2011). Government responses to tuberculosis outbreaks were another series of events that are said to have been particularly damaging to Inuit families and culture. After more frequent contact with southern ships in the late 1920s, tuberculosis spread rapidly among the Inuit. The close confinement of families in the winter allowed for rapid transmission of the disease. By 1931, a quarter of the population died annually and it was not until 1945 that the Canadian government acted to control tuberculosis among the Inuit. However, instead of establishing tuberculosis hospitals in the Arctic, they conducted mass chest X-ray surveys among the Inuit and forcibly sent Inuit patients with active tuberculosis to sanatoria thousands of miles to the south. Police took those that were ill or suspected of being ill abruptly from their communities without telling them or their families where they were to be sent and children were separated from parents (Sandiford Grygier, 1994). Most Inuit did not speak English, and the sanatorium staff in southern hospitals did not speak Inuktitut. Although this action proved effective in slowing down the spread of tuberculosis and reducing deaths, many Inuit spent decades in sanatoria and some never saw their parents or

children again. Rates of tuberculosis in the north continue to be over 20 times the rates in the south. It has been suggested that the main reason for this disparity is the geographical separation of tuberculosis treatment from where the Inuit live. If tuberculosis is to be eliminated, several hospitals distributed across the Arctic need to be established, where Inuit patients may be treated by staff who speak their language and understand the conditions of their life (Sandiford Grygier, 1994).

Another way that the federal government interfered with Inuit way of life was through forced re-locations. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs relocated an estimated 1,000 of Canada's Inuit from the 1950s to the 1970s. The most widely known case occurred in 1953 when seven Inuit families from Quebec were moved over 1, 900 kilometres away from their homes in Port Harrison to Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay in the High Arctic. The rationale behind this forced migration was political – Canada was concerned about a potential weakening of its claim to Arctic sovereignty during the Cold War between the United States and Russia, and it was felt that Canada needed permanent residents in the High Arctic to strengthen its claim over the territory (Morantz, 2010; Taylor & Bell, 2004). The Inuit families who were moved to Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord had to endure a harsher climate than they were accustomed to in Port Harrison. The families also had no means to earn an income, had scarce access to food, and were given fines for hunting more than their allotted shares. Those involved in the re-locations were promised that they could return home if the move proved unsatisfactory, however it was 30 years (1983) before they were returned to their ancestral homelands (Morantz, 2010; Taylor & Bell, 2004).

The first major experience with greater control over their own government and land for the Inuit of Nunavik since 1870 was in 1971 when the James Bay Hydro-electric project was

announced. In 1975, the Northern Québec Inuit Association (which later became Makivik Corporation) began negotiations with the federal and provincial governments and the three companies involved in the project. In 1975, the James Bay and Northern Québec agreement (JBNQA) recognized Inuit title to 8,400 square kilometres of land and gave the Association $90 million in compensation for future loss of traditional lands. The JBNAQ also had provisions for a regional government, a school board and regimes for environmental and wildlife protection for the Inuit of Nunavik. After ratification by the Québec government, Makivik Corporation was given responsibility for managing these funds. Negotiations between Makivik Corporation and the federal and provincial governments for making Nunavik a fully functioning self-governing entity have been underway ever since (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996d-b).

This brief history of the Inuit of Québec provides some insight into the challenges of maintaining Inuit culture. Explicit attempts to change Inuit lifestyle such as the imposition of formal education, the slaughter of sled dogs, implicit attacks on families such as failing to provide healthcare where Inuit people reside and re-locations have all succeeded in separating them from the land and from their families and cultures. Particularly for youth that come to Montreal for economic or social reasons, the risk of becoming even further removed is great. The following sections will examine the histories of some of the other cultures of the participants in the study.

**Haudenosaunee**. People of the Iroquois confederacy called themselves the Haudenosaunee, or people of the Longhouse. The Haudonosaunee peoples were made up of many nations speaking related languages and occupying neighbouring territories. These nations included in the Iroquois Confederacy included the Mohawks, the Oneidas, Onodagas, Cayugas and Senecas, and later the Tuscaroras. The Mohawk or Kanien'kehà:ka were the largest of the

six nations and had several traits in common with their neighbouring nations; they lived in semi-permanent villages that they moved every 15 to 25 years, and built new homes and cleared fields for the cultivation of corn and other crops. They practised a mixed economy of farming, hunting, fishing, and gathering plants, nuts and berries and, in some places, maple sap **(Reid, 2004; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b-a)**. The Confederacy suppressed conflict among its member nations but also acted as a way to secure territory from the intrusion of neighbouring nations. Before they began cultivating corn, the Haudenosuanee moved more frequently, however a shift to a less mobile way of life is said to have occurred between 500 and 800 AD with the introduction of corn cultivation. By 1300 the Longhouse was the standard dwelling **(Reid, 2004; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b-a)**. The Mohawks called themselves Kanien'kehà:ka, translated as people of the flint. Giving thanks was a central element of the Kanien'kehà:ka spiritual belief and practice. The Ohenten Kariwatkwa, or the thanksgiving ceremony meaning "Words that come before all else" was an important part of everyday life for the Kahien'kehà:ka (Reid, 2004).

Because of the practice of moving every decade or two, there were several locations or villages that have been home of the Kanien'kehà:ka in the province now known as Québec. Kanesatake and Kahnawà:ke, both in the southern part of Québec near Montreal are the two post-contact Mohawk reserve communities in Québec that are currently recognized by the federal government under the Indian Act (Reid, 2004). The first contact the Kanien'kehà:ka had with the Europeans was when a small contingent was involved in 1609 during a battle at Ticonderoga against a French-Algonquin alliance. As a result of this battle, the British and Dutch became the preferred allies of the Kanien'kehà:ka for at least the next half-century (Reid, 2004).

Mohawk lands along the St. Lawrence River were claimed by King Louis IV of France as part of "New France" in 1608. The struggle over land rights near Oka for the Kanehsatake Mohawks' began in 1717, when the land on the eastern shore of the Lake of Two Mountains (now named Oka) was granted in trust by the governor of New France to the Seminary of St. Sulpice of Paris, a Catholic missionary order. The Sulpicians used the trust lands to establish a Catholic mission. In 1733, a second concession was granted to give the Sulpicians a larger land-mass that was also "in trust to" the Mohawks. It was understood that if they left the mission, the title of the land would revert back to the King of France (Pertusati, 1997). In 1840, the Legislature of Lower Canada (now Québec) passed an act known as the Ordinace of 1840. The Ordinance of 1840 gave the Seminary of St. Sulpice ownership title to the land and trusteeship over the Mohawk settlements. It stated that any original land rights had been extinguished by government actions, despite the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which had confirmed the land rights of First Nations across the country. The Mohawks continued to assert their land rights and in 1868 petitioned the federal government to recognize their rights. However, by 1869 the Sulpician Priests were selling parcels of land to non-Indigenous settlers and by 1875 the area had become so populated by white settlers that the town of Oka was incorporated as a municipality (Pertusati, 1997). In 1945, in an attempt to stop the Priests selling further lands, the federal government purchased the remainder of the land and gave the Mohawk's certificates of possession that guaranteed their right to remain on the land (Pertusati, 1997). In 1947, only two years after purchasing the land from the Priests, the federal government sold this land to the town of Oka. Shortly after that this sale the town drew up plans to develop the land to be used for public recreation. To protest the development of the golf course, the Mohawks hired a lawyer to represent their interests in Ottawa, where the case was rejected. In 1975, the Mohawk nation

including Kanesatake, Kahnawake, and Akwesasne filed a comprehensive land claim with the Department of Indian Affairs, which was denied. In 1977, they filed a specific land claim for legal rights to their Lake of Two Mountains lands (Oka) (Pertusati, 1997). These actions describe the events that led up to the stand off at Oka in 1990, one of the most highly and violent land claims stand-offs in Canada's history.

**The Cree of eastern James Bay.** The Cree of eastern James Bay at one point occupied over 400, 000 square kilometres, or one-fifth the size of all of Québec. The Crees have always been hunters and fishers, and lived among caribou, beaver, other small mammals as well as fish and waterfowl. The number of animals on the land decreases as one travels further north on their territory. Cree hunting groups were small and therefore did not rely on large group solidarity; however in pre-contact times several Cree bands met in the summer in fishing spots. The earliest dated occupation in the territory 3,500 years ago was at the headwaters of the La Grand and Caniapiscau rivers which are now flooded. Before the 1870's, hunting for subsistence was the main Cree economic activity, followed by fur trading and other products to the Hudson's Bay Company until the decline of the Beaver in the 1830s (Morantz, 2002).

The Hudson's Bay Company used a debt system with the hunters and the amount of debt granted to hunters was seen as a symbol of success. Until the early 1900s when beaver was still plentiful, this system worked well, however the decline of the beaver and hunting the muskrat meant a drastic decline in earnings for the Cree that lived inland from the coast. Although those living farther north preferred to live off the caribou and avoided becoming involved in the fur trade for some time, by the late 1800s all of the Cree hunters in the eastern James Bay region were said to be fully involved in the fur trade. As the number of animals declined, the Cree

became heavily reliant on the company to provide food and employment at the trading posts (Morantz, 2002).

In 1867 when Nova Scotia, Ontario, Québec and New Brunswick confederated to make Canada, pressure was put on the Hudson's Bay Company to surrender its holdings in the north, known as Rupert's Land. The Dominion government then turned these lands over to Ontario and Quebec in 1906. Despite the fact that each province was required in acts of parliament to obtain surrender of the Indigenous right to the land, it was only Ontario that entered into a treaty with its Indigenous population in 1905 (treaty no.9). Québec failed to enter into treaties as the government felt that with the establishment of New France the right to Indigenous title was forever extinguished (Morantz, 2002).

Salisbury contended that there were both internal and external factors that influenced the changes in Cree lifestyle throughout the second half of the twentieth century (Salisbury, 1986). Before 1940, the Cree population in the north of Québec was spread out over the entire 150,000 square-miles for most of the year. By 1971, over one third had moved into villages permanently. Despite this fact, 80% of the population continued to obtain their food from hunting and earned wages through selling furs. The other 20% worked in full time wage labour. There were three large Cree villages – Fort George, Mistassini, and Great Whale, and three smaller coastal villages – Rupert's House, Easmain, and Paint Hills. Waswanipi band members had no villages of their own but lived in several small settlements (Salisbury, 1986).

In 1975 after several years of negotiations, the Cree become signatories to the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. The agreement constitutes over 400 pages of provisions for the Cree including monetary benefits, hunting rights and regional Authorities for education, hunting and trapping and health and social services. Salisbury notes that one of the most

innovative additions is a method to strengthen the hunting economy; an income security for hunters and trappers which guarantees full-time hunters a minimum cash income and an allowance for each day spent hunting (Salisbury, 1986). Despite some of the positive changes that came with greater self-government and control over resources for the Cree, continued incursions on resources from the federal and provincial governments, including re-locations as a result of rivers flooding have resulted in political divisions among leaders and communities members as well as deeply felt losses of rivers and land (Scott, 2001).

**Atikamekw and Montagnais of northern Québec**. The Montagnais and Naskapi are Algonkian-speaking peoples whom, along with the Cree, inhabited the entire Québec-Labrador peninsula. Before 1400 A.D., the Innu were believed to have lived on the sea coast eating walrus, seals and other sea creatures and were pushed inland by the Thule/Labrador Inuit. According to some historians, there are no prehistoric differences between the Cree and Innu, but they broke off into different nations after contact with various groups of Europeans. Whereas the Cree had more contact with the English-speaking Protestant fur traders, the Innu had more contact with French settlers and traders (Wadden, 1996). The Innu living in Québec are called by their French name, the Montagnais (further south) and Naskapi (further north). The climate of Québec-Labrador peninsula is unsuited to agriculture and the Innu were hunters of Caribou, supplementing their diet with other meats, fish and berries (Wadden, 1996). Innu stories and legends are passed on orally from one generation to the next; one important belief is that Pishum – the moon and the sun - watch over the planet. The Innu also believe that humans were put on earth to co-exist with animals rather than dominate them (Wadden, 1996). When hunting was poor, the Innu sought help from the animal spirits through the shaking tent ceremony, and many other ceremonies to influence the hunt are still used today (Wadden, 1996).

The Atikamekw nation is a flexible entity that in 1881, when faced with invasion of their territories by the Kawapisit, chiefs of the four Atikamekw bands – the Wemotaci, Manawan, Kokokac, and Kikentactch (present day Opitciwan) decided to join together and petition the federal government to set aside lands for them under the Kice Okimaw (grand chieftancy). In the 1970s they became a distinct political entity and, following the example of other Aboriginal groups in Canada began asserting and re-appropriating their culture and identity. This led to the creation of the political body the Atikamekw Sipi (Poirier, 2001).

In 1975, the Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais (CAM) was formed, with a primarily political purpose. The CAM was to represent the interests of the members before the provincial and federal governments and the initiation and pursuit of a land claims negotiation process. The validity of the lands claims were recognized by the Québec government in 1980 and shortly afterwards negotiations between the CAM and the Québec government began. In 1988 an interim agreement was signed by the province, the CAM and federal governments that allowed for interim measures to protect the Atikamekw and Montagnais during the negotiation period, to have the right to "veto" development projects that are proposed during the process of negotiation, and the issue of forest exploitation. The negotiation process continues as all parties seek an agreement for an Innu and Atikamekw homeland (Charest, 2001).

The brief histories of five of the Indigenous nations that are represented by the participants in this study give a small glimpse at the internal and external changes to lifestyle and impacts of colonial actions over the past several centuries. The result of land claims processes and disputes sometimes result in very politicized media attention. The Canadian public, with little education on the histories of these distinct Nations, may either fail to understand the social problems that many individuals face, or blame all Indigenous people for what they feel are too-

generous concessions and social programs. This negative media attention may result in misinformed educators that pass on these sentiments to Indigenous youth in the classroom. It may then be difficult for urban youth to feel proud of their cultural identities while finding the energy and knowledge to constantly be defending the actions of different Indigenous Nations in Québec.

## Colonisation and Constructions of Race

Many authors contend that it was not only the arrival of the newcomers to Canada (and other colonised nations), but also ideas of racial and cultural superiority that were particularly harmful to Indigenous peoples. Lutz (2008) argues that the concept of race emerged in the sixteenth century and grew out of the study of inherited traits observed in animal breeding. By the eighteenth century the concept had expanded to include inheritable traits in humans. Scientists began developing categories and dividing humans into "scientific" categories or races. One of the most influential theorists was Carl Linnaeus who worked out a system where he claimed to be able to classify all living things according to visible criteria (Lutz, 2008). Linnaeus associated phenotypical features with social characteristics; he described American Indians as copper-colored with straight, black hair and thick wide nostrils, socially obstinate, content, and free. Those he termed “Asiatics” were melancholy, rigid, severe, haughty, and covetous while Africans were described as phlegmatic, relaxed, crafty, indolent, and negligent. Linnaeus described Europeans the most favorably as sanguine, gentle, acute, and inventive. Systems of governance were also included in these categories. Asiatics were governed by opinions, Africans by caprice, American (Indians) by custom, and Europeans by "laws" (Lutz, 2008).

One of the most prolific writers on the intersections of colonialism and race, Albert Memmi, argued that racism was a required component of the colonial mentality, and part of the way that colonizers justified the domination of other peoples' homes and lands (Martinot, 2000; Memmi, 2006). He argues that racism has four components: (a) The insistence on a difference between races, whether real or imaginary, (b) A negative value placed on those peoples seen as differing, thereby implying a positive value to those imposing the difference, (c) The differential value is applied to an entire group which is then deprecated and (d) The negative value becomes the legitimization and justification for hostility and aggression. The purpose of racism is self-valorization and the creation of a sense of identity for one group of people through the denigration of another (Kempf, 2006; Martinot, 2000).

Similarly, Bulmer and Solomos (1999) define racist ideology based on: (a) The belief that a designated racial group is biologically or culturally inferior and; (b) The use of this belief to rationalize or prescribe the racial group's treatment in society, as well as to explain social position and accomplishment. Bulmer and Solomos (1999) argue that it is irresponsible to consider race in absence of the history of colonialism. They assert that much of the contemporary debates around race relations and racist policies must be situated in an understanding of the origins of slavery, colonialism, and other expressions of white supremacy.

Although race was not the only way that people were "othered", Césaire (1972) argued that horrific events such as the Holocaust have historically been given much more attention than other unthinkable crimes, such as the enslavement of millions of Africans. Similarly, Loomba (2005) pointed out the hierarchy of forms of discrimination, using the example of Charles Kingsley, known for his apparent concern for social reform in the late 1800s when he remarked on a trip to Ireland:

> I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country…But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours (Loomba, 2005).

This sentiment illustrates the racial hierarchy that infiltrated the thinking of even the most apparently socially forward thinkers of the time. Although he has much in common with theorists who believe race was the primary factor in motivating colonialism, Said (1994) argued that it is vital to understand that the European culture produced and managed what he refers to as the 'Orient', another way of describing anyone who was not European. Said (1994) argued that the Orient was created during the post-enlightenment period and named the practice of contrasting the dominant Western culture to all others "Orientalism". He argued that it is the concept of hegemony that gives Orientalism its strength and staying power. Hegemony, first discussed by the philosopher Antonio Gramsci in the late 1920s in relation to class differences, is used by Said to relate that in any society, certain cultural forms and ideas predominate over others (Said, 1994).

Loomba (2005) took Said's argument further and asserted that it was by contrasting themselves to various Indigenous populations that the Europeans imposed new identities onto non-Europeans. Discourse of the primitivism of Indigenous peoples was more prevalent in the Americas because the Europeans saw themselves as the first to influence existing cultures, whereas in a continent such as India where many nations had made contact before the Europeans, a stereotype of barbaric and degenerate was attributed to the other populations they encountered. In addition, assigned identities were dependent upon the Indigenous peoples' cooperation with

the newcomer's attempts to exploit them (Loomba, 2005). The next section will present the way that Indigenous identities were shaped by first contact with the colonisers.

## Colonisation and Indigenous Identity Construction

First contact with by Indigenous peoples by colonial settlers occurred on the Eastern coast of Canada and in Eastern Québec with the Beothuk of Newfoundland and the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia (J. S. Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). The Europeans found the diversity among the many tribes difficult to understand and solved this problem by labeling all Indigenous peoples as Indians (J. S. Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). Because the colonizers wished to assimilate the Indigenous peoples in order to make way for immigrants to farm the land and produce a profit for the mother countries, they attempted to shame Indigenous peoples for not abiding to "Christian values" such as settling in one place and farming the land (Morse, 1985; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996d-a). Although some differentiation was made between different tribes, primarily along linguistic lines, little was done to view Indigenous peoples as distinct cultures.

**The Indian act**. As immigration increased in the early 1800s, the main goal of the British empire was to ensure the orderly settlement of the newcomers and as such they sought more immediate solutions to clear the land of the Indigenous population (Harring, 1999). Thus in order to efficiently assign the tracts of land and as way of ensuring minimal compliance with their settlement strategy, the colonial officials required a way of assigning identities to Native peoples (Episkenew, 2009). The new Dominion of Canada therefore created the first legal definition of who was an Indian in the Indian Act of 1876. An Indian was defined as:

> *First.* Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band;
>
> *Secondly.* Any child of such person;

*Thirdly*. Any woman who is or was lawfully married to such person (Department of Indian Affairs, 1876).

These definitions were created without consultation of the Indigenous peoples to whom they pertained and it was to the financial and political benefit of the government to ensure that as few people as possible were eligible for Indian status (Episkenew, 2009; J. S. Frideres & Gadacz, 2008; Hele, 2007). The registration system was managed by sending an Indian agent, appointed by the government to take a census in order to develop treaty payment lists and band lists (Morse, 1985; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996d-a). If people were away hunting, trapping or fishing or if bands were in remote areas, they were simply not registered under the Indian Act (Morse, 1985). In addition, Episkenew (2009) asserted that it was not always easy to determine who was entitled to Indian status. Due to the long history of contact, there had been many inter-marriages and some people had converted to Christianity. As such, officials created a third category, that they referred to alternately as half-breeds, Métis or the "impure". Thus, Episkenew (2009) argued that a triangle was created with the colonizers at the top with the most power, the "pure" Indians or those who were granted status and afforded certain minimal privileges in the middle, and a third category of "non-Indians" who were relegated to an even lower status, those of neither "pure" Indian, nor a part of White society. Several authors have argued that it was these arbitrary assignments of identities that forever divided families, communities and nations (Episkenew, 2009; J. S. Frideres & Gadacz, 2008; Hele, 2007; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996d-a).

Once Indian status was attained, there was no guarantee that it would be maintained. Until 1960, the only way that someone with Indian status could vote in federal elections was to become enfranchised, meaning to give up their Indian status (Morse, 1985). Similarly, for many

years status Indians could not send their children to public schools, receive service from provincial social welfare programs, or join professions such as law (Morse, 1985). The Indian Act had particular repercussions on how Indian women were identified. A status Indian woman who married a non-Indian lost her status, as did her descendants. However the opposite was not true; a non-Indian woman who married an Indian man took on his status, as did her children. In addition all status Indian women lost their band status and became members of their husband's band upon marriage (Episkenew, 2009; J. S. Frideres & Gadacz, 2008).

The imposition of these identities had far-reaching impacts in several domains. Lutz (2008) argued that the 1876 Indian Act essentially defined Indigenous peoples as legal minors that prohibited them from owning the small tracts of land that were assigned to them. Whereas non-Indian entrepreneurs could use their land and home as collateral, and use the loans to invest in stock, boats, logging equipment or more land, Indian reserves were owned by the Crown and held in trust for Indians; they could not be mortgaged. The lack of borrowing power and legal prohibitions meant that Indigenous people in the fishing industry, for example, were more dependent on canning companies than white fisherman who could buy their own boats (Lutz, 2008).

Several authors write about the "success" that the Indian Act has had in dividing and conquering Indigenous peoples (Episkenew, 2009; J. S. Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). In the 1930s, there were many debates over whether the Inuit should be included as Indians and what rights, if any, the Métis had. Due to lack of interest in northern land (apart from asserting sovereignty) by the Canadian government and the lack of regular contact between settlers and the Inuit, there were no significant treaties signed until the official recognition of Nunavut as a Canadian territory in 1999 (Coates, 1999; J. S. Frideres & Gadacz, 2008). The 1982 constitution tried to

bring some legal clarity to these debates by for the first time including the Métis and Inuit in the definition of Indigenous Peoples, however this resulted in a significant increase in the debates within and between Indigenous groups (Coates, 1999; Grammond, 2009). For example, the supreme court of Ontario ruled that Métis people had inherent harvesting rights, but did nothing to define who qualified as Métis (Coates, 1999). The R vs. Powley decision in 2003 now sets out guidelines for membership in a Métis community (Teillet, 2007) As federal funding has expanded to include more groups of people, the importance of being a status Indian has increased and the lines between groups have become more defined. In the Yukon, the Yukon Native Brotherhood and the Yukon Association of Non-Status Indians joined to form the Council for Yukon Indians as a way of rejecting the government-imposed definitions of Indigenous people (Coates, 1999; Grammond, 2009). Although there are some policies that affected most Indigenous peoples in Canada, other aspects of colonialism were more specific to certain Indigenous cultural groups because of their perceived political or economic value to the Canadian government. This section offered a very brief overview on the ways in which the Indian Act have shaped and controlled Indigenous identities in Canada. There are several excellent resources that go into further detail on all of the complexities relating to Indigenous identity and the law (Grammond, 2009; Lawrence, 2004). The next section will review how the residential schools have further attacked Indigenous identities in Canada.

## Residential Schools

The pre-contact education of Indigenous children was arranged for in much the same way as other cultures (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996c). However, because of its vast differences to European systems of schooling, it was not understood by the European colonizers (Miller, 1996). Although education varied widely depending on the culture, the type

of skills needed to survive on the land and the climate, Miller (1996) argued that there were some commonalities in the instruction of Indigenous children. Instruction and spirituality were intertwined and teaching could be described by the "three L's"; looking, listening and learning (Miller, 1996). In addition, lessons in behavior for children were taught by setting positive examples instead of overt discipline and guidance towards desired behavior was sought through the use of games, stories for didactic purposes and ritualized ceremonies when children neared adulthood (Miller, 1996).

The first known boarding school for Indigenous children in Canada began in 1620 under the Récollets, an order of the Franciscans who took a number of Indigenous boys to their seminary in France (Miller, 1996). They concluded that the migratory habits of the "Indians" made their conversion to Christianity almost impossible, and thought they would have better luck keeping the children in one place, and that the young "Indians" once converted to Christianity would be able to aid the missionaries in converting others (Miller, 1996). Furthermore, they concluded that they could not get the undisciplined youth to obey them. Indigenous parents instilled discipline administered through ridicule, warning or stories that were meant to teach children a lesson about their own behavior and tended to stay away from use of physical discipline (Miller, 1996). In the seventeenth century, the Jesuits capitalized on Indigenous peoples respect for reciprocity by asking families that were starving to allow them to care for the children (by feeding them) and if the children got better, the family would be obliged to give the children to the Jesuits to teach them (Miller, 1996). It was often only when parents had no other alternatives for ensuring their children's needs were met that they agreed the children be able to attend the boarding schools (Miller, 1996). Miller (1996) writes that the French effort in the seventeenth century ultimately failed for reasons that became clear to generations of assimilators

from the early nineteenth century onward. First was the parental resistance to separation, an attitude the French noted was very strong among North American “Indians” due to their "excessive love of their offspring" (p. 55). From a European Christian standpoint, the children got everything they wanted and never had to be disobedient, because the parents gave them all that they wanted. European missionaries never understood that Indigenous peoples had their own educational systems, and that these systems differed drastically from their own, in a way that was completely integrated into everyday life (Miller, 1996).

The modern era of residential schooling began in the nineteenth century and was different from experiments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where interracial cooperation was more common due to the newcomers’ dependence on the Indigenous populations for their own survival (Milloy, 1996). Schouls (2003) writes that the Government of Canada developed a practice of dealing with Indigenous peoples that it inherited from the British Crown. Demand for land increased as the settler population grew and this in turn compelled the government to create a policy towards Indigenous peoples, whom they saw as that were “interfering” with land distribution for settlers. The first policy was the Royal Proclamation Act of 1763 which stated that settlers could not occupy Indigenous territory until formally surrendered to the Crown by duly constituted and recognized Indigenous leaders. Schouls (2003) argues that although the Crown acknowledged that Indigenous peoples possessed their lands and that the lands could not be taken over without due process, the notion that land title could be subsumed with a small token of reserve, annuities and limited hunting, fishing and trapping rights points to a "colonial dynamic in which Indigenous autonomy was also denied" (pg. 40). As a result, Indigenous peoples were denied any independent political power and in Section 91(24) of the British North American Act, "Indians" were made the sole responsibility of parliament. Control over “Indians

and lands for Indians" was implemented through the Indian Act of 1869 and later through the Department of Indian Affairs which was created in 1880. Schouls (2003) writes that with the acquisition of Indigenous land largely complete by the twentieth century, the goals of the Department of Indian Affairs became "benign neglect coupled with social control and assimilation" (pg. 41).

The colonial administrators once again turned towards residential schools as the solution for assimilating the Native population; however this time they sought an inexpensive solution as the Native peoples were no longer seen as key in helping the government run efficiently (Canada, 1996b). The Bagot Commission of 1842 and the Davin Report of 1879 advocated for a model of schools based on those already in place in the U.S.A. The Davin Report stated: "The Indian problem exists owing to the fact that the Indian is untrained to take his place in the world. Once we teach him to do this, the solution is had" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996c). By the twentieth century, dozens of schools, which were partnerships between the federal government and churches, were in full operation. Residential schooling thus became mandatory for "registered Indians" wherever it was available and children were removed from their homes by school officials if they did not come willingly (Milloy, 1999).

A primary part of the curriculum was the teaching of the world as a European place within which only European values and beliefs had meaning. If this lesson was successful, an Indigenous child would see their own culture as savage superstition (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996c). In addition, the teaching of European languages, French in Québec and English in all other parts of Canada alongside the banishment of Indigenous languages was a focal point of education in residential schools (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996c).

The schools were chronically under-funded from the outset leading to unsanitary conditions, health epidemics, and hundreds of child deaths. Milloy (1996) stated that in some instances inspectors found raw sewage in sleeping and eating quarters of the children and that despite being reported to the authorities, little change occurred. Reports of inadequate standards of clothing and food were also common and demands by parents to return their children home to live in better conditions went unanswered. Underfunding also meant poorly trained and underpaid staff who employed harsh physical discipline, often leading to physical abuse to control the children (Fournier & Crey, 1997; Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1996). Widespread sexual abuse also came to public awareness in the late 1980s when adult survivors began coming forward (Milloy, 1996; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996c). Different theories of trauma began to surface when the impacts of residential schools and other colonial tools became more and more obvious to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous in Canada and the U.S.A. These theories will be presented in the following section.

## Historical Trauma

Historical trauma is a term given to the culmination of losses suffered by Indigenous peoples in Canada as a result of colonialism that manifests itself in trauma symptoms such as higher rates of addictions, mental health problems, and family violence. Therefore "historical trauma" is not so much a separate theory from colonialism, but rather a way of understanding the traumatic affects of colonisation on Indigenous peoples.

After the first conference on residential schools in Canada, the term Residential School Syndrome (RSS) was proposed as a potential diagnostic category to explain the high rates of mental health problems in many Indigenous communities (Cariboo Tribal Council, 1991; Christjohn & Young, 1997). This term has been criticized for grouping together the experiences

of all people that attended residential schools because it overshadows the genocidal nature of the residential schools and the paternalism associated with colonialism which existed both before and after the residential schools (Robertson, 2006).

The diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in order to examine levels of trauma was used in some of the first work that examined higher rates of mental health problems among Native Americans (Manson et al., 1996). The authors discovered that few children and adolescents that described traumatic events qualified for a diagnosis of PTSD (Manson et al., 1996). In discussing the trauma that many Indigenous people have experienced, some authors have pointed out that PTSD fails to describe the nature and impact of severe, multiple, repeated and cumulative stressors on Native American communities (Cook et al., 2005; Robin, Chester, & Goldman, 1996). Instead, terms such as cumulative trauma, complex trauma, developmental trauma or DENOS (Disorders of extreme stress not otherwise specified) began to be utilized as more inclusive of a wide and ongoing range of traumatic events (Cook et al., 2005; Robin et al., 1996; van der Kolk, 2005).

The term complex trauma has also been used to explain the experiences of Indigenous people with severe and repetitive traumas (Ross, 2009; Sochting, Corrado, Cohen, Ley, & Brasfield, 2007). Complex psychological trauma is defined as exposure to severe stressors that are (1) repetitive or prolonged, (2) involve harm or abandonment by caregivers or other responsible adults, and (3) occur at developmentally vulnerable times in one's life (Ford & Courtois, 2009). Complex trauma may change a person's psychobiological and socio-emotional development if it occurs at critical developmental periods (Ford & Courtois, 2009). Thus, children that suffer from complex trauma are at risk of experiencing problems that put them at risk for additional trauma exposure and multiple impairments such as addictions, psychiatric

disorders, medical illness, legal problems, and family violence (Cook et al., 2005). Complex trauma is purported to affect seven domains of human functioning; attachment, biology, affect regulation, dissociation, behavioral control, cognition, and self-concept (Cook et al., 2005). The adversities faced by certain groups of people can both lead to and worsen complex trauma (Vogt, King, & King, 2007). Individuals living in economically impoverished conditions, incarcerated individuals and their families, children or adults that have been victimized sexually and physically multiple times or victims of displacement, political repression or genocide are all at an increased risk of experiencing complex trauma (Vogt et al., 2007).

Brave Heart and Debruyn (1998) were the first to describe the intergenerational trauma of the Lakota people as historical trauma. The banning of traditional mourning ceremonies by Indian agents, the 1890 "Wounded Knee Massacre", and the ongoing incursion on Lakota lands was said to be the beginning of an overreliance on alcohol, an elevated rate of suicide, and higher rates of mental health problems. Evans-Campbell (2008) expanded on Brave Heart and Debruyn's conceptualization of historical trauma. She postulated that the diagnoses of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder did not adequately account for the way that historical traumas may interact and compound currently experienced traumas such as interfamilial abuse, suicide of family members as well as daily racism and discrimination. However, in addition to an expansion of the definition of trauma, Evans-Campbell also suggested diagnostic criteria for the term historical trauma while expanding the model to allow for three levels of trauma: individual, family, and community. This definition of historical trauma requires that many people in the community experienced the traumatic events, that the events generated high levels of collective distress (demonstrated both empirically and narratively), and that the events were perpetuated by outsiders with a destructive or genocidal intent, making them particularly devastating. At the

individual level, trauma manifests itself in mental and physical health problems such as PTSD, guilt, anxiety, and depression. At the family level, symptoms may include impaired communication and stress around parenting (or attachment problems seen in children). The entire community may suffer from the breakdown of traditional culture and values, the loss of traditional rites of passage, high rates of alcoholism, physical illness (obesity), and internalized racism (Evans-Campbell, 2008).

Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) used the term 'historic trauma transmission' to discuss the intergenerational transmission of trauma in the Canadian Indigenous context. The authors provided a comprehensive overview of the de-population of Indigenous peoples in the Americas due to disease and violence in the 1400 and 1500s, and also examine how the depopulation provoked waves of other epidemics until the nineteenth century. The authors contend that there are five main areas that have been impacted by different waves of colonization: physical, economic, cultural, social and psychological. In this model, historic trauma is understood as a cluster of traumatic events and as a disease itself. As such, there is no single historic trauma response. There are different disorders with different clusters of symptoms. Historical trauma is therefore understood as causing deep breakdowns in social functioning that can last for years, decades, and generations (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

While all of the conceptualizations of trauma may be helpful in their own right, the diversity of experiences among Indigenous peoples and cultures will no doubt make it difficult to make one concept make sense for all. There are several problems with the use of the conceptualization of the various kinds of historical trauma described above. First, the word trauma can be used to describe both an event and the outcome of an event or its associated

symptoms (Ford & Courtois, 2009). Additionally those symptoms are so diverse in their severity and aetiology that linking them back to specific events or series of events is difficult. The term historical trauma, in particular, seems to suggest that the reason for current disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians lies solely in the past and has no connection to ongoing racism or discriminatory policies. However, this is problematic due to the fact that the current impact of racist attitudes and policies have been pointed to as one of the causes of the severity of trauma among many Indigenous peoples and communities (Blackstock, Prakash, Loxley, & Wein, 2005; Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2010; Neugebauer, 1999; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b-b; Waldram, Innes, Kaweski, & Redman, 2008). Furthermore, the impacts of both historical and current events may differ among individuals and communities based on a number of factors. Although there is little research that has explored why Indigenous individuals or communities are more resilient than others, some studies have begun to explore associations between decolonization and better outcomes (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Cornell & Kalt, 2007; M. Walls, 2007; Whitbeck et al., 2004).

There are, no doubt many other factors that impact the degree of trauma among Indigenous individuals or communities. Although there are fewer studies available, some additional factors, for instance, may include the number of times communities have been displaced, the level of economic development or economic opportunity, the level of educational opportunities, the number of generations that attended residential schools and the degree of abuse and neglect at the different schools, the degree to which patterns of parenting learned in residential schools were passed on to future generations, the size, isolation and political power of the community, the differences in how federal and provincial policies are applied on and off-

reserve and the availability of health and social services (Cornell & Kalt, 2007; Nadjiwan & Blackstock, 2003).

Historical trauma appears to capture the wide range of policies and acts that were perpetrated by successive colonial and Canadian governments and its allowance for a large number of symptoms accounts for the health and mental health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. However, the notion of complex trauma speaks to childhood traumas such as physical and sexual abuse, which may be more specific to the intergenerational aspects of parenting from some residential school survivors. The interactions of poverty and learned dependence, displacement and historical and ongoing discrimination also come into play for many Indigenous peoples (R. T. Carter, 2007; Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2010). It may be argued that another form of ongoing colonisation manifests itself in increased urbanisation of Indigenous peoples. The next section will examine the various push and pull factors associated with urban migration and the implication for urban cultural resources.

## Indigenous Urbanisation & Urban Resources

According to immigration theorists, there exist several "push" and "pull" factors that encourage people to either remain or leave their home community, country, city or town (Anderson & Taylor, 2005). Push factors may include poverty, unemployment, low wages, overpopulation, religious persecution, war, and social immobility. Pull factors may include high wages, greater employment opportunities, educational opportunities, ability to reunite with family members, and religious freedom. There are also "stay" factors and "stay away" factors. Stay factors may include ties to family and friends, cultural familiarity, and social status. "Stay away" factors may include language barriers, discrimination, low social status, lack of political rights, and cultural barriers (Van den Berg & Bodvarsson, 2009). Immigration is one part of the

phenomenon often referred to as globalization. Van den Berg & Bodvarsson (2009) asserted that the main determinant of immigration is the disparity in real incomes between countries. Standard economic theory predicts that people will tend to move from low to high- income countries, thus increasing the supply of labor in the high-income countries and reducing the supply of labor in the low-income countries. The authors gave the example that immigration to both Western Europe and the United States has exceeded one million people per year over the past decade; whereas very few people immigrate to Haiti or Ethiopia (Van den Berg & Bodvarsson, 2009).

Reasons for internal migration, or migration within one's home country have also been studied. Ravenstein hypothesized that there are seven ''laws'' of migration: (1) most migrants move only a short distance and usually to large cities; (2) cities that grow rapidly tend to be populated by migrants from proximate rural areas and gaps arising in the rural population generate migration from more distant areas; (3) out-migration is inversely related to in-migration; (4) a major migration wave will generate a compensating counter-wave; (5) those migrating a long distance tend to move to large cities; (6) rural persons are more likely to migrate than urban persons; and (7) women are more likely to migrate than men (Van den Berg & Bodvarsson, 2009).

It has been suggested that government policy away from assimilation and towards integration is part of what encourages urban migration among Indigenous peoples in Canada (J. S. Frideres, Kalbach, & Kalback, 2004). Taylor and Bell (2004) wrote that urbanization is another form of ongoing colonization by claiming: "aside from initial population decline, one of the most tangible and lasting demographic impacts of colonization on these peoples has been their widespread dispersion and spatial redistribution" (pg. 1). However, they claim that despite widespread recognition of the impact of internal migration, there has been no systematic analysis

of the geographic movement of Indigenous peoples, either historically or in contemporary times (Taylor & Bell, 2004).

Earliest post-contact movements of Indigenous groups in Canada were often related to economic activities with colonial settlers. For example, the Abenaki who moved into Québec from New England in the seventeenth century because of the English settling on their territory, and the Iroquois and Delaware migrated into southern Ontario in the late eighteenth century, likely as a result of government incentives to clear the land for settlers (Taylor & Bell, 2004). Historically, the relatively greater concentration of Aboriginal people in the more rural regions of Canada suggests that they have been less affected by urbanization than the rest of the population. In 1961, only 13 per cent of the Aboriginal population resided in urban areas compared to 70 per cent for the total population. However, during the decade 1961–1971, the increase in the rate of urbanization for the Aboriginal population was greater than that recorded for the total population. Already highly urbanized, the share of the total population resident in urban areas increased by just 10 per cent, compared to a substantial 138 per cent increase for the Aboriginal population whose level of urbanization increased from 13 to 31 per cent. While there continued to be little change in the relatively high level of urbanization during the 1970s for the total population, urbanization of the Aboriginal population continued to increase, reaching 42 per cent by 1981 while the level for the total population remained relatively stable at around 76 per cent (Taylor & Bell, 2004).

Official policy-making towards Indigenous peoples in Canada gradually shifted from assimilation in the first have of the 20th century, to "integration" during the second half of the century, which encouraged retention of culture while moving into urban locations with greater economic and education opportunities. From 1940–1960, the federal government closed down

many of the schools operating on reserves and forced children to attend the nearest provincial schools. In addition, because there were few secondary schools on the reserves, high school attendance required students to relocate to attend a provincial school. In many cases the nearest provincial school was a considerable distance from the reserve so if parents wanted to be near their children while they attended school (made compulsory by the government in the 1880s), then entire families often had to relocate. Other policy initiatives that served to stimulate movement off reserves included the construction of all-weather roads, the slowing down of housing construction on reserves, and active promotion of the urban way of life (Taylor & Bell, 2004). Bohaker and Iacovetta (2009) argued that this era also saw 'Canada's original inhabitants' and newly arrived European refugees and immigrants being treated with similar 'Canadianization' programs. They wrote that both Natives and newcomers were constructed as outsiders who needed to adopt dominant middle-class Canadian social and moral codes and pro-capitalist values) and the differences. The only difference being that the immigrant campaigns tended to be more tolerant of cultural differences than the Aboriginal campaigns.

In the current era of continued urbanization, migration to the cities in Québec poses unique linguistic and political challenges for both immigrants and Indigenous peoples. The Province of Québec, in its attempt to preserve the French language and the Québecois culture has adopted legislation making French the mandated language for business and government interactions alike (Croucher, 2006). Québec welcomes far fewer immigrants than Ontario or the western provinces. Although most immigrants to Québec settle in Montreal, only 12% of the Montreal population are visible minorities, compared to 30% in Toronto and Vancouver (Dickinson & Young, 2002). Immigration rules consider knowledge of French in the selection process of immigrants to Québec, both limiting and providing discouragement from moving to

the province without knowledge of the language. The recently proposed Bill 60, or Charter of Values, may result in a further decrease in immigration, with its focus on religious "neutrality" and framework for "reasonable accommodations" (The National Assembly, 2013). The unique immigrant experience for immigrants living in Montreal may provide some indication of the experiences and expectations of Indigenous people moving to Montreal.

According to the 2011 census, 53% of Aboriginal (those identifying as First Nations, Métis or Inuit) people now live in Canadian cities. The Urban Aboriginal Peoples' Survey found that Aboriginal groups differ significantly in their degree of urbanization. The most urbanized Aboriginal peoples are non-status First Nations peoples (or non-status Indians) and Métis, with 74 percent and 66 percent, respectively, living in urban areas. Status First Nations peoples (or Registered Indians) are less urbanized, with 38% living in urban centres, with about half of their population (52%) residing on reserves (and about 10% located in rural areas off reserve). Inuit are the least urbanized, with less than 30% living in an urban centre (Environics Institute, 2010).

As of the 2011 census, the largest urban Indigenous populations were in Winnipeg and Vancouver with 78, 415 and 52, 375 people respectively identifying as Aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2012; StatsCan, 2005). In contrast, Montreal, which has a larger population overall, has 26, 285 people that identified as Aboriginal in the 2011 census. Between 2001 and 2006, the Aboriginal population of Montreal increased by 60%, and again by 48% between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2006, 2012). A delegate at the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' round table on urban issues explained that the size of the city affects the Aboriginal community's sense of cohesion even in Winnipeg, which has the largest urban Aboriginal population in the country (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996e). It can thus be presumed that the

smaller the proportion of Aboriginal peoples in Montreal and the larger overall population size might have an impact on this sense of cohesion.

Howard and Proulx (2011), in their book on the dynamic nature of urban Indigenous identities critiqued "controlling processes" of power structures and how they seek to "construct and institutionalize culture". For example, they wrote:

> Ideas such as the primitiveness of Aboriginal peoples versus the civilized nature of non-Aboriginal peoples, that Aboriginal peoples only live in rural spaces close to the natural world and not in cities, the inability of Aboriginal peoples to effectively cope with industrialized urban life, and that Aboriginal peoples mush be benevolently managed by paternalistic non-Aboriginal actors continue to have negative symbolic and material effects on Aboriginal peoples living in cities (pg. 3).

This quote has strong echoes of colonial constructions of race and demonstrates how dichotomized and static notions of race and culture get passed on from one generation to the next. The authors linked these notions to the wide span of identities that urban Indigenous peoples claim for themselves.

Howard and Proulx (2011) also note that there may exist faulty assumptions that urban Indigenous peoples may constantly move between two worlds, or have frequent access to land, elders, ceremonies, and Aboriginal languages. For many urban peoples, land may be largely symbolic and they may link themselves to traditions and place despite the fact that they may not have physical contact with these places. Those that have no definable historical or kinship links to a specific culture may utilize pan-Indigenous teachings to build an identity and gain social acceptance (Howard & Proulx, 2011).

The scholarship on urban Indigenous peoples is relatively limited, and thus large-scale

surveys provide a helpful starting point to understanding the extremely diverse experiences and needs of the urban Indigenous population in Montreal. The largest survey of urban Indigenous peoples is the Urban Aboriginal Peoples' Survey (UAPS-2010), in which interviews were completed with 2,614 individuals aged 18 or older who self-identified as First Nations (status or non-status), Métis or Inuit across 10 cities in Canada, including Montreal. These 10 cities have a total population of 286,000 Aboriginal people, representing 46 percent of the urban Aboriginal population in Canada. Ottawa was added in as a supplemental city, because of the relatively larger Inuit population. The study was comprehensive and surveyed participants about issues ranging from place of origin, to reasons for moving to urban locations, to importance of culture and experiences with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers in urban locations (Environics Institute, 2010).

The UAPS was unique in that it looked at generational differences among participants; they could be classified as either first, second or third generation urban dwellers. The first group was comprised of urban Aboriginal peoples born and raised in another community, town, city or reserve other than their current city of residence and represented 68 percent of UAPS participants. Inuit (87%) were most likely to be first generation residents, followed by status First Nations peoples (75%), Métis (62%) and non-status First Nations (58%). Among the 11 cities, Montreal had the largest proportion of "first generation" urban Aboriginal peoples (86%). Older people (77% of those aged 45 and older) were more likely than younger people (60% of those aged 18 to 24 and 64% of those aged 25 to 44) to be "first generation" urban Aboriginal peoples (Environics Institute, 2010).

The UAPS asks about reasons for moving to an urban location among first generation urban dwellers. The most frequently cited reasons participants provided were to be closer to

family (38%), to pursue education (37%) and employment opportunities (37%) (Environics Institute, 2010). In 2010, the First Nations Information Governance Centre conducted the Regional Longitudinal Health Survey of First Nations living on-reserve. This study sampled only First Nations currently living on reserve, but the reasons for having lived in urban centres were similar to the findings in the UAPS. Employment and education were the most frequently cited reasons for moving among First Nations males (36.3%), while for females it was education (FNIGC, 2010). These reasons are consistent both with theories of immigration and migration, but also reflect the effectiveness of the governments' "integration" policies with respect to Indigenous peoples in Canada. Earlier literature examining the reasons that people moved to cities confirms that many migrated to cities to be near other family members who had come to access jobs, health care or education (Howard-Bobiwash, 2003).

The literature on urban identities and the surveys presented in this section provide several helpful insights into the lives of urban Indigenous peoples living across the country. First, there is not one profile of an urban Indigenous person; there are numerous reasons that Indigenous people migrate to cities and some have been living in urban centres for up to three generations. Second, a majority of more recent urban dwellers move to cities to obtain employment or educational opportunities that they may not be able to access in their home of origin. Although technically it was their "choice" to move, failing to provide better educational and employment opportunities leaves people little choice but to move to cities. This also separates them from their homes and ties to their cultures. Finally, Montreal is the city with the largest proportion of first generation urban Indigenous peoples, which highlights the likelihood of a new and increased need for services that are tailored to fit the needs of this growing demographic.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples found that for many of the urban Indigenous people that they spoke to, cultural revitalization meant the development of a bicultural identity. At the time the Royal Commission released their report, there were over 40 Aboriginal organizations in both Toronto and Winnipeg, and Native Friendship Centres were cited by many as a place that people could feel good about their culture as well as receive support and acceptance (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996f).

In a report exploring the need for culturally-specific resources for Nisga'a living away from their ancestral lands, Montgomery (2003) traced the development of the Native Friendship Centre movement and commented on some of the potential pitfalls of such a culturally diverse model of service provision for urban Indigenous peoples. He wrote that in 1972, the Canadian government officially recognized the long-term sustainability of Native Friendship Centres and implemented the Native Migrating Peoples Program. An early evaluation of the Friendship Centres found that they had established a wide base of support among community members and were able to utilize their funds creatively (Montgomery, 2003). However, despite the support received for the Centres, Montgomery asserted that because of the "liberal cultural pluralist" model utilized by Friendship Centres, other local organizations may feel that they do not need to offer culturally relevant services to urban Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, certain cultural traditions will be favored over others, likely based on the majority Indigenous culture(s) represented in a specific city. Thus, the relevance of some of the cultural programming or resources may be limited for Indigenous peoples who do not come from those cultures (Montgomery, 2003).

In 2006, after a First Nations socioeconomic forum held in Mashteuiatsh, the "Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec" (Association of Québec Native

Friendship Centres) requested the collaboration of the Canadian government and the Québec government to "determine the specific situation of Aboriginal people living away from the communities" (Regroupement des centres d'amitié des autochtones du Québec, 2008). The Montréal Urban Aboriginal Needs Assessment project was developed in response to the call for a better understanding of the current needs of the growing urban Aboriginal community in Montréal. In total 113 individuals took part in the needs assessment, and included clients of services for Aboriginal people in Montreal, Aboriginal service providers, and other key informants. The study found that there was a strong desire for a sense of an Aboriginal community in Montreal. Some examples of what this would mean included having a place to gather and interact with other Aboriginal people, building a support system for individuals and families and allowing for networks to develop and/or having community centres in a central location that could offer a full range of services/events, incorporating Aboriginal cultural content and languages, and providing the opportunity for personal contact and socialization (Regroupement des centres d'amitié des autochtones du Québec, 2008). Additional needs mentioned by participants included housing, education and training, health services, daycares, social services, orientation and information about life in Montréal as well as translation services (Regroupement des centres d'amitié des autochtones du Québec, 2008).

The Montreal urban Aboriginal health strategy network (NETWORK/RESEAU), is an initiative that was created after the results of the needs assessment described above were presented in November 2008. Since 2008, the NETWORK has met regularly by organizing seasonal gatherings and now has over 600 members representing over 120 organizations (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012). The NETWORK's mission statement is to "improve the quality of life of Aboriginals in the greater Montreal area through a

coordinated and concerted approach that will align our collective interests in supporting locally-driven initiatives" (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012).

One of the largest pieces of work completed by the NETWORK was a health needs assessment of the urban Aboriginal population due to a growing recognition of the need for a holistic health and healing centre for Aboriginal people in Montreal. A total of 89 questionnaires were conducted in face-to-face interviews with Montreal urban Aboriginal service users and a second questionnaire was conducted with 94 service providers in Montreal. Illness narratives were collected from 21 Montreal Aboriginal people, and a focus group was conducted with 19 service providers in order to identify solutions to gaps in services. The research found that many of the Montreal urban Aboriginal participants were not born in Montreal and did not have plans to return to their communities of origin. However, they maintained close ties to their communities and participated in their communities or in Aboriginal cultural events in the city. The overall health of the participants was rated low. Most participants were unable to access traditional services in Montreal such as having access to elders and ceremonies; but those that did were dissatisfied with them (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012). Half of the service users and service providers were not satisfied with how services in Montreal are administered, and reported feeling that Aboriginal people were neither involved in the management of their health services, nor as partners in their relationship with healthcare providers. Both difficulty in accessing services and experiences of discrimination in mainstream services were mentioned as barriers to good health care. In particular, finding appropriate responses to mental health and drug and/or alcohol rehabilitation needs was mentioned as a problem (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012).

Once again, the relative paucity of literature on the cultural needs of urban Indigenous peoples, paired with recent needs assessments, point to the fact that resources for urban Indigenous people should be further developed and culturally diversified. The next section will provide an overview of the literature on cultural identity among ethnic minorities populations in the U.S.A., where many of the most studied constructs of cultural identity have been developed.

## Identity and Cultural Identity Studies

The term cultural studies has been credited to a group of "leftist" British academics that were associated with the Centre for Contemporary cultural studies at the University of Birmingham, founded in 1964 (Stam, 2001). Stuart Hall, Richard Hoggart and E.P. Thompson, among others, sought new agents of social change and used Gramsci's ideas of class to illustrate the inequalities in the British class system. Despite official credit for the term cultural studies going to these men, Stam (2001) wrote that there were indeed several precursors that need to be credited for their ideas, including Leslie Fiedler, who wrote about the myth of the "vanishing Indian", Franz Fanon, who was an influential post-colonial writer and Henri Lefebvre who wrote about the politics of urban space and everyday life. Cultural studies and the poignancy of race came to the forefront in the 1980's when the term "multiculturalism" came to signify the decolonization of global culture and an attack on the notion of Eurocentric superiority (Stam, 2001).

S.J. Schwartz et al. (2008) wrote an excellent synthesis how personal and cultural identity have been studied separately and in conjunction with one another. Consistent with Erikson, constructs such as identity exploration and commitment (Marcia, 1980) and identity capital (i.e., accrual of identity-related skills, orientations, and self-knowledge that can be used to negotiate for social resources (Coté & Levine, 2002) focus on the search for, and consolidation of, a self-

definition that can be used to support self-directed negotiations and exchanges with society (S.J. Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005). As a result, personal identity is often defined in terms of an individual's goals, values, and beliefs in areas such as political preference, religious ideology, occupational choice, family and friend relationship styles, and gender role ideologies (S.J. Schwartz et al., 2008).

An entirely separate literature has developed around *cultural* identity and self-definition. Cultural identity focuses largely on (i) cultural values and practices, (ii) the ways in which one regards the ethnic or cultural groups to which one belongs, and (iii) relative prioritization of the individual and of the group (S.J. Schwartz et al., 2008). There are a number of constructs can be included under the rubric of cultural identity. These include acculturation, including biculturalism (Berry, 2003; S.J. Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008), ethnic identity (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; Tajifel, 1981), and racial identity (W. E. J. Cross, 1978). All of these constructs have been utilized across ethnic and cultural groups (S.J. Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). There are a few other constructs that are commonly referred to in the broad literature on cultural identity such as individualism and collectivism, independence and interdependence, familism filial piety and communalism (S.J. Schwartz et al., 2008), however only constructs that seemed directly related to cultural identity among Indigenous peoples will be reviewed below.

Acculturation is generally referred to as the changes that a minority group makes to adapt to the majority group (i.e. immigrants, refugees and Indigenous groups changes towards becoming more like the dominant group) (S.J. Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). Biculturalism is one aspect of acculturation, where an individual strongly endorses values and practices from both the receiving and heritage cultural contexts (S. J. Schwartz, Zamboanga, Rodriguez, & Wang, 2007). Some studies have found that biculturalism is associated with better family functioning

and fewer behavioral problems than other types of acculturation such as identifying purely with the dominant or heritage group (Coatsworth, Maldonado-Molina, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2005; Sullivan et al., 2007).

Ethnic identity, first proposed by Tajifel (1981) is commonly defined as being part of an individual's self-concept, derived from his or her membership in a social group, combined with the emotional significance of belonging to that group. Much of the research on the construct of ethnic identity has been undertaken in the U.S.A. where an increasingly large proportion of the population defines themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority, either as first generation, or often, as an American citizen with several generations of ancestors having been born in the U.S.A. The construct of ethnic identity has been found to be an important aspect of self-concept among several ethnic minority groups living in the United States including those identifying as African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and various other ethnic groups (add in references from smith article, saved on desktop under dissertation revisions). One meta-analysis of 184 studies including over 40, 000 people found an average effect size of 0.17 in the relationship between ethnic identity and positive self-concept (Smith & Silva, 2011).

An alternative conceptualization of ethnic identity has been provided by W.E. Cross, and is more commonly referred to as racial identity (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Kokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001). Cross's groundbreaking description of self-identification among African Americans was informed by the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois and, more particularly, Franz Fanon (Appiah, 1985; W. E. J. Cross, 1978; Fanon, 1963). This line of scholarship considers dynamics associated with intergroup oppression, marginalization, and internalized racism. Cross has more recently developed a holistic model of racial, ethnic, and cultural identity, but his early work proved most influential to the construct of racial identity, which has become distinct from

ethnic identity in the psychological literature (Smith & Silva, 2011).

Cross's original model in 1971 included three identity classifications. The first was labeled "pre-encounter" and was originally thought to be either pro-black or pro-white, where pro-white was self-hating (W. E. Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). Later tests on scales found at least two clusters to the pre-encounter phase; pro white and anti-black. Black self-hatred was thought to be the result of extreme mis-education as a result of distortions on history of Africa and African Americans, this resulted in black self hatred and internalized racism. The second identity classification was called "Immersion/Emersion", where everything Black was seen as good, and everything white was evil. "Immersion" into blackness was the first step to an internalized black identity, and was also thought to be excessive embracement of everything black (W. E. Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). Cross proposed that rage, anxiety and guilt can have negative impacts on someone that is too immersed in the exploration of themselves and an unforgiving stance towards those they consider to be "pre-encounter". Internalization and Internalization-commitment were seen as the third and final classification of identity actualization. Internalization consisted of being pro-black without romanticizing it and without hating whiteness. Internalization-commitment was actualization coupled with activism and regular involvement with diverse organizations, these last two stages were combined. This stage was thought to result in Black pride and self-love. This last stage was also revised whereby Cross argued that although worldviews changes, pro-Blackness does not guarantee better mental health, nor does it changes fundamental personality characteristics (W. E. Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001).

Over the past several decades there have been other constructs relating to ethnic and racial minorities and immigration status that have been developed in response to ever changing

demographics. This research has been particularly developed in the U.S.A. among Latinos and Asian Americans, for example (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Zhou & Lee, 2004). Although it is impossible to provide a full review of all of the literatures on cultural identity in this dissertation, it should be noted that this literature is extremely rich, and that both culturally specific and pan-ethnic constructs have been studied among ethno-cultural minorities; however there exists few if any literature specific to Indigenous peoples and identity formation from a anti-colonial perspective. The next section will review how some of the constructs related to cultural identity have been employed particularly among youth populations.

## Youth and cultural identity

Identity formation is widely accepted as one of the major tasks of adolescence (Erik H. Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980). Erikson studied a variety of cultures and found great variation in how adolescence is structured and the tasks associated with identity formation and drew a parallel between what he saw as a growing identity crisis towards problematic identities in the population at large and identity disturbances in "severely conflicted young people whose sense of confusion is due to a war within themselves" (Erik H. Erikson, 1968, p. 17). However, as a result of the changing structures of society, a new developmental stage entitled “emerging adulthood” has been receiving increased attention for its importance in in identity development and stabilization (Arnett, 2000; S.J. Schwartz et al., 2005). Schwartz et al. (2005) argued that although the life choices available to emerging adults has expanded, the support for identity formation has decreased (Coté & Levine, 2002; S.J. Schwartz et al., 2005). These authors contended that, if emerging adults are to make enduring life commitments (e.g., romantic commitments, career choices) by the end of their twenties, they must first undertake the psychological task of individually forming a stable and viable identity that can guide and sustain

these commitments. Thus the unstructured nature of emerging adulthood, the vast array of potential identity choices, and the lack of external guidance may have made identity development a personal project for many emerging adults and may also require the exercise of agency in negotiating the passage to adulthood (**S.J. Schwartz et al., 2005**).

A widely accepted psychosocial model of adolescent identity development in Western academic settings, meant as a way to test Erikson's theoretical notions of identity theory was first proposed by James Marcia (Marcia, 1980). This model expects that those in late adolescence will belong in one of four stages of identity development: (a) Identity achievement, (b) Foreclosure, (c) Identity diffusion and (d) Moratorium. Youth in identity achievement have made a decision with regards to their identity and are consciously pursuing self-chosen ideologies or occupations. In the state of foreclosure, adolescents are also committed to ideologies or occupations, but these are parentally chosen rather than self-chosen. Those in identity diffusion have no ideological or occupational direction, even if they have at one point experienced a decision-making period. Finally, those in a state or moratorium are in identity crisis, or are currently struggling with occupational or ideological issues (Marcia, 1980).

Brendto, Brokenleg and Bockern (1990) assert that traditional Native American child-rearing philosophies provide an important challenge to what they term the more "narrow" psychological theories of adolescent development. The authors write that the Native knowledge of child psychology that has been maintained through oral traditions over the past 15,000 years was brushed aside for what were purported to be superior Western approaches to child care through missions and residential schools (Brendto, Brokenleg & Bokern, 1990). Native American cultures had the education and empowerment of children as one of the central purposes of life. Thus, the period of adolescence was not seen as such a formative time of life

because children had gradually learned about themselves and their abilities so that they knew who they were as they reached their teen years (Brendto et al., 1990). Traditional Native educational practices incorporate the four bases of self-esteem first described by Stanley Coopersmith: significance, competence, power and virtue (Brendto, Brokenleg & Bokern, 1990). Significance is derived from the acceptance, attention and affection of others; competence is seen as something that is acquired as one masters the environment by achieving successes; power is the ability to control one's own behavior and gain respect of others and virtue is a feeling of being judged worthy by one's own culture and significant others (Brendto, Brokenleg & Bokern, 1990). Despite these criticisms, many of the contemporary empirical studies on adolescence use western psychosocial frameworks to test their hypotheses

Many of the most widely cited studies on cultural identity use Marcia's framework for identity development (Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Alpuria, 1990; Phinney & Cahvira, 1992; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). The resolution of identity issues related to ethnicity was found to be of particular importance during adolescence for one sample of adolescents in the U.S.A. using this framework (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). When studied as a separate variable from religion, ethnicity was also found to be a more important factor in identity achievement than religion or politics for a sample of ethnically diverse adolescents living in the U.S.A. (Phinney & Alpuria, 1990). In their longitudinal study of 18 youth (Phinney & Cahvira, 1992), most of the youth moved from one phase of identity to the next and ethnic identity was associated with higher levels of self-esteem both at the beginning of the study and three years later. Furthermore, self-esteem predicted ethnic identity stage three years later (Phinney & Cahvira, 1992).

Research in Native American and Canadian communities has also used Marcia's framework for understanding identity. Delgado-Torres (2007) examined the extent to which Indigenous identity is a potential resource for well-being. In her study of 187 American Indian students as Haskell Nations University in the U.S.A., she found that participants who reported greater interest in exploring their ethnicities and greater involvement with social practices of their tribe reported greater self-esteem and greater academic achievement.

In one of the first studies to look at Indigenous identity of youth in Canada over time, Hallett, Want, Chandler, Koopman, Flores and Gehrke (2008) used longitudinal data from the Ministry of Education in British Columbia for every student that identified themselves as Indigenous between 1993 and 2002 on a yearly basis. They found that students who identified themselves as Indigenous every year had the highest school drop-out rate, and that those that did not initially identify themselves as Indigenous, but later did so consistently had the lowest drop-out rate. The authors suggested that those who consistently reported their identity as Indigenous had not gone through a period of moratorium and may be in states of foreclosure or diffusion, whereas those that had gone through a period moratorium and favorably resolved their identity as Indigenous had the best outcomes in terms of remaining in school. The latter study can only hypothesize the reasons for the differences in declaring Indigenous identity and drop-out rates, as there was no mechanism for follow-up or member checking. The next section will review studies that have examined cultural identity among urban Indigenous peoples in Canada.

## Cultural Identity Among Urban Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Peters has completed two reviews of academic research examining urban Aboriginal identities, the first in 1996 and the second in 2011 (Peters, 1996, 2011). In the 1996 paper, she found that early discourses on urban Aboriginal peoples beginning in the 1940s and 1950s and

coinciding with increased migration to cities centered on the notion that urban life was incompatible with Aboriginal cultures and identities. Migration to cities was seen as a decision to abandon Aboriginal identities and assimilate into the mainstream. In contrast, the 2011 paper argued that emerging research has found that urban living is not at odds with a retention or emergence of positive Aboriginal identities and communities (Peters, 1996, 2011).

Peters identified four main themes in the post-1996 literature that impact urban Aboriginal identities (Peters, 2011). The four themes included: (1) settler racism, (2) municipal settler colonialism, (3) the onus to search out opportunities to remain culturally connected and, (4) the cultural heterogeneity of cities. Settler racism was found to include both blatant and more subtle forms of discrimination, where white privilege and ways of life were naturalized and Aboriginal ways of life, for example healing practices, were not even considered as options in mainstream healthcare. Four separate studies found that settler racism was one of the main causes of people hiding their Aboriginal identities and that it impeded positive identity development (Absolon & Winchester, 1994; Belanger, Barron, McKay-Turnbull, & Mills, 2003; Lawrence, 2004; Restoule, 2008). Municipal settler colonialism was seen as the second, related theme in the emerging research on urban Aboriginal identities (Peters, 2011). For example, Newhouse and Peters (2003) argue that research on urban Aboriginal peoples often focuses on individuals and neglects the larger urban Aboriginal community. Thus, the community is seen as incapable of participating in decision-making that affects its members, and /or the governments fail to conceptualize urban communities as having a right to self-determination in policy-making (White & Bruhn, 2010). The third theme that Peters found in the literature on urban Aboriginal identities was the challenge of having to consciously decide to seek out opportunities to be involved in cultural activities or to be part of an urban community (J. Frideres, 2008; Lawrence,

2004). The fourth emergent theme in the academic literature on urban Aboriginal peoples is the cultural heterogeneity of cities. Tensions between providing culturally specific programs or opportunities and providing spaces where all Aboriginal people were welcome were sometimes amplified by limited resources (J. Frideres, 2008; Proulx, 2003).

There have been a small number of qualitative studies exploring the cultural identity *formation* of urban Indigenous people. One study used two sharing circles with seven urban Indigenous men in Toronto (that had lived in urban areas for at least 75% of their lives) to determine how the formation of cultural identity influences education experiences. The men all spoke of working to incorporate Aboriginal, Native or Indigenous practices into their lives, and the author found that there was a sense of a "pan-Indian" adoption of culture because of the multi-cultural environment of Toronto (Restoule, 2008).

Another study undertaken in Winnipeg, looked at the experiences of urban Indigenous university students of mixed ancestry. Story-telling was used as an Indigenous methodology with nine individuals. The participants expressed through their stories that the impact of colonization continues to affect the identity of mixed ancestry peoples in every aspect of modern life. Exploration of their Aboriginal heritage was an important activity and was aided by the greater availability of courses in Native Studies in a University setting. Exposure to Indigenous thought, history, spirituality, culture and language helped them in this process. In addition, continued reliance on the colonizers definition of identity of who is and who is not Aboriginal and what is a 'real' Aboriginal also reinforced real and perceived differences between those that live on the land and those who live in the urban setting (Froman, 2007). Thus, it becomes clear that identity is not a simple concept and that there can be multiple factors that either support or impede identity development.

Lawrence (2004) interviewed 29 mixed-blood Indigenous individuals living in Toronto and examined the ways that law, policies and mythologies have shaped the identity of these individuals and their families. Themes such as whether one looks Native, whether they have tribal membership and whether they are legally defined as "Indian" are all at the hear of the confusion that urban mixed blood Indigenous have towards their identities. Lawrence also discusses how these individuals go about shaping their Indigenous identities in this context (Lawrence, 2004).

Laliberté (2013) interviewed 42 individuals that identified as Métis and lived in the city of Saskatoon. The participants varied in how they defined themselves as Métis, with some tracing back to the historic Métis nation of the Red River region, and others using the term to refer to a mix of First Nations and non-First Nations parentage. The acceptance of urban organizations and large numbers of people identifying as Métis in Saskatoon appeared to help people feel proud of their identities and to feel comfortable using the term Métis that had so many potential meanings.

It becomes clear that the literature on the cultural identity of urban Indigenous peoples and among Indigenous youth is rather limited and there have not been constructs developed for use specifically among Indigenous peoples. Thus further research looking at the similarities and differences in cultural identity development among Indigenous peoples and other cultural groups could be a valuable contribution to the research (Peters, 2011).

## Identity, Decolonization and Healing

Some Indigenous peoples and scholars have called for the need to recognize the role of the damage that has been done by colonisation to feelings of cultural belonging and identity. Decolonizing strategies is a very broad term and can encompass a huge range of activities from

learning languages to making attempts to gain self government, to engaging in traditional activities and spiritual practices and employing 'liberation psychology' (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Cornell & Kalt, 2007; Duran, Firehammer, & Gonzalez, 2008; Torres Stone, 2006). Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird (2005) asserted that colonization and decolonization are words that should become part of the standard vocabulary of all Indigenous peoples, including young people. Giving a name to experiences adds to empowerment and when young people use this language, they engage in a form of resistance to colonialism.

Communities that have made attempts to gain greater control of land and services have also been found to have lower suicide rates, reduced reliance on social assistance, reduced unemployment, the emergence of diverse and viable economic enterprises on reservation lands, more effective management of social services and programs, including language and cultural components, and improved management of natural resources (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Cornell & Kalt, 2007).

In the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's series on programs that focus on healing from historical traumas, Fiske (2008) wrote that healing can only take place when a strong, coherent sense of identity is achieved. The author describes the Tsow-Tun Le Lum program, a healing lodge for Indigenous peoples located in British Colombia. She writes that according to the philosophy of the program, a coherent identity arises from and is sustained by cultural belonging. The program begins the historical context that stresses the impact of residential schools and intergenerational transmission of trauma. The counsellors of the program believe that understanding one's own and others' symptoms depends on acknowledging the historical and cultural context in which trauma originated and in which healing can be achieved. The program

incorporates sweat lodges, the medicine wheel and other pan-Indigenous rituals that serve to utilize cultural healing in a way that is relevant to their culturally diverse clientele (Fiske, 2008).

Another publication in the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Series was an evaluation conducted in downtown Saskatoon with an organization called Building a Nation (BAN). BAN provides counselling to remedy the effects of residential school abuse for off-reserve Treaty First Nations persons and their extended family members, including Métis and non-Aboriginal persons. The organization aims to help survivors and/or descendants by restoring a sense of trust, strength, pride and honour that was taken away from them (Waldram et al., 2008).

I was unable to find any studies that looked at identity as a separate component to healing, rather, identity tended to be embedded in holistic approaches towards healing from intergenerational traumas (Fiske, 2008; Gone, 2008).

## Contemporary Indigenous identities

There has been a great deal of resistance to the external constructions of Indigenous identity at a variety of local, national and international levels. Behiels (1999) spoke of the reconstruction of Indigenous identities in Canada as being constrained by the legacy of the external imposition of Euro-Canadian identities and due to the political and legal structures that continue to govern the everyday lives of Indigenous groups. Furthermore, he wrote that Indigenous peoples are involved in a process of redefining themselves as stateless peoples who have collective rights as opposed to individual rights (like the rest of the Canadian population). Behiels (1999) argued that internal conflict among Indigenous peoples is a part of this re-defining process due to the way that Indigenous identity and resources have historically gone hand in hand. Similarly, Coates (1999), in writing about Indigenous identities at the cusp of the

21st century argues that the increasing Indigenous assertion over economic, social and political authority has resulted in positive images of Indigenous cultures, but that the politics of identity and membership within nations and communities can be complex and sometimes painful.

One example of this complexity can be seen in the way that one faction of the Mohawk community of Kahnawake, the Mohawk Council, has responded to Bill C-31 of the Indian Act which reinstated the Indian status of thousands of women across the country. This change caused the Mohawk Council to fear that there would be too much strain placed on already limited resources. In absence of any additional funding provided to Indigenous bands to support this change, the Mohawk Council demanded the right to decide on their own terms who would qualify for band membership. They set this measurement at 50% blood quantum, meaning that any individual had to be at least 50% Mohawk to be eligible for membership (Dickson-Gilmore, 1999). Some members of the community who lived in Mohawk territory but who did not meet the new criteria appealed to the Canadian Human Rights tribunal to counter this definition. The tribunal in turn determined that it was not the Mohawk Council but rather the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs who was guilty for not providing the Council with adequate financial resources for meeting the increased needs of a population whose membership had been expanded to include women that had previously lost their status (Dickson-Gilmore, 1999).

As a result of the somewhat arbitrary history of assignment and revocation of Indigenous identity by the Canadian governments, the current situation is one where legal definitions rely on genealogy and marriage and ignore questions of culture, ethnicity, personal values and community definitions of who is Indigenous (Coates, 1999). Coates (1999) argued that an individual can be a status Indian and have little or no contact with a First Nation, whereas it is quite common in northern regions for an individual to speak the language, pursue a traditional

lifestyle and live closely with other First Nations and be legally a non-status Indian (Coates, 1999). In addition to legal definition, Coates relates that issues of identity and social identification are equally complex. The public wants to equate "Indian" with a set of traditional activities and elders want to see everyone gain language skills, partake in traditional activities and respect customary law. However, young people influenced by modern culture may not understand or agree with the importance of participating in traditional activities or learning their traditional languages (Coates, 1999).

Despite the tensions between modern and traditional cultures, Adelson (2000) wrote that Indigenous practices and healing ceremonies have flourished in recent years and have come to increasingly symbolize transnational Indigenous unity and to highlight local potential. However, she explains that these expressions are often combined with acts of resistance to the ongoing incursion on Indigenous lands and resources (Adelson, 2000). The author described a process whereby the Whapmagoostui Cree of Great Whale River in northeastern Québec re-shaped their Cree identity in the face of threats of a hydroelectric project flooding their land. The Whapmagoostui have held annual Gatherings in order to demonstrate their objection to the project, but also to provide an opportunity for young people to learn from their elders and revisit their culture. Adelson (2000) observed that although the cultural activities were enjoyable for the youth, many events such as pow-wows are more of an expression of a pan-Indigenous identity, because pow-wows were not traditionally a part of their culture. Furthermore, the opportunity to come together and spend time on the land as families was reported to be the best part of the Gatherings. Adelson (2000) concludes that the re-creation of culture may be less about revisiting the traditions of the past and more about how contemporary peoples construct contemporary identities.

The re-building of Indigenous identity on a broader scale can be seen in the pan-Indigenist movement. Coates (1999) wrote that the Pan-Indian movement links Indigenous in Canada with the global movement for social, economic and cultural justice and has led to the realization of similar conditions faced by Indigenous peoples in the U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand and dozens of other countries. In 1974 and 1975 the first international Indigenous organizations, the International Indian Treaty Council and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) were founded in the U.S.A. and Canada. The WCIP was the initiative of George Manuel of the National Indian Brotherhood, partly in response to Pierre Trudeau's White Paper proposal that would have seen the elimination of Indian status and a repeal of the Indian Act (Merlan, 2009). Merlan (2009) argued that the term Indigenous has long been used to distinguish between those who are Native and those who are not, but that more recently, the concept has become internationalized and presupposes a degree of commonality between those who are Indigenous versus all others. Merlan (2009) defined Indigeneity as a first-order connection (usually small scale) between group and locality.

Lee (2006) wrote that a wide range of definitions have been used under the label of Indigenous, but a commonly used definition is the 1993 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which was first drafted by Cobo and stated:

> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which: 1) have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, 2) consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories or parts of them, 3) form at present non-dominant sectors of society, and 4) are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as a people,

5) in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems (UN, 1994 (1993; p. 458) as cited by Lee, 2006).

Lee argued that some individuals or Peoples choose not to participate in this social construction and think of themselves mainly in terms of attachment to a locality, a set of people, a way of life or other locally relevant social identities. For these people, globalized identity may have little or no significance (Lee, 2006). Despite criticisms of local relevance, Coates (1999) argued that the pan-Indian movement may provide greater flexibility and an Indigenous cultural determination to create and re-shape culture in the modern world instead of more local representations that may run the risk of presenting culture as a static entity.

## Summary of Literature Review

The literature review has provided a glimpse at some of the social policies that have transformed pre and post-contact cultures of Indigenous peoples in Canada, with a focus on Québec and Montreal. Post-colonial theorists such as Memmi, Césaire and Said may help to provide an understanding of how constructions of race have shaped policy-making with regards to Indigenous peoples within Canada from contact to the current day. Histories specific to certain cultural groups, as well as the broader history of residential schools and the Indian Act shows how government policies have shaped Indigenous identities, and the historical trauma theories may provide some context for the social and economic problems that have resulted from these policies. The literature on cultural identity, youth cultural identity and Indigenous decolonization demonstrate how concepts of culture and identity are integral to healing from historic traumas. However, the power and politics that have become associated with identity further complicate notions of culture for some Indigenous peoples in contemporary societies. These notions will be further explored in the discussion section.

The literature review demonstrates the centrality of the concept of culture in the lives of Indigenous people from pre-contact times to the present day. Continuous patterns of behaviour by colonial and post-contact federal and provincial governments show the extent to which attempts to assimilate Indigenous peoples exist to this day. Urban Indigenous youth may struggle with particular issues related to identity, especially in a city like Montreal that may be less open to accepting cultural difference than other large urban centres in Canada. Thus the research question: "What is the role of culture among urban Indigenous youth in Montreal?" is extremely relevant given the existing literature. The next section will present the methodology, which will be followed by the findings of the interviews with urban Indigenous youth.

# Methodology

## Method

This dissertation is an exploratory study using constructivist grounded theory in order to examine the role that cultural identity plays in individual identity for an urban Indigenous youth population. There has been little research that has looked at the lived experiences of Indigenous urban youth, thus grounded theory was seen as the best methodology for this study. The interviews were analyzed using a combination of traditional grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In looking at the best approach for this dissertation, I felt that both approaches had advantages. Although I disliked the fact that traditional grounded theorists strived for objectivity and felt that the researcher was separate from the research, the approach to data analysis was more systematic, which proved to be helpful for a novice grounded theory researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In contrast, CGT recognizes the explicit role of the researcher in co-constructing analyses and theories that derive from the data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Charmaz has argued that CGT is ideal for social justice research as it allows subjective experiences to be integrated with social conditions in analyses (Charmaz, 2000). Therefore, a combination of approaches was seen as appropriate for this dissertation for several reasons: although the larger theories of post-colonialism are guiding this study, the realities of urban Indigenous youth that come from a multitude of cultures, classes and backgrounds may not be well-explained by post-colonialism. Furthermore, an approach which favours the development of a theory in co-construction with the participants is in line with social justice goals of participatory research (Charmaz, 2000). In addition, a combination of methods promotes flexible guidelines that allow the researcher to use aspects of traditional grounded theory or other qualitative methods that best

fit the needs of the particular research project (Charmaz, 2006). Because I am working both with the research participants and an Indigenous advisory committee, I felt that a flexible approach was needed to allow for the contribution of individuals connected to the research in different ways.

## Research, O.C.A.P. and Indigenous peoples

There have been several concerns raised by Indigenous groups and scholars that research done by non-Indigenous researchers has been of little benefit to Indigenous communities, and has in many cases caused considerable harm (Mihesuah, 1998; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). For example, research has been imposed on Indigenous peoples as unwilling subjects and researchers have been seen as intruders that exploit and perpetuate racist and ethnocentric views of Indigenous peoples (Ermine, Sinclair, Jeffrey, & IPRHC, 2004) . In a scathing critique of anthropology, Deloria asserts that much non-Native research does little to give back to Indigenous communities and calls for funding bodies to institute ethical guidelines in concert with Indigenous scholars and communities (Deloria, 1991).

As a result of these critiques, the First Nations Information Governance Committee (FNIGC) and the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) created one set of guidelines for conducting research in First Nations communities in Canada (First Nations Centre, 2007). The four principles of conducting research, known as *O.C.A.P.*, stand for ownership, control access and possession. Ownership refers to the relationship of a First Nations community to its cultural knowledge/data/information. The principle of "Control" refers to First Nations' maintaining and regaining control of all aspects of their lives and institutions including research, information and data. The principle of "Access" means that First Nations people must have access to information about themselves and communities, regardless of where the data is

held. This may be achieved through standardized, formal protocols. Finally, the principle of possession, although not a condition of ownership per se, is a way that ownership can be asserted and protected. The potential benefits of O.C.A.P. are many and include the rebuilding of trust in research, improving data quality, relevance and value to community, supporting meaningful capacity building and ensuring community consent and control over research process, among others (First Nations Centre, 2007). Although these guidelines represent the ideal research relationship, the principle of possession in particular becomes complicated when dealing with participant confidentiality. For example, providing full interview transcripts to advisory committee members would constitute "possession" of data, but may also identify participants, which fails to protect their confidentiality. The navigation of O.C.A.P. principles for this particular project will be discussed in more detail below.

Increasingly, O.C.A.P. principles are being adopted by funding bodies and universities, such as the Canadian Institute of Health Research and large research institutes such as McGill University. Although O.C.A.P. principles were initially devised to apply to First Nations people living in Canada, there is also good reason to extend them to Inuit and Métis (Schnarch, 2004). O.C.A.P. principles are often cited as principles in evolution, and although there are several useful guidelines in applying them, most often engagement with Indigenous peoples is discussed in terms of "defined communities", such as reserve territories where the majority of the population is Indigenous (First Nations Centre, 2007; Schnarch, 2004) . There is rarely if ever one organization or body that claims to be capable of representing the interests of all members of the community or urban population; thus, it may become the responsibility of the researcher to attempt to adapt O.C.A.P. principles to meet the specifications of each particular project.

Although O.C.A.P. principles have essentially been formalized by their adaptation by some universities and funding bodies, there are other related methodologies that do not explicitly use this terminology, but also claim to counter the harmful dynamic of research in Indigenous communities. Participatory action research (PAR), Praxis methodology, Indigenous methodologies and White studies are four methodologies found in the literature that incorporate some or all of the O.C.A.P. principles. For example, participatory action research aims to actively engage community members as co-researchers and centralize local research approaches (Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011). Blodgett et al. (2011) wrote: "The core tenets of PAR are centralized on principles of trust and relationship-building, co-learning and empowerment, mutual benefit, and long-term commitment, each contributing to a rebalancing of power relations amongst the community and academic co-researchers" (pg. 3). PAR has been used in several research projects with Indigenous peoples across Canada; some examples are co-creating community-based activities in one Northern Ontario reserve, studying the barriers to health provision for urban Indigenous people in the Okanagan; and conducting a health needs assessment for urban Indigenous people in Montreal (Blodgett et al., 2011; Evans, Hole, Berg, Hutchinson, & Sookraj, 2009; Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012)

Praxis research, Indigenous methodologies and White studies are other methodologies that seek to break down the divide between researchers and participants and to engage participants in research that is locally relevant and has the capacity to make change. Cultural praxis research aims to engage marginalized groups to voice their thoughts and experiences in meaningful ways and participate in the process of knowledge production so that social transformation may be achieved (Blodgett et al., 2011). One example of praxis research is an

exploration of the experiences of Indigenous community members from one Canadian Reserve (Blodgett et al., 2011).

Indigenous methodologies (IM) are research methods by and for indigenous peoples, using techniques and methods drawn from the traditions of those peoples. IM therefore incorporates all of the O.C.A.P. principles by its very definition, and appears to be an ideal form of research when studying any issues pertaining to Indigenous peoples (Evans et al., 2009). Kovach (2005) proposed that Indigenous research link Aboriginal epistemology with an Indigenous theoretical framework. She drew four assumptions from Aboriginal epistemology to guide research: "(a) experience as a legitimate way of knowing; (b) Indigenous methods, such as storytelling, as a legitimate way of sharing knowledge; (c) receptivity and relationship between researcher and participants as a natural part of the research "methodology"; and (d) collectivity as a way of knowing assumes reciprocity to the community" (Kovach, 2005, p. 28). She proposed that Indigenous theory provides a particular perspective on the research methodology that includes Aboriginal ways of knowing, is founded in research principles and respects the research process protocols and ethics (Kovach, 2005). Two examples of Indigenous methodologies are by Restoule (2004), who used sharing circles to explore how culture and values were passed on to seven Indigenous men living in Toronto and Froman (2007), who used storytelling in her research with mixed-ancestry urban Indigenous participants in Winnipeg.

White studies is a form of research that seeks to name and uncover the hidden dominance of practices that are taken for granted as a normative way of life in a racialized world (Evans et al., 2009). Carter and Hollinsworth (2009) critiqued oversimplifications of rural-urban space and the fact that Indigenous people in Australia are assumed to occupy only traditional homelands. The authors interviewed Australian Indigenous people that live in so-called “rural” areas to understand their notions of resource use such as forestry, grazing and water allocation planning.

Indigenous methodologies, White studies, Praxis research and participatory research all offer helpful examples of how O.C.A.P. principles can be put into practice, with some emphasizing the actual methods, with others providing ways of engaging participants and ensuring that research is relevant and useful. This dissertation was driven by the research question which was more suitable to grounded theory, therefore I decided not to employ Indigenous methodologies, but instead hired a youth advisory committee to ensure that O.C.A.P. principles were adhered to in the context of this study.

## O.C.A.P. and This Study

O.C.A.P. guidelines were used in developing the research proposal for this dissertation. These guidelines are relatively new and seem to refer to First Nations that live on reserve; I therefore had to adapt them to meet the needs of this dissertation. Because there is no single body or organization that represents all urban Indigenous youth in Montreal, I undertook to recruit a youth advisory committee that would oversee the implementation of O.C.A.P. principles for this dissertation.

In order to recruit a diverse sample of youth for the advisory committee, I approached several organizations and asked them for their help in advertising the research project to their participants. The organizations included the inter-tribal youth centre at the Native Friendship Centre, the First Peoples' house at McGill University, the Centre for Native Education (Concordia), La cercle des premières nations at the Université du Québec à Montréal, Projet autochtone Québec, the Network for Indigenous Mental Health Research, the Montreal Urban Indigenous Strategy Network and the Ka Mamukanit program, an employment project for Indigenous youth, the Native Women's shelter, and Project 10, an organization that serves gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgendered (GLBT) young people. Those interested were required to be

between 18-30 years old, identify as Indigenous, reside in Montreal and have an interest in the role of culture for urban Indigenous youth (see recruitment posters, Appendix A & B). Initially ten youth expressed their interest in being a part of the advisory committee; however a core group of four to six youth attended the majority of the meetings during the planning and data collection phases. Advisory committee members were compensated $35 per meeting (meetings generally lasted between 1.5 to 2 hours). A research grant received from the Network for Indigenous Mental Health Research was used to compensate advisory members. I also provided snacks or a light meal for the members.

During the planning, interview and analysis phases, the advisory committee met seven times. The topics covered varied depending on the stage of the project. The first couple of meetings were spent discussing the principles of O.C.A.P. and how they could be specifically implemented for this dissertation. I spent some time reviewing how the principles have been used in other research projects and suggested a few ideas on how they may be used for this project. The committee felt strongly that making sure people knew about the findings and making use of the study was of primary importance. They gave several suggestions on ways to ensure that the results of the study reached the larger urban Indigenous community. For example, they suggested contacting the Indigenous People's Television Network, radio programs, such as McGill's CKUT 'Native Solidarity' program and the Montreal urban Indigenous Health Strategy NETWORK to make presentations about the results. I have made contact with all of these groups; a radio interview with CKUT took place in April 2013 and I have attended the NETWORK meetings in order to inform service providers about the results of the research. I also took part in a series of research seminars in December 2013 hosted by the Centre for Research on Children and Families at McGill University that was advertised widely

amongst organizations that serve Indigenous youth in Montreal. Advisory committee members and participants were also invited to the presentation.

Other priorities for the first few advisory meetings were establishing the main research question and reviewing and modifying the interview guide (appendix D). The committee had several suggestions for making the wording of the questions straight forward and widely understandable, as well as ensuring that the questions focused on getting at the positive aspects of participants' lives. Another concern was that the participants did not feel obligated to answer the questions, and that they did not bring up negative feelings or memories. They suggested adding phrases such as "if you feel comfortable sharing", after the question: "can you tell me about some of the most negative experiences in your life".

Later meetings focused on recruitment strategies and theoretical sampling of interview participants. The committee had many ideas for finding more participants, and targeting the types of participants needed at different stages of sampling. They suggested events that I had never heard of such as the Indigenous performance night at Café L'Escalier or employment fairs, and offered to distribute hand-outs if they were attending the events. The fact that I was unaware of some of these informal gatherings led me to believe that there are informal places and spaces where Indigenous people get together in Montreal.

During the analysis phase, committee members were given sections of the analysis chapter, as well as memos and diagrams and asked to give their input on the beginning of the theory generation. The members had several suggestions including taking the focus off of the traumatic aspects of the participants stories and focusing on answering the research question with the resilient parts of the stories first. This posed a challenge for me and took several attempts to get a version that participants felt comfortable with. They also felt that first attempts at the

theory were too linear and that the stories the participants told, as well as the processes that were at play in the stories were much more complex and interactive than could be accounted for with any linear type process or diagram.

## Study Purpose and Research Questions

The goal of this dissertation is to understand how urban Indigenous youth feel about their culture and how this in turn informs their identity. Many of the studies that have been undertaken on urban Indigenous identity formation focus on adults (Froman, 2007; Lawrence, 2004; Restoule, 2004), and those that do focus on youth are based on ethnically diverse samples of immigrants to the U.S.A. (Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Cahvira, 1992), or found that cultural identity is a protective factor, but are unable to assert how it may be acquired (Delgado-Torres, 2007; Torres Stone, 2006). Thus, the need to gather information directly from young Indigenous people is important in answering the research question: what is the role of culture among urban Indigenous youth living in Montreal?

## Research Design

The design for this dissertation was based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) guidelines for planning successive phases of a naturalistic inquiry. The phases include: 1) *orientation and overview*, characterized by exploration of what is known, what is most salient, and how best to approach the project. For my dissertation, this phase included the literature review conducted for the purpose of the comprehensive exams (a required part of the Ph.D. program in Social Work at McGill University), reflection on my professional and personal experience, meeting with the dissertation and advisory committee members, and two pilot interviews; 2) *focused exploration*, or the information-collection phase wherein I gathered and analyzed data which included

interviews, field notes and summaries of interviews through a constant comparison process; and 3) *member checking,* or the elicitation of participant feedback on my interpretations of the data they provided. Phases two and three overlapped and were mutually informative. In order to test initial credibility and dependability of study materials, two pilot interviews were conducted. Criteria for participation in the pilot were 1) identifying as Indigenous, 2) residing in Montreal or the surrounding area, 3) currently between the ages of 18-30, and 4) be interested in discussing what culture means in their lives. The study materials and instruments were piloted in order to assess whether study materials were clear and able to elicit appropriate and adequate response.

## Sampling

The sampling process began with open sampling where interview participants were recruited by several avenues (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Posters were sent to several of the same organizations from which advisory members were recruited. These posters were either displayed on-site or sent around on e-mail listservs. Two information sessions were held, one at the the Ka Mamukanit program, an employment program for Indigenous youth and another at the Ivirtivik Centre, a language training and employment centre for Inuit adults. Advisory committee members also advertised through word of mouth in their own networks. Sampling criteria was the same as for advisory committee members; the participants needed to be between 18-30 years old, identify as Indigenous, reside in Montreal and be interested in discussing what culture means in their lives. An effort was made to interview both men and women, however no other initial sampling criteria were determined at the beginning of the interview phase in order to maximize variation and generate initial categories (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After completing the first few interviews, I began examining the data for relevant emerging categories that could determine additional sampling criterion and began

relational and variational sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). One of the initial observations was that the participants were thus far primarily English speakers and we lived in a province where French is the primary language of use. Although I had advertised in French and through several French or bilingual organizations, my first several participants were Anglophones or spoke English as their second language and spoke little to no French. Some of the participants felt they were at a double disadvantage living in Montreal: they were subject to fewer opportunities both because of their race and their language abilities. A second observation during this stage of initial coding was that the all but one of first few participants were over 25 years old. The youngest participant appeared less able to reflect on the role of culture in his life than the older participants. I therefore attempted to obtain a wide range of ages within the 18-30 year old range. During a later stage of the interview process I began discriminate sampling in order to maximize the opportunity for comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After analyzing interviews of participants who had lived most of their lives in Montreal, I began to purposely sample Inuit, First Nations and Métis youth that had grown up in their home communities to determine whether this factor was related to the greater or lesser role of culture in participants' lives.

Sampling continued until I determined that there was no new, relevant data emerging from the interviews, the categories were well developed, and the relationships between the categories were well established (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In order to verify that the themes that emerged were valid, participants were asked to attend another short interview called "member checking" whereby they were presented with their first interview transcripts and verified initial themes that emerged from their first interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1989; Padgett, Matthew, & Conte, 2004). I also asked additional questions needed to clarify the

first interviews. Fourteen of the twenty participants took part in a second interview. It was not possible to interview six of the participants because they had moved or because they failed to attend the second scheduled interview. After two attempts were made to schedule second interviews with each participant, I stopped contacting interviewees so as not to harass them.

## Participant Profile

In total, 20 Indigenous youth were interviewed for this study. An even number of men and women participated. There were slightly fewer younger aged participants (18-22 year olds) than the older age groups. The participants spoke a variety of languages, however all interviews were conducted in either English or French. Participants had a variety of educational experiences ranging from graduate level studies to working on completing high school. There were also many employment experiences including full and part time employment, full time students and employed in a training or language program. Participants were recruited from a variety of locations including e-mail recruitment on various list servs, employment programs, word of mouth and through the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal. The employment programs were the Ka Mamukanit Project, a six-month employment placement program for Indigenous youth aged 16-30 and Centre Ivirtivik, a long term language and employment program for Inuit living in Montreal.

Table 1 provides more detail on the demographic profile of the participants. In many instances the categories are not numerated in order to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Table 1: Demographic profile of participants, N=20

| | |
|---|---|
| Sex | Female:10<br>Male:10 |
| Age | 18-22: 5<br>23-26: 7<br>27-30: 8 |
| Nationality/Identity | Algonquin, Atikamekw, Cree, Dene, Innu, Inuit, Miq'maq, Mohawk |
| Sexual orientation | Heterosexual: 18<br>Gay/Lesbian/Bi-sexual/Transgendered: 2 |
| First languages spoken by participants | Atikamekw, English, French, Inuktitut, Mohawk |
| Language of interview | English: 18<br>French: 2 |
| Family upbringing | Raised in biological/ nuclear family: 15<br>Raised outside of biological /nuclear family: 5 |
| Highest level of education | Less than high school, High school, College graduate, University graduate, Working on graduate level studies |
| Current employment | Employed full time, employed part time, full-time student, employment program (short term), Language/computer program (long term) |
| Recruitment | Inter-tribal youth centre, Listserv / e-mails recruitment, Projet Ka Mamukanit, Centre Ivirtivik, Referrals from committee members |

## Data Collection

**Instrument.** The mode of data collection for the study was semi-structured interviews with urban Indigenous youth. A qualitative semi-structured interview guide was constructed using broad, open-ended questions related to culture and identity. The guide was refined in both wording and content, after the pilot interviews and meetings with the advisory and dissertation committees. The first revision came from pilot participants who felt that some participants may need more direction in answering the first question; "can you tell me about yourself?" Prompts were added to help participants that needed them. Additional changes were made based on advisory committee feedback. A more general exploratory question was added: "What has culture meant for you in your life?" Further changes were made to simplify the questions. For instance, instead of asking about something as broad as Indigenous history, the question was changed to: "are you interested in seeing social change? What kind of social change would you like to see?"

**Interviews.** Interviews were conducted in several locations including a conference room at McGill University (n=10), a conference room at an employment project (n=7), a coffee shop (n=1), a participant's place of employment (n=1) and a participant's home (n=1). The location and time of each interview was mutually determined by the participant and researcher. Interviewees were given the choice as to whether they preferred to have the interviews audio-recorded or that hand written notes were recorded. They were cautioned that note taking would not be verbatim and may not capture the full meaning of their responses. Four participants chose not to be audio recorded and the remaining 16 agreed to audio recording. Interviews that were audio recorded were transcribed verbatim and interviews where I took notes I fleshed out the notes immediately following the interviews in order to provide as much detail as possible. I

completed all twenty first interviews and the fourteen second interviews in both French and English. Although several of the participants spoke other first languages, I unfortunately did not have the budget for a translator. I believe that there were instances in a couple of the interviews where a translator could have helped me clarify the participants' meanings. See Appendix C for a complete version of the interview guide.

Upon completion of transcription, the verbatim transcripts were provided in writing for participants to review. Participants were asked to engage in a follow-up interview so that I could synthesize the major points that we had covered during the first interview and ensure that they were in agreement with the interpretation of the main points. Participants signed a second consent form at the start of the member-checking meeting. I would then ask participants to clarify points that were not clear upon initial review of the transcripts or to expand upon any topics that were not fully discussed. The summaries also provided me with the opportunity to immediately begin making interpretations of participant responses and for participants to assess the accuracy of these initial interpretations.

**Data analysis and synthesis**. Data analysis was concurrent with data collection in order to make decisions about theoretical sampling and to improve the rigor of the process by going back to participants and member-checking (Charmaz, 2006; Padgett et al., 2004). After the first couple of interviews, I began coding the transcripts to analyse initial themes and to make decisions about theoretical sampling. Before completing any of the second interviews, I coded, pulled out themes and generated follow up questions for the participants. The constant comparison method was used which checks for consistencies within each interview and compares interviews to one another to look for similarities and differences (Boeije, 2002; Patton, 2002). I transcribed all of the first interviews, with the exception of the two interviews

completed in French, and half of the second interviews. A student at the University of Montreal transcribed the four French interviews (both first and second interviews), and five of the second interviews were completed by a transcription service. Nvivo 10 software for qualitative research was used to assist in the organization of the data analysis.

**Coding.** Initial coding of all first interviews was done by hand on hard copies of transcripts. After all first and second interviews were carried out, all of the transcripts were imported into Nvivo and a second round of open coding was completed using phrases grounded in the data. At this initial stage, codes often overlapped and excerpts were coded as belonging to one or more codes. After all transcripts were coded, categories that were broad enough to explain several codes on a more abstract level were selected. I then began axial coding in order to make connections between the categories and conceptualize the elements of each category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Figure 1 is one example of axial coding for 'Identity building'.

| **Figure 1: Example of axial coding for 'Identity building'** |
|---|
| **Increasing cultural/spiritual knowledge** |
| Language lessons |
| Volunteer with community members to teach cultue |
| Make visits to home community to get to know family, learn about culture, learn language |
| Desire to teach others about culture |
| going to NFC to learn about their culture, or Aboriginal cultures in general |
| Job that teaches others about culture |
| **Social justice activities with community** |
| Goal to move back home and work to improve community |
| Trying to increase employment opportunities for urban Aboriginal people |
| Employment that focuses on improving outcomes for Aboriginal people |
| **Seeking connections** |
| Seeking out Aboriginal friends |
| Visiting home community/biological parents for first time |
| Attempting to find out more about family |
| Going to NFC to meet other Aboriginal people |

Once axial coding was completed, I referred to Strauss and Corbin's paradigm for theory-building which allowed me to better illustrate the complex relationships between the concepts (Figure 2). After the data were organized in this way, I was able to engage in selective coding whereby the concepts became more abstract and I was able to see the patterns that led to certain types of strategies in the model, as well as the intervening characteristics that may have contradicted the model (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I continued in this way until all of the main categories and sub-categories were saturated. I determined that categories were saturated when several of the participants had similar experiences with certain phenomenon. For example, I knew that the category 'identity building' was saturated when almost all of the participants had expressed their desire to learn more about their respective cultures and had given concrete examples of the steps they had taken or were planning to take. Similarly, sub-categories, such as

the 'not belonging' category were quickly saturated when most of the participants relayed feeling excluded whether they were with Indigenous or non-Indigenous people. It was at this stage that I was able to condense the elements within the model and find a way to tell the story of the participants in a cohesive way.

## Researcher Reflexivity

In order to keep track of methodological decisions as well as my own reactions to the data as they were emerging, I kept a journal in which I made notes and wrote memos that reflected theoretical insights. Below is an excerpt from my journal that I wrote after one of my first interviews:

> 14/11/2011. The participant was very open to being interviewed, but had her 2 year old son with us, so appeared quite distracted at times. The interview was short, only 25 minutes, even though she answered all of the questions and gave a lot of thoughtful answers. She laughed openly and often during the interview, and was comfortable sharing personal stories. However, near the end I noticed that she seemed anxious to have me leave her home and was much less open. At the end of the interview I shared with her that I was excited to hear that she made the link with colonization and her own personal situation and that was one of the things I was most interested in. She seemed to close up after that comment and it made me realize that perhaps I should not be sharing this type of analysis with interview participants.

Reflecting on both the verbal and non-verbal cues helped me to pay attention to issues that may be more complex than I initially realized. Although the participant was very open with me, I perhaps did not realize that it was very difficult to share such personal stories and that she did not wish to engage in a theoretical discussion about her life.

Some of the other notes were about reactions that I found surprising. After the first several interviews I wrote this note:

> 29/11/2011: When I asked some participants if they wanted to participate in this interview they responded that they had lived in Montreal almost all their lives and did not know much about their culture, were they still eligible to participate? Is it possible there is some sort of perceived status associated with greater cultural knowledge or knowledge of their language, etc?

I realized that there must be feelings of shame and unworthiness that may be linked to cultural loss and identity. It had not occurred to me that people would feel unworthy to be identified with their culture if they did not have first-hand knowledge of it. I particularly struggled with the role of culture in participants' lives and thought about this daily as I was open coding. In the note below I felt like I was having an epiphany about how I had been on the wrong track this whole time:

> 02/08/2012: Culture in the true sense does not exist anymore. Even youth that have grown up with their language in their community are growing up in a way that is not natural to their culture of origin. Many grew up on a reserve or "community" that has been imposed on them and for some of them they mention so many social problems - poverty, alcoholism, unemployment and mental health problems. These are all structural in nature. There are few cultural practices that persist in these artificial environments, because they are no longer connected to sustenance and or pride. Both of these have been taken away.

Looking back on this, I should have known this all along, especially because I had begun this dissertation seeing things through a colonial perspective. However, I was surprised by the extent

of the destruction of cultural practices and knowledge. The journal was helpful in several ways as it helped me reflect throughout the data analysis process, it created a trail of my thoughts and actions in the process of data collection and analysis and helped to ensure methodological rigour.

## Member Checking

There were several mechanisms for member checking throughout the course of data collection and analysis. I asked each participant to meet with me twice, once for a full interview using the interview guide as a draft, and the second time to give them a copy of their transcripts and to ask any follow up questions that occurred to me in order to clarify or elaborate on things they had said during the first interview. I also shared with participants emerging themes from the interviews and asked for feedback on how their own stories fit in with these themes.

Initially, the second round of interviews were extremely helpful in getting clarification and providing input on emerging themes. As the second interviews progressed, I became better at understanding the points at which it would be helpful to have participants expand on their answers during the first interviews. I also noticed that the same themes began emerging for many of the participants. I took this as another confirmation that the categories were becoming saturated.

In addition, I provided participants with the opportunity to share any new thoughts that had come to them since the first interview. The clarifications and themes that emerged during the second interviews were incorporated into the analysis for a more complete understanding of participants' viewpoints. The participants were also offered copies of the completed dissertation. Several participants provided their e-mail addresses in order to receive final copies.

The advisory committee also provided a mechanism for member checking. The advisory committee consisted of the same population group as the interview participants; urban

Indigenous youth. Therefore, they were able to give input as to whether my interpretation of the participants' stories matched their own experiences and whether there were potential problems with my analyses. Several of the discussions with the advisory committee focused on how the data would be presented. When the theme of trauma and loss became apparent, they were concerned that this would be the predominant story and that the stories of resilience and cultural pride would be overshadowed by these negative experiences. They asked me to ensure that the voices of participants that were healthy and had succeeded in their goals were also central in the results.

## Informed Consent, Confidentiality and Ethics Approval

At the beginning of each interview, informed consent was obtained by going over the consent form (appendix C) and ensuring that the interviewees understood that they could choose to end the interviews at any time, that they were not under any obligation to complete the interviews and that they would not be penalized in any way for ending the interview. They were also informed that anything they say is confidential, meaning that they would not be identified by name and that their interviews were stored in a secure location that only I would have access to. Participants were informed before agreeing to be interviewed that they would receive $20 per interview. Once the participant agreed to be interviewed, I arranged to meet them individually in a private environment. If participants became upset during the interview, I made sure that they were referred to appropriate resources. Although there were no instances where participants required referral to counselling or other therapeutic services, I did provide a few informal referrals to some of the resources I was aware of to help with employment and networking.

Ethics approval was obtained from the McGill Board of Ethics REB-II on June 26, 2011 and was renewed on two occasions; it is currently valid until June 2014 (appendix E). This

ethics board reviews the research proposal to ensure that participants are not considered too vulnerable to take part in this research. I also obtained verbal and/or written permission from the directors and staff at all of the locations from which participants were recruited.

## Methodological Rigor

**Trustworthiness of the study.** According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness becomes about "truth value", meaning that the multiple constructions have been adequately represented. This means that the inquiry should be carried out in such a way that the probability that the findings will be found credible is enhanced and, second, that the findings have been approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied. There are several ways in which trustworthiness can be established including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Credibility.** There were several ways in which credibility was established in this dissertation. Member checking was one of the primary avenues in which the data were confirmed. Both participants and advisory members served as experts on the topic of study to review the data for its accuracy and interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 2008). Triangulation is another way of ensuring credibility in qualitative research. In this instance, multiple interviews and field notes served as two avenues in which the data were triangulated. Immersion in the data is another way to obtain credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 2008). Because I was not stationed at an observation site, immersion was difficult to obtain, however my frequent contact with the youth advisory committee and my experience working in Indigenous communities provided some familiarity with the subject matter (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 2008).

**Transferability.** In qualitative research, the goal of the findings is to provide enough information to understand the phenomenon under study. Before determining how the findings would be presented, I decided which parts of the participants' stories would provide the best picture of the overall stories being told. I began with over 200 pages of transcripts, 34 interview summaries and analytic notes of each of the first and second interviews. After axial coding, I wrote another 15 analytic notes about the connections between the themes and sub-themes. These notes helped me to generate the final figure (figure 2: An emergent model of the role of culture among urban Indigenous youth) and the parts of participants' stories that would provide examples of each of the components of the grounded theory model. Providing thick description and rich and detailed information allows for the reader to understand all possible viewpoints and experiences of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, some efforts were made to obtain a diverse and purposeful sample that allowed for a wide range of experiences which helped in allowing for a thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Dependability and Confirmability**. There are several ways to ensure dependability. Some of which, such as triangulation, also establish credibility; since there can be no dependability without credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Instead, Lincoln and Guba suggest an "internal audit" which determines both dependability and confirmability. An internal audit has several components including: (1) raw data, such as field notes and video or audio tapes; (2) data analysis and reduction products, such as summaries of field notes or notes on initial "hunches"; (3) data reconstruction and synthesis products such as categories and relationships and a write up of the final product with a link to the literature; (4) process notes; (5) materials related to intentions and dispositions such as the research proposal and ethics application; and (6) instrument development information such as pilot forms and interview guides.

Although a formal audit process as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was not possible for the purposes of this dissertation research, an internal audit has occurred. Both the academic dissertation committee consisting of three academic supervisors (two internal and one external) and the youth advisory committee members were actively involved in all stages of the dissertation planning and writing. All members of both committees reviewed excerpts from pilot and interview transcripts and drafts of initial coding procedures; saw drafts of all chapters and were given several opportunities provide feedback at each of these stages and reviewed analytic notes of interviews and saw excerpts from my field journal, as well as participated in the development of the ethics application, interview guide and recruitment materials.

## Methodology Summary

Deciding on an appropriate methodology for this study was a difficult task. The invaluable contribution of the youth advisory committee cannot be stressed enough. From the very beginning, they ensured that the focus of the study was on hearing the participants' voices from a strengths-based perspective and in a way that reflected the diversity of participants that they knew to make up Montreal's urban Indigenous youth population. Although grounded theory is not an Indigenous epistemology per say, the method allowed for an important contribution of theory directly from the voices or urban Indigenous youth. I believe that it is because of the rigour brought to the process by this extra group of eyes, ears, minds and hearts, that the findings are so powerful. The next chapter will present the "emergent grounded theory model of the role of culture in the lives of Indigenous youth" and the stories from the 20 participants that make up this model.

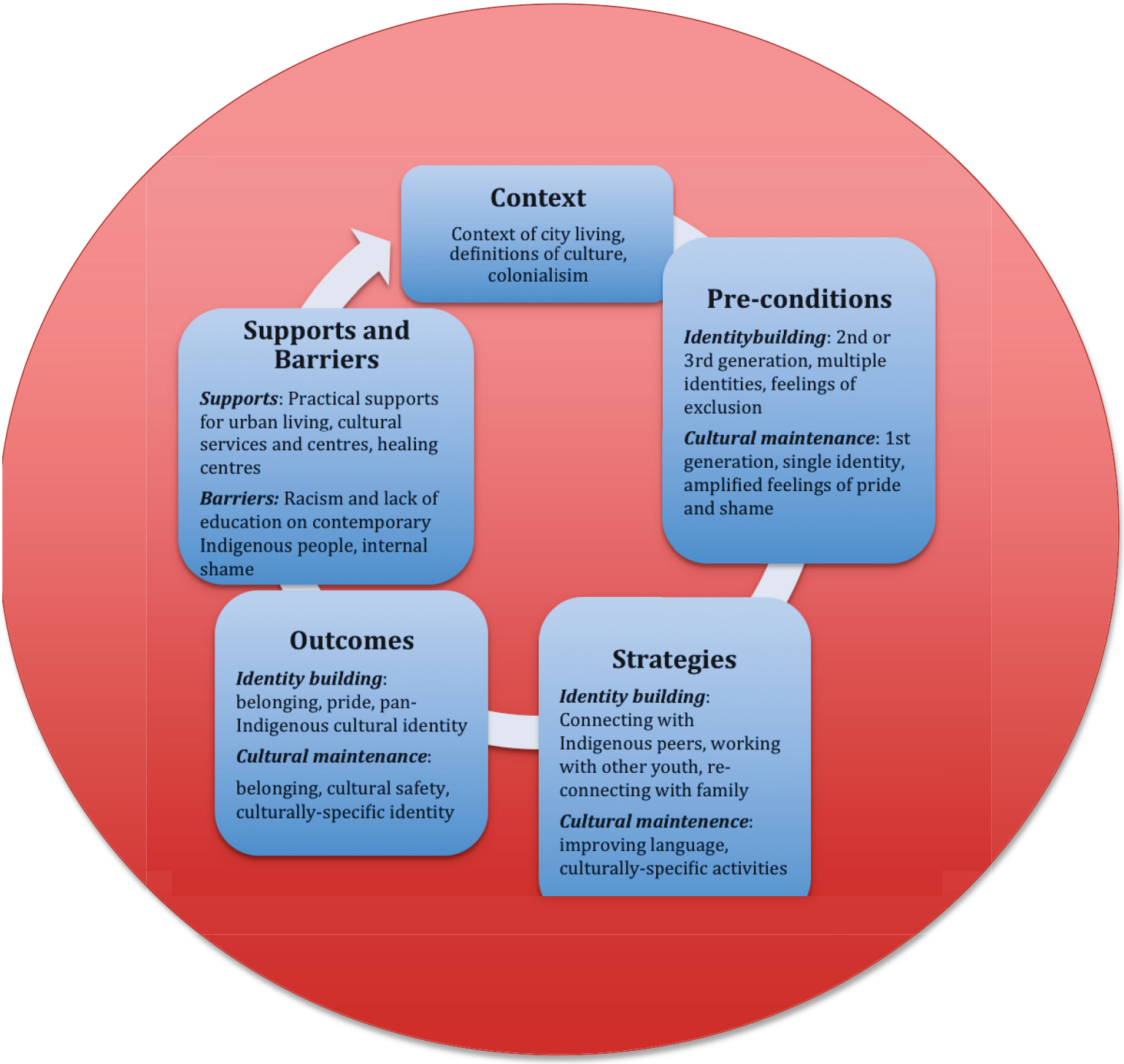
# Findings

## Overview of Theoretical Constructs

The goal of this dissertation was to develop a grounded theory model that would depict the role of culture in the identity formation of urban Indigenous youth. A model of the role of culture has emerged through the process of data analysis (see Figure 2, "An emergent model of the role of culture among urban Indigenous youth"). In grounded theory, it has been said that the theory plays the "starring" role, while the interviews or words of the participants play the supporting roles (Sandelowski, 1998). I tried to find a balance between theory formulation and ensuring that the voices of the participants were accurately and adequately represented. The findings will follow the flow of the model and will capture the words of the 20 participants. Participants will be described using a capital letter; "A", "B", etc. in order to maintain confidentiality.

The model is based on the conditional/consequential matrix detailed by Strauss and Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I found this model to be particularly helpful in the final stages of theory generation because of its emphasis on the interplay between macro and micro conditions. Because urban Indigenous youth have all been impacted by macro-level policies and conditions, there cannot be a separation between these conditions and the process of cultural identity development. However, in order to ensure that I did not force the data into these categories, this matrix was loosely used as a guide in generating the theory. In the model, there exists an inter-play between the context in which Indigenous youth live and the reason that they might undertake a journey to explore their cultural identity.

Figure 2: An emergent model on the role of culture among urban Indigenous youth



The results of such journeys, when they are able to happen in a meaningful way, might include increased pride and sense of self. However, there are barriers to completing this type of journey including the challenge of coping with intergenerational traumas resulting from colonialism and dealing with both overt and subtle forms of racism. I will present the findings by using Figure 2 as a guide. Each section of the figure pertains to particular groups of findings, for example when using the heading "Pre-conditions for identity building and culture maintenance", it can be noted that the exact same heading is used in the figure of the grounded theory model.

## Context of Grounded Theory Model

Before beginning this research, I did not anticipate encountering such a diverse group of youth. At one point I believed that being an urban Indigenous person meant someone that had moved away from a reserve community or from the north to a city. Although this is certainly one definition of an urban Indigenous person, I came to understand that this is an extremely narrow definition of the range of possible Indigenous identities and experiences. The youth that I met through this research as participants and advisory committee members do not limit themselves to one identity. Many of them have multiple identities; they may have one Indigenous parent or even one parent who is partly Indigenous and identify as Indigenous, or they may feel connected to all of their cultural backgrounds. Some never lived on a reserve or in an Inuit community and have spent all of their lives in Montreal or other urban areas. Others were raised completely outside of their birth cultures and communities in adoptive or foster homes. Still others feel that culture is only one aspect of their identity and may feel that other aspects of themselves, such as their sexual identity, are just as important in their overall identities.

**Context of city living**. The youth that participated in this study live in a very specific context, with a number of macro-level factors that directly or indirectly impact their lives. All of the youth currently live in Montreal, a city that is unique in Canada due to the fact that it is the largest urban centre in the province of Québec, the only province with French as the official language. The history of French-English relations and the desire of many Québecois to maintain their language and culture makes for a situation where immigrants and Indigenous residents alike are expected to adopt the French language if they hope to find employment, housing and assimilate into mainstream society. Language issues can be a major barrier to adapting to life in Montreal, particularly for Indigenous youth who spoke English as their first or second language before moving to the city and often find themselves needing to learn a third language.

The youth in this study differ greatly from one another, with some never having lived on a reserve or in a northern community, and others that have only recently moved to Montreal. The experiences of the participants that lived all or most of their lives in Montreal were very different from those that had only lived in the city for shorter periods of time. The reasons participants moved to the city appears to be an important indicator of well-being. Those that moved to Montreal from Nunavut or Nunavik needed to overcome several obstacles in order to succeed in the city. Several Inuit participants related that they decided to move to Montreal for better education or employment opportunities, or to get away from alcohol abuse and suicide epidemics in their communities. Once they arrived in Montreal, they were faced with cultural shock, isolation, and difficulty finding work because they did not speak French. Some found that they were more at risk of using drugs or alcohol in the city because of the isolation and hopelessness they experienced. Many of the participants spoke of wanting to return to the north and had looked for opportunities to meet other Inuit in Montreal to lessen their isolation and remain

connected to their cultures. Nevertheless, the hardships that come with moving to a city seem to make culture less of a priority. In searching for work and housing, these participants learn quickly that assimilation may be more effective in meeting their goals.

Other factors that impact the youth in the study are both the history of colonisation, and the ongoing colonial policies that continue to play out in their lives. Residential schools, forced settlement, health policies towards the Inuit and explicit goals of assimilation are some of the ways that the participants describe their families' histories of colonisation. Ongoing instances of colonisation include encroachment onto Indigenous lands and resources and the hypocrisy of requiring Indigenous Canadians to learn another language before being able to work in a place like Montreal. The latter examples demonstrate that governments' goals of assimilation have shifted into more insidious forms, as outlined in the literature review.

The participants in this study varied a great deal on the length of time they had lived in Montreal. While some had lived in the city all of their lives, others came to get away from certain situations, or moved because their parents or other family members had decided to come. Because this factor appears to be so important when looking at the role of culture in the participants' lives, the context of why and for how long the participants have lived in Montreal is detailed in this next section.

***Lack of affordable living and housing***. "E" left Iqaluit five years ago when she was pregnant with her first daughter in order to get away from the alcohol and fighting that comes with alcohol. She identifies as Inuk and loves visiting smaller communities in the north, but specifies that she only likes visiting communities where there is no alcohol; such as Cape Dorset. She describes the reason she came to Montreal:

> It was too expensive to live up north and food and diapers are at least two times as expensive as they are in the city...In Iqaluit, everyone knows everyone else and everyone is drunk all of the time, a lot of people in my family have problems with alcohol (paraphrased).

Similarly, "F" moved to Montreal because of lack of housing and to get away from what she calls "drama" in her home community. She says:

> There I cannot get an apartment first of all. Its not that I cannot afford it, there's no housing. There's barely any houses. In Wakem Bay there's about 1000 people, in Kuujuak there's about 2000 people. Like there's not much houses. Families live in, they put them on a list and wait for them until they make a house. It can take 4-5 years..... like well second of all, too much drama up north, like suicides and alcohol and like drugs and stuff...Its too much drama, like too much.

Although for both "E" and "F", moving to Montreal was a choice, in reality, they had little choice if they wanted to find stable housing, employment and stay away from drugs and alcohol. For these participants, there were a number of complex factors that influenced their decisions to come to Montreal. Funding limitations in new home construction, the lack of subsidies to decrease the cost of living in the North, and the consequences of historical trauma are apparent in their stories. Their reasons for moving to Montreal demonstrate the extent to which unspoken policies of assimilation still exist.

***To be close to family / access urban resources***. Several of the participants decided to come to Montreal because family was already living here. In some situations they came to help family, or be close to a family member that was ill, and for others it may have been one of several deciding factors that brought them to live in the city. "B" came to Montreal to be

close her aunt, but also had plans to attend university. Although she could have attended university closer to home, having a relative here seemed to make Montreal her first choice. She explains:

> I knew I wanted to live in Montreal that was one thing I always wanted to do and I think the reason why is because my aunt, who is like I'm very close to, she's like my second mom lived here and she would always like tell me stories about Montreal you know and I just loved it, it was like this city – still close enough to home you know I knew that I can get on a bus tonight and be there tomorrow, its not like a flight, I could take the bus or the train. I knew I always wanted to be in Montreal. Education wise, I knew I wanted to go to McGill, that way my – its even in my year book to be a graduate of McGill because my mom went to McGill and I just wanted to continue that you know, so that was my goal.

Although moving to Montreal in particular seemed to be as a result of having family here, the need to leave her home community for post-secondary education would have likely caused this participant to move somewhere else after high school.

"L" originally moved to Ottawa and was familiar with city living and then came back to Montreal when her mother was sick:

> Well I'm 30, I've been living in Montreal for two years. Um, I'm originally from Cape Dorset, I graduated back in '99. I moved to Ottawa for a year and went to a program called Nunavut - - program over there, and I went back up north and worked here and there, did some internships for the government, cause my mom was sick, and she was here and that is how I ended up here.

In contrast, "O" came to Montreal because he felt there were few opportunities in his community and his sister who was already living in Montreal needed help looking after her son:

> In fact, one of my goals, was to come look after one of my nephews. My sister had come to live in Montreal 8 or 9 months before and I stayed in Manawan and I wasn't in school anymore. And there were no jobs, there was almost nothing to do, so I was hanging out with the wrong people and I realized it was time to get out of there (translated from French).

In looking at the variety of reasons that the participants came to Montreal, even those that came here to be closer to family usually had other motivations as well; such as accessing education, employment opportunities or healthcare for themselves or their families. One thing that appears clear is that having a relative in the city may make it a much more tangible goal for those that may have more than one reason to move to the city.

***Came as a child with family to access employment***. Many of the participants have lived in Montreal for most of their lives and came to the city with their families as children. "A", "D", "G" and "M" all lived in their birth communities for several years before moving to Montreal. In all four cases, these participants' biological parents had moved to Montreal for employment.

***Fresh start***. A few of the participants decided to come to Montreal because they wanted a fresh start. "P" says:

> "I'm from Alberta. I moved to Montreal three years ago. I had a rough time in my life for ten years approximately where I had substance abuse and now I'm just trying to fix my life and put it back together and I'm currently doing night school".

"T" decided to move to Montreal for what he called having "personal problems" up north: "Well you see I'm gay, they don't accept gay people up there - its especially spiritually very demanding so one of the good reason I move down here is to live the way I want to live yeah". Both "P" and "T" wanted to get away from their previous situations and Montreal was a new place to begin.

***Always lived in city.*** Contrary to what many people think of when they hear about Indigenous people in the city, some Indigenous youth have lived in Montreal or other cities all of their lives. "H" says:

> I was born here (in Montreal) and uh when I was about four or five I moved to Ottawa for like a year and after being there for like a year...we stayed in North Carolina for until geez, we stayed in North Carolina for maybe 3-4 years and we came back to Montreal like just a couple days after my (12th) birthday and I've been here since.

Similarly "J" relates that he has always lived in the city, with annual trips to his mother's home community:

> Yes, I was born in Montreal, my mom came here to study when she was younger with my brother, well my half-brother, I am métis so for sure its different for me, cause I've always lived in Montreal. Sometimes I go to the Cote-North where I've experienced a bit, its not racism, but being seen as different. And when I'm in Montreal its also different (translated from French).

Some of the youth that grew up outside of their families have also been in cities all of their lives. "S" says:

> I'm a Cree Native adopted into a white Jewish family...All my life (I have been in Montreal). I also lived in the States starting when I was around 16, well about 18. Six

months … usually six months in the States, six months here, I jump the border every six months.

Depending on the reason that youth live in or moved to Montreal, their experiences and struggles differ from one another. The reason that youth find themselves in Montreal and the length of time that they have lived here, or whether they have been here all of their lives are extremely important contextual factors that influence the role that culture plays out in their lives. In the emergent model of culture in the lives of urban Indigenous youth (figure 2), reasons for city living are both contextual and act as important separators between those that fall into the "identity building" group and those that make up the "culture maintaining group". First generation urban dwellers tend to have very different explanations for the way that they incorporate culture into their lives than do second or third generation participants. This factor also seems related to the degree to which the participants identity with a single or multiple identities. This may be due to the fact that mixed-race participants, Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgendered (GLBT) participants, and participants that grew up outside of their biological or nuclear families are also more likely to have been living in the city for longer periods of time. Thus, it becomes difficult to separate cause and effect; however as the findings will make clear, there appear to be two very different ways in which the participants go about engaging with and or exploring their cultural identities.

**Definitions of culture.** I began all of the interviews by asking the participants to define the word culture. For some it was very easy to define; others felt that the term was quite broad, and others felt that they could not define the word culture as they did not feel they had any first-hand knowledge of cultural activities or practices. Participants generally defined culture in

one of four ways: culture as a way of life, culture as language, culture as traditions/art and culture as ambiguous.

***Culture as way of life***. Several of the participants defined culture as a way of life that is traditional and difficult to maintain in an urban environment. For "M", Inuit are different from people in Montreal, and have a way of life that they like to share with others. To her culture was defined as: We are small town people, more welcoming than people in Montreal. We like to teach others what we do, and what it means to be Inuit. Culture also means hunting, camping, fishing and family feasts (paraphrased). "M"'s definition highlights the differences between her culture and what she considers to be an urban lifestyle. Even though she has lived in Montreal since her early teens, her concept of herself and her culture has remained unchanged and the core values of what makes her Inuit remain. Another participant, J grew up in the city but goes up north to see his family every year. He says:

> Well, it makes me think of family, how we live and everything in the north. Culture is also a bit how we lived back in the day, for example how we made food and everything. Once a year I go up north to hunt or to see family. That's a bit Native culture, the way we get-together and everything (translated from French).

"T" moved to Montreal as a youth and says:

> My definition of culture is the way of our living. It's kind of hard to adapt down here in the south. Bringing it down here (my culture) it's kind of difficult to make changes the way I live (paraphrased).

These definitions imply a certain duality of life for an urban Indigenous person. All of these participants imply that culture is something that is more present in their home communities and that it is a way of living that is difficult to maintain in the city.

***Language.*** Other participants highlight language as one of the most important aspects of culture. "O" grew up in his community and lived there until he was a teenager and went away for school. He speaks his language and is proud of the fact that most members of his nation have not lost their language:

> For me, culture is identity; there are a lot of things that come to mind, its identity or say language. I think its something that allows us to differentiate ourselves from others. Say, the Québec culture, the Anglophone culture, the Haitien culture, the Atikamek culture, its what differentiates us (translated from French).

For "F", language, ways of surviving like hunting and sewing clothing are an integral part of what she understands to be Inuk. She says:

> I think about that as my own culture, like what my grandfather used to tell me all these kind of stories – like the first white man came into town and they're ruining our cultures and stuff – you know – we're losing our cultures and like culture really means big time for us Inuit because we know we're going to lose it someday. Most of the Inuit are talking in English now and like we're – a lot of Inuit people cannot talk in Inuktitut and like we're losing our culture. And our elders are doing their best to try and get that back. That's why there's like Inuktitut class, that's why there's this schooling and trying to help us get our culture back like sewing and learning new words and like hunting – you know?

"F" highlights the fact that many Indigenous people have lost or never learned their language. This leads to the question, how can someone who considers language to be a defining aspect of culture be comfortable identifying as an Indigenous person without their language? "G" feels the same way, she says: "Culture is language; it is a reflection of your differences in your identity, that's culture – language, number one factor". When asked how she feels about her identity as

an Indigenous person because she never learned her language, "G" responded: "Yeah, it's a big loss, it's me having a part of myself that I don't know".

***Culture as teachings and traditions for survival***. Several of the participants mentioned teachings from elders or from relatives as part of their definition of culture. "L" mentions several of the teachings or stories that have stayed with her:

> Like I believe in like there's little … little things that Inuit … that I carry anyways because I grew up with it. Like for a small child who has like … There's a saying in Inuktitut. Like arsaniit is the northern lights and the northern lights only come out in the winter when it's super, super cold. And you know, if you see your child or any child and you see them with no hats on but because they were … you know, they're children and they're teenagers, they don't want to listen to their parents, they don't want to wear a hat, so they made up a little thing called arsaniit. It's called the northern … If you don't have a hat on the northern lights is going to take your head off and you know, just to keep their kids wearing their hats during the winter so they don't get cold and little things like that. And I carry them through, you know.....

"L"'s definition of culture shows how culture has been passed down from one generation to the next. The story that "L" shares is also set in the north, where keeping warm is a matter of life and death. Although "L" says this is something that stays with her, as part of her own cultural identity, a teaching like this would inevitably be shifted in an urban, or more southern context, where the weather, and therefore way of life, is very different as well. Another participant, "Q" also mentions teachings as part of his definition of culture. He says:

> Culture is like a teaching from the elders.... tradition, ways of life, how a person grows... I consider myself as an Inuk. Inuk is like one person and there is Inuit, meaning that is a

> lot of people and there are different dialects, different ways of saying. There is mind your own business, watch and learn yes and keep learning with the elders, whatever the elder says, it is better to follow their saying.

"Q" has lived in Montreal since he was a young boy, but has maintained close ties to the Inuit community and his mother often spends time at Inuit feasts where she and her family have regular contact with elders. For "Q", the important part of the teachings are who they come from, those with more life experience than himself; and these teachings will help him to navigate his life whether he is in the north or the south.

Other participants thought of culture as the process of making items that help their ancestors meet their needs. "R" defined culture as:

> Culture reminds me – definitely reminds me of a sled, you know how they used to have dog sleds, the making of the sled, of Inuit, me I'm Inuit you know ... It also reminds me of like a print-making or a drawing, like how they make Inuit art and sculpting, cause I grew up in it. The fun part of it is making culture, the best part.

Both dog sleds and sculptures were important parts of survival in the north. The dog sled in order to travel long distances, and sculptures used as landmarks, where there are few natural landmarks to navigate the distances.

Similarly, "O", who grew up in his community talks about making important modes of transportation, such as canoes out of bark. He says: well in fact I think that one of the ways we can identify Atikamekws is well every time I hear the work Atikamekw, I think about bark...

***Culture as ambiguous***. Others were uncomfortable defining the word because they did not feel they had received any type of cultural education. For instance, "C" stated:

> I played Inuit games, but I don't know much about culture. My father wanted me

> to get a formal education and not to be a hunter. My father was a water truck driver and got an education. There are still enough animals to hunt, but not enough ice and snow for them to survive for much longer.

Although this participant had grown up in speaking Inuktitut and in his home community, the practice of being a hunter was becoming obsolete because of environmental changes. He was therefore discouraged from learning about his culture and felt that he could not even define what the word meant. "D" was born in Cape Dorset, but raised by several different relatives in Montreal from the age of nine stated: "I do not really know what culture is". Later on in the interview "D" related how he has made efforts to understand what it means to be Inuit, and recalls that his mother taught him about Inuit food, however he wishes to broaden his knowledge of what it means to be Inuit.

"B" finds the word culture difficult to define, she says: "I think first of all culture for me, there are so many different aspects of it because there's my personal identity with culture and you know my experience with culture". "B" identifies as First Nations, as queer, and as a woman, and therefore has many different aspects to her identity. Culture is not the only aspect to her identity, nor does it necessarily refers only to ethnicity and therefore she does not feel it is something that can be easily defined.

It was interesting that none of the participants felt that urban living could be defined as part of their culture. There was little mention of attending music or art shows by Indigenous artists, such as those involved in "spoken word", hip hop artists, or even Indigenous film festivals such as Terre en Vue in Montreal. Perhaps this was a reflection of the way that the question was asked, or that the participants did not feel that these types of activities constituted a legitimate definition of culture. From speaking with advisory committee members I learnt that

that taking part in these types of activities was indeed an important part of their lives in Montreal. When I asked advisory members why they thought participants had not talked about these types of activities, one person responded: "culture is something that is given to you, you cannot change or adapt it – art is different". This explanation may account for the large number of responses that involved quite traditional definitions of culture.

One common theme throughout the stories of the participants was the impact of colonialism on their ability to incorporate their definitions of culture into their lives. The next section discusses the historical and ongoing impact of colonialism on the participants' lives and cultures.

**Colonialism.** A common thread among the participants despite the fact that they come from so many different cultures and life situations was the explicit mention of the historical and ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and how this has impacted their cultures and their lives. The harmful effects of residential schools, the arrival of European settlers and the intergenerational traumas such as addictions and abuse were a few of the ways that colonization has been harmful.

Many participants were aware of their families' histories with residential schools and how it affected their identity as Indigenous people. "N" speaks about the imposition of both language and religion through the residential school system:

> Well, with the elders, with the grandparents it is, but I think people because of the residential school – my mother told me that in the residential school system you were encouraged – I don't know, not encouraged but you were I guess forced not to speak your language, you were forced not to be who you were, so its a chain of events where my grandparents didn't speak to their children and they raised their children, you know

> English, Catholic, and you know we were the next generation and we didn't have any of that culture or any of that made us distinctly us, you know. So in a way I do feel like I've lost a part of me.

**"**N" feels the loss of her culture and language as though she is missing a part of herself. "G" described the loss in a similar way:

> He was more ashamed of his language. If you, like, have -- when you're 5 -- from, like, the age of 5 on and that you're beaten and your fingers are -- bleed and you're, like – you're beaten as a child... I don't speak it. I can swear, I can say animals, my mother made us a book when we were kids, a coloring book, um so that we could remember our language, but my father went to a residential school and refused to teach us as kids so....

The theme of not knowing part of oneself is found throughout many participants stories. It is a loss that they feel very deeply, despite the fact that they may not have ever known the language or the culture. "H" compares residential schools to the holocaust, implying that although children were not killed, their spirits and the core of who they were was taken away from them:

> no one's aware of that, I say holocaust and people think Jews in Auschwitz, you know, I think of millions of Natives that got cut away from their culture and shaved their heads and put in schools and you now molested by priests and shit like that and you know taught to be Catholic and to hate their own spiritual ways and just destroying the culture and their identity altogether and so yeah, those residential schools.

In addition to residential and federal schools that impacted many different cultures including the Inuit, there were also specific acts against the Inuit to encourage assimilation and undermining their culture and traditional ways of surviving off the land. For example, "F" talks about the slaughter of hunting dogs:

> Like our culture, cause they killed all our dogs, we couldn't dog sled anymore, my grandfather always used to tell me all kinds of different stories and I don't know how, but I wish I could be the one to give the culture to everyone, every Inuit...

Another way in which culture was undermined was by separating families by sending those with tuberculosis to hospitals far from home. "M" recounts how the fear of tuberculosis was used to separate families, in some cases it took children away from families and never returned them.

> ... like my grandmother on my mom's side, my mom was only 4 when she was taken away on a ship, saying that she was sick – tuberculosis, but my grandfather as he recalls, there was no sign of her being sick or vomiting or nothing like that, my mom and grandpa always thought she was used for a guinea pig, cause she didn't return. And my mom went searching for her for many, many years and she finally found her (grave stone) in Hamilton – she was upset about that for her whole life – why - that was the big question.

Some of the participants were able to explain how colonisation has caused widespread trauma amongst their family and communities. "V" discusses how his ancestors were forced to live in ways that went against their traditional lifestyles with the introduction of reserve communities.

> Yeah, a lot of the people … 'cause they said the Innu people, they used to be very… they would always move. They had, like … I don't know, nobody could keep living like that, I don't know. White people, they looked at the Innu and they said, "Sorry, you just can't do that. You can't have your whole community live in three places, like, and keep rotating all year round," you know. But that's what we used to do and we stayed healthy

> like that.. And we would kill caribou, we'd kill everything and we'd all survive as a family. We'd be more tight together by always moving each season to a different place. But we stopped doing that and now we're stuck in one place. So, like, they're getting fat, they're getting more addictions, they're eating … just sitting there and eating chips and, like, greasy meat and, like, it's just … and they're getting addicted to beer, they're running out of time, you know.

"V" relates how the imposition of reserve communities is one of the causes of addictions and poor health. By changing the way that the Innu people knew to stay healthy, the government was imposing an artificial culture and lifestyle on hundreds of different cultures and expecting them to be part of the colonial economy when this had never been their culture or lifestyle.

"J" also speaks about the damage caused by the reserve system. Communities were created arbitrarily, often hundreds of miles from urban centres, or other industries. Although the stated goal of the government was to integrate Indigenous peoples into the economy, the impact was just the opposite. In addition to economic isolation, the social impacts were just as devastating.

> You know, they were placed away because they have nothing to do, the suicide rate is seriously high in every Indigenous community. Me, being put in a house with nothing to do, there are no jobs, you just eat, consume, you drink, you just drink, if you have drugs you take them, sometimes money problems, fights (translated from French).

Not every participant was aware of the history of colonization and how it has negatively affected their families. Many participants spoke about widespread addictions and mental health problems in their home communities, but did not talk about history that has led to inter-generational traumas. Nonetheless, their descriptions provide a clear picture of how

community and individual traumas continue to erode their cultures. The next section will present the participants' experiences that appear to precede the way they chose to bring or maintain culture in their lives.

## Pre-Conditions for Identity Building or Culture Maintenance

In looking at the diversity of the participants, there was nevertheless two distinct groups that emerged from the data: those that sought out opportunities to learn more about Indigenous cultures and worldviews, that had fewer ties to their communities, were less likely to speak an Indigenous language, may have grown up outside of their biological families, had multiple cultural and/or other identities (i.e. gay or lesbian), and had lived in Montreal for longer periods of their life, whom I termed "identity building" participants. The other group, whom I term "cultural maintenance" participants had been in Montreal for shorter periods of time, were more likely to identify with a single culture and had greater ties to their ancestral communities, may have grown up outside of their nuclear families, but were still raised within their cultures, and were more likely to speak an Indigenous language.

**Pre-conditions for identity building**. Most of the participants encountered experiences that led them to question their cultural identity at one point or another in their lives. Experiences were both positive and negative, but they inevitably left a lasting impression on the participants. These experiences seem particularly important in determining whether or not they undertook a process or journey to deepen their cultural identity as an Indigenous person. For some, these experiences were directly related to their multiple identities. Many participants also talked about having a difficult time feeling like they fit in completely in any one location or culture and others felt that they were not entitled to identify themselves as Indigenous because they did not know enough about their culture or did not speak their language. Both "identity

building" and "cultural maintenance" participants experienced turning points where they seemed to realize the importance of exploring their identities or maintaining their cultures.

***Processes that shaped identity***. Several of the participants from mixed backgrounds struggled to understand and form their cultural identities as they were growing up. "A" speaks about the way her identity was negatively affected by her father's violence and alcoholism:

> When I was a teenager, most of my cultural identity was you know – through my father – which was not a good experience. You know most of it was alcoholism and violence was most of my experience, and that's most of what I got as a teenager; that is most of what I saw. Now I see it is much more than that and I can understand it in a historical context, I can understand it in a much bigger broader way – it is not so specific to one situation...

The shame and confusion she felt as a teenager shifted to a deeper understanding of the widespread destruction caused by colonialism as she became an adult and had access to other forms of learning. "A" also felt out of place regardless of where she was as a result of belonging to more than one culture, and because she was the only Native person in her school growing up. She says:

> Well before then, I grew up down south and there was no other Native kids, like I was really the only one. In the whole school, there was another, a Mexican kid, but other than that everybody else was Québecois and white, so I didn't, when I was a teenager I didn't really have much of an identity as Inuit. I didn't, I was not conscious of it.... That's why I went back (up North), so that cultural awareness cause I'm not only Inuk, I'm part southern, I grew up in the Laurentians, so its a double identity.

Part of the process of gaining a better understanding of her self was to try and feel a sense of belonging among other Inuit. Thus "A" had multiple experiences that made her question her cultural identity and she chose to try to better understand her culture by travelling to her father's home community in order to meet her relatives and learn about her Inuit side. Thus, despite some negative experiences related to her culture, "A" chose to deepen her understanding of her culture, which resulted in feelings of greater belonging to the Inuit community, which encouraged her to learn Inuktitut, volunteer at Inuit feasts and learn how to make amautis.

Other participants described wanting to learn more about their culture and identity when others took an interest in it, "B" describes her feelings:

> Like my brother never has been like traditional, hasn't really expressed any kind of interest in that and I think being with a non-Native (in a relationship) I don't think he would ever really jump on that boat a little bit. For me it was just interesting because for me and my partner is non-Native, but I think because of her interest in the culture and us seeing it as something like "Oh, my God, I've never seen this before. Like this is so cool." It kind of like sprung an interest for me to kind of learn more about it.

For "B", the fact that a non-Native that she trusted was interested in traditional aspects of her culture, encouraged her to explore aspects of her culture that she was less aware of. In contrast, some participants heard negative messages from their parents due to their own experiences or worries about their children. "H" never visited his mom's home community and has lived in different cities for his entire life. He was interested in learning more about Indigenous peoples and cultures and describes his attempts to do so:

> I'm interested in going to the Native Friendship Centre (NFC), um I went there this one time and it was like closed or something, and I didn't even know where the front door

> was, so I was like, I'll just come here another time. But uh, like I said my mom, I told her yeah, I checked out the NFC today, but it looked like they were closed and she was like oh, I don't know if I want you hanging out there – there's a lot of people that just go there for like booze money or heroin money or all this other stuff. I don't know, I feel annoyed whenever my mom talks about it like that. This is our culture; you can't get rid of that. Sure you might not be very proud of you know the kind of shit that's happened to us as a people but you know, whatever, you have to deal with that.

"H" has spent a lot of time educating himself about the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada and was upset by his mother's attempts to protect him. Despite her comments he is interested in learning more about his culture, but her depiction of those that use the NFC services could have left "H" with confusion and mixed feelings about his identity.

"K" had similar experiences with receiving negative messages about her cultural identity from her parents. "K" has one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous parent. Christianity was practiced in her home and her father, who was not Indigenous, forbade her from taking part in spiritual aspects of her mother's culture, she explains:

> He grew up in a very Christian home as -- as well. Actually, probably more than my mom's. And when I was growing up, he didn't ... A lot of Christians maybe see anything other -- other than what they practice, they see it as being, like, witchcraft or, you know, weird or, you know, like -- like, sinful. So ... So I wasn't allowed to practice when I was about 17 or 18, he told me I don't want you to go -- I don't want you to smudge or to go to sweats. It's sinful...

"K" grew up hearing that parts of her culture were "sinful" and has had a difficult time feeling proud of all aspects of her identity. As an adult she has taken comfort in being around other

Indigenous people that accept and are proud of their traditions and ceremonies. Although in some cases, having negative experiences may have pushed participants further away from their cultures, in the case of participants in this study, it seemed to make them more determined to explore the aspects of themselves that they were told they should feel ashamed of. Although internalized racism may be a barrier to engaging in identity building strategies (that will be discussed below), experiences of shame may not always turn into feelings of internalized racism. It appears to depend on the determination of the participant, in the case of this study, on whether they continue to explore their cultures in order to experience feelings of pride. For some of the participants, it was having those initial positive experiences after taking their cultural identity for granted that made them go further in exploring aspects of their cultures. In the section on supports, it is clear that having access to places where they can go and feel that they belong may also help ensure that negative experiences do not end the journey of identity building. The following section presents some of the other experiences of participants, namely feelings of exclusion related to their multiple identities.

***Feelings of exclusion***. Some participants describe feeling left out wherever they went as a result of being part of more than one culture or from a non-heterosexual background. "G" had one Indigenous and one white parent and describes how she never felt like she belonged to either group:

> People would tease me because I was white in the Northwest Territories and because I spoke French and I was different. And then here they would tease me because I was Native. And I was like, oh, my God, I don't fit in anywhere. And so that's, like, I guess my social stature when I first started. And then now, like, I moved to New York and people were like, oh, my God, you're Native, you're so special. And I'm like, no, I'm not.

> I'm not -- not more special than -- than anybody else, but I just had to face racism at a younger age. But I guess, like, everybody faces racism at one point or another, whether you're white, whether you're black, or they're just -- you have to -- to be able to -- to communicate and stand up for yourself. And the fact that I show that I'm proud will encourage other people that are around me to stand proud...

For "G", the experience of feeling like she did not fit in anywhere was quite painful. As she got older and had more positive experiences among her peers, she was able to embrace her multiple identities and feel proud of her diverse background. "J" had a very similar experience; his mother was Indigenous but his father was not and he grew up in Montreal, but never learned his language. He describes feeling "left to the side" regardless of whether he was visiting his relatives from his mother's home community or when he was in Montreal:

> I am Métis so for sure for me its different, because I've always lived in Monreal. In the past when I went to the Cote-Nord I experienced, you know not racism but I was treated differently, and when I'm in Montreal its also different...Well because of my dad, because I didn't speak the language, they had a hard time believing, well not believing but like a judgement because I didn't speak the language, I didn't speak Innu, and also coming here it was different. I have a distinct first name...(translated from French).

"J" continues to move between two worlds, some years working in Cote-Nord and spending time with his relatives, and other years finding work in Montreal. He states he is tied to both places, but even as an adult does not feel completely at home in either place. For other participants, feelings of not belonging were intensified because they felt like they were truly alone. For example "P" was adopted into a white family and grew up in a small town that was quite

homogenous in terms of cultural diversity. She relates that she was teased as a teenager for being Indigenous.

> When I became an adolescent the people at school, the kids at school made fun of me and it was a hard time growing up and I was just trying to be familiar with who I was but they were criticizing me and I didn't know I was really any different, I didn't know that....because of my nationality. They were calling me like a squaw and put me down and I was mad, I felt I had a lot of anger inside because I wanted to be friends with them so bad but they were teasing me and bugging me and I had a lot of anger and resentment to them and sometimes I'd go home and take my frustrations out on my mom or whatever and she was always the one just always there trying to comfort me and care for me and I was mad because she couldn't take care of me when I was at school and my anger started to get really out of control and I just got really upset and I thought maybe it's because like I felt like I never really belonged and maybe because I wasn't around people that were like me.

Although "P" belonged to two worlds, as an adolescent, she wanted to be part of the world that she was a part of on a daily basis. She had no control over the actions of her peers and her adoptive mother could do little to change her reality. As a youth, she has had many struggles to feel better about herself and to begin to claim her Indigenous identity.

Others felt excluded for having different kinds of multiple identities. For example "B" was surprised when a group of Indigenous colleagues demonstrated a lack of knowledge on queer relationships at a sexuality workshop:

> And I was frustrated because like you'd think that being in an Indigenous group who've experienced oppressions and all, you know, the crappiness that comes with it, that they

> would think about being so inclusive and I have never felt unsafe in a space in a long time and to a point where I've got up and left a few times and again though at the end, you know … because I shut down. Like at the beginning I was really like involved with the discussions and then once the activity started I just like was trying to see if the facilitator could do some sort of thing to redirect it in the ways that like I said were more inclusive and wasn't done and at the end she was like "Does anybody have any comment?" Like you know, the workshop's done. I was like "Are you kidding me?" But I had to think about it. I'm like do I say something, do I not. Because normally in spaces where it's, you know, mostly like non-Natives, oh it's the touchy Indian. And in that space I was with Indians but I was the touchy gay person, you know.

"B" relates that she always has to be on guard and make decisions about whether or not to speak up and be made to feel like an outsider, or to keep silent and feel that the discussion is irrelevant to her. "T" felt that he had no choice but to move to Montreal because he was not accepted in his small northern Québec town for being gay. He felt that he could only be who he really is by leaving his home and others in his culture:

> Well I had personal problems up north. Well you see I'm gay, they don't accept gay people up there...so one of the good reason I move down here is to live the way I want to live yeah...yes when I came out they didn't accept for who I am so I decided to move to Montreal that year.

Feeling rejected or excluded from community members, colleagues or peers may make participants more determined to prove that they belong by encouraging them to be students of their culture or language. On the other hand, it may also have the opposite effect and push people away from their cultures because of their feelings of rejection or shame for not meeting

their cultural groups' definition of normal. For those that decide to go on to learn more about their cultures, some discuss turning points in their lives where they realized they needed to know more about where they came from, or have more acceptance of themselves in order to feel complete.

***Turning Points***. One participant discusses a turning point related to his becoming an adult. V" grew up outside of his culture because he grew up in a foster home, but when he was eighteen he decided to reach out to his biological family. He explains how he always knew something was missing and decided to go and see them again as a young adult:

> My birth family, actually, I had lots of contact with them when I was young, like … but then after I was put in that foster home I lost all contact with all my family. And I always missed them. I always … you know, I always wondered who my family was growing up and I always … you know, something was missing and I realized … you know, I always felt I was going to go back home one day, see who my family is and … when I went back when I was eighteen it's like they all remembered me and … but I didn't remember them, you know.

Connecting with birth parents is often important for children that grew up outside of their families, and for those that also grow up outside of their cultures the search for identity can be even more important. "G" felt ashamed to be seen by others as Indigenous as a teenager, but later came to develop greater pride in herself and her culture:

> Its changed (my feelings about culture), as a teenager I separated myself from my culture because I lived with my father who complained about racism, so that was a reflection on me and I didn't want to be woe is me, I wanted to be proud, so like in Québec there was the Huron and it was always like oh they're selling cigarettes, they're, they get everything

> paid for them, and there was this other little Huron girl that was in our classes and she had blue eyes and curly hair and was completely white and we didn't understand why she got all her lunches paid and then there was me who didn't have any lunches.... and now I sell my culture (laughs) and I go to work and talk about my culture and let kids touch my hair, but no I'm proud of who (I am), I think it was a turning point in my life where if I hadn't identified and been proud of who I was, I couldn't be happy.

There are many mixed experiences from pride and shame, to feelings of exclusion and belonging, that participants struggle with before engaging in activities or processes that may help to build their identities. The next section will present the findings of how the second group of participants experienced a similar combination of feelings. The fact that both "identity building" participants and "cultural maintenance" participants have similar experiences of shame based on the reactions of others has important implications for the emergent grounded theory model on the role of culture in the lives of urban Indigenous youth (figure 2). It appears to show that some of the lingering effects of colonialism, including the paucity of education on contemporary Indigenous peoples in our school systems, result in feelings of internalized shame and racism. If left unaddressed, these feelings may act as barriers for engaging in strategies that help to increase pride and cultural identity. These strategies will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

**Pre-conditions for cultural maintenance**. The group of participants that sought to maintain their cultures once moving to Montreal also had mixed experiences related to their cultural identities. Some had very positive memories associated with their cultural teachings, whereas others felt both pride and shame simultaneously.

***Amplified feelings of both pride and shame after moving to city***. "L" has grown up speaking Inuktitut and eating what she refers to as country food, or raw food. In discussing her feelings about her Inuit identity, she says:

> Well of course it really identifies who I am, that's for sure. I have a couple of friends that don't even eat like the way we eat. We eat raw, frozen – and that's one of the best things, that I never want to lose. Especially the food, and you know like I'm proud to be Inuk, that's for sure, and I'm proud of myself to where I am today... we have sewing here sometimes and different little activities that keep us Inuk. But you know, I want to add something, sometimes I'm embarrassed to be Inuk here. Like not here at this particular place, but I don't go to Atwater too often, I'll go to the mall, but I'll hide so I don't see any...

It becomes clear with what "L" says that she has very strong feelings of pride, but also feelings of shame about some other Inuit in the city. In talking about Atwater, she is referring to the stereotype that Inuit who are struggling with addictions live in the Atwater area and that she does not want to be associated with that type of lifestyle. These dual feelings have pushed "L" both closer and further away from her culture in that outside of her professional life, where she attends a training and employment program for Inuit people in Montreal; she does not associate with other Inuit in the city. Therefore one of the barriers to completing the cycle of reinforcing positive identity as depicted in Figure 2 are the impacts of intergenerational trauma and the feelings of shame that are invoked by them for "L" on behalf of others in her culture that struggle with addictions.

Some had very positive memories and feelings associated with taking part in traditional aspects of their cultures. For example, when asked to describe positive events that shaped who

they were as people, "D" responded that doing beadwork, watching people doing it, and learning how to do it quickly were really special for him (paraphrased). "F" responded: "Well, going hunting. Learning how to make like pualuks, mittens, and like anything we can do. Especially hunting. Hearing my grandfather's stories". "J" also had special memories of spending time in the woods:

> I saw my family when they were in the woods, my grandparents beside my mom, and it's really something I love doing, that I was able to learn, and it's great (translated from French).

For all of these participants, positive memories and feeling that they acquired skills and cultural knowledge contributed to feelings of positive identity and pride in their cultures. In the barriers section, I will further explicate the potential for internalized racism to interfere with the process of "cultural maintenance".

**Turning Points**. Several of the participants talked about certain events or points in their lives where they decided that learning more about certain aspects of their culture was becoming more important to them. Many mentioned the period of early adulthood as the time when they started to realize that they needed to keep working on understanding their cultures, otherwise they might lose them. For some the importance of culture was related both to their age and to the influence of living in the city. One participant, "F" who moved to Montreal a few years ago from Northern Québec says:

> When I was growing up I … like I … the only thing I thought about was hanging out with my friends and like go play sports and stuff. But like now I'm 20 years old and like starting to know what our culture means to us and like what's going on in the world right now and like you know. I don't know. Well, I know that there's so many people that

> they're Inuit but they don't speak Inuktitut. That's wrong. Well, it's not wrong. It's not our fault but …

One of the reasons "F" realizes that those around her are losing their language is because she lives in the city now. The social and economic reasons that make people leave their communities are also contributing to the further loss of language and culture. Similarly, "E" who moved to Montreal five years ago from Iqaluit worries that her own daughter will grow up without her language and now realizes how important her culture is to her: "I feel I am losing my culture, my daughter doesn't speak the language and I tried to teach her, but she only wants to speak English and Spanish from watching Dora" (paraphrased). "E" never had to question her ability to maintain her language because she grew up in Iqaluit speaking Inuktitut. It is only now that she is living in the city and raising her young daughter that she recognizes the risk of her daughter losing the language (paraphrased).

"N" recognizes that there is always more to learn about her spirituality and language and began noticing in her 20's that her mom who has been constantly working at her language is more fluent than she is:

> And (I'd like) to come to a point where I feel comfortable conversing, comfortable being in the Longhouse. And it all doesn't have to be done right away....Probably when I was in my early twenties (I felt the desire to learn more)....You know, 'cause I … for me it's like my mom... She is somebody who's been learning the language for years upon years. You know, she'll … she'll converse. She converses better than me. She knows a lot more than me.

Despite the fact that the participants had varied experiences with the extent to which they grew up immersed in their culture, there was often a turning point where they decided they

wanted to learn more or realized they were afraid to lose parts of their culture. For the participants that grew up speaking their languages, with strong ties to their communities, it appears that there are a number of factors that push them to engage in "cultural maintenance" strategies, including positive and negative experiences related to their identity, their age and family or developmental stage, and the cultural changes or transitions that come with moving to an urban setting. The strategies employed by both groups of participants to either build or maintain their cultural identities will be discussed in the following section.

## Strategies for Identity Building or Culture Maintenance

Although there are certain caveats to the extent to which participants felt that culture was important in their lives, the desire to learn or maintain their cultures were nevertheless present among all of the participants' responses. The ways in which the participants went about incorporating or maintaining their cultures, or 'strategies' were discussed in two ways: (1) They expressed a desire to learn more about their cultures and identity, which I've called 'identity building' and/or (2) they expressed a desire to maintain their cultures in some way, which I've termed 'culture maintenance'; these concepts are explained further below.

**Identity building.** There were several ways that participants discussed the desire to learn more about their culture, or to deepen their understanding of their identity. These included re-connecting with family or returning to their home communities, giving back to their communities in some way, learning their languages, teaching others about their culture, or seeking out opportunities to connect with other Indigenous youth.

***Connecting with Indigenous people.*** Some of the participants seemed to find opportunities to network with other Indigenous people, whether they be students, community

members or people that they happen to meet in their daily lives. For these participants, connecting with others from their specific culture was less important than simply being with other Native people with whom they felt shared similar experiences and histories. "P", who is a student at college and was adopted as a young child said: "They're going to start a Native club at the Dawson I was interested in … So that's going to be a big part of my culture, bringing it into my life more and like meeting new people and networking"...."P" seems to feel that connecting with other Indigenous students, regardless of their specific cultural backgrounds is a way for her to create a social group that she can relate to. "G" expressed a similar sentiment, that being 'Native' in itself was a reason to connect:

> They actually met in, like, a -- a hunting store and they were like, "Hey, we're -- you're Native. You're Native. Oh, my God, let's be friends". So it was the same thing. My dad was, like, looking for the same thing as me when he - I guess he was my age....I also went to Kuujjurapik and we did a youth exchange with kids there and we went with like other urban Indigenous kids here, a little Inuit kid who is practically my brother, I spent last Friday with him, I have another Inuit kid who I went to high school with and we've been friends like forever – we meet Indigenous people and we keep connections with them because there is no real place. There is the Cercle des Premières Nations, there is this bar called Café Escalier where they give Indigenous shows and we always see the same people.

"G" is telling a story about her father and his best friend that he has had all of his life, and how they met randomly and connected over the fact that they were both Native. She relates that this is also something that she is searching for at this stage in her life. "G" is also saying that because there is no single location or meeting place where you can go and connect with other Indigenous

young people, she makes her own connections in various ways. "J" feels that particularly living in the city, connecting with other Indigenous youth is important: "…no but you know, just to know that I made a new Native friend in Montreal, its already a good thing, especially when you're here, you're not with family or on the outside" (translated from French). "S" was adopted into a non-Native family, and goes to the Native Friendship Centre on a regular basis and also goes to different Indigenous events in the city. He says: "Well whenever there's like a little Native festival or something like that I always go by and check it out".

There are a variety of ways that participants have found to build "pan-Indigenous" networks and connect with other Indigenous people. For these participants, getting to know others from their specific culture(s) appears less important than connecting with other native or Indigenous youth, regardless of their specific cultural background. This may speak to an acknowledgment of shared histories and shared experiences of being Indigenous people.

***Working with or helping other Indigenous youth***. For some participants, teaching other youth about their cultures, or helping them to have better futures was their way of staying connected to their cultures. One participant, "L", discusses how she would like to help other youth by creating more programs to help them stay away from drugs and alcohol:

> I wanted to live up north, that's one of the things, I wanted to stay up there to help younger generations to have a life, you know, not just rocky all the time, and direct them in the right direction... You know if I could I would go back and make proposals for programs for young ones and middle age and old people, you know – it works only when you put it, you have to make it work.

"O" would like to return home and develop employment projects and get other youth involved in sports:

> To go back, I would also like to do my part by helping in the development of the community... Yeah, organizing jobs or schools, or being a football coach, that would be cool. It really allowed me to be disciplined as well. When I played football for two years, it really helped me and got me used to having confidence in myself (translated from French).

Others who have always lived in Montreal see themselves helping out in cities. "J" was recently involved in an employment forum with Indigenous people living in the city:

We were at a meeting for Indigenous people in Montreal who lived in cities like Montreal and other cities and were looking for work. Like a big employment fair, so really, I went just to support my mom, she organized it. I took part, I did a bit of volunteering, I looked at others that were looking for work, and I found it all interesting. Slowly we are setting goals, its a kind of Indigenous network that's starting. You know if it works that would be great (translated from French).

The theme of helping other youth was one of the ways in which the youth acknowledged their participation in working towards social justice. I was, however, surprised to not find the theme of social justice more explicitly in the responses of participants. It is possible that the youth did not understand the terminology, however I provided examples and many of the youth responded that they had never heard of any types of organized activities, but they would like to if they did exist. Others stated that they preferred to work on their identity in ways that they saw more positively represented Indigenous culture, instead of being angry all of the time. One important contextual element was that the interviews were completed before the beginning of the 'Idle no More' movement, which may have changed the participants' responses to the social justice

questions. Informally, I have heard that many members of the advisory committee, as well as some participants that I have kept in touch with through social media have become involved with 'Idle no More' activities. It is possible that this movement provided both opportunities to engage in activities, as well as education around the shared causes of Indigenous peoples that were not as prominent in Montreal prior to the movement.

***Re-connecting with family.*** For some of the participants, family was one of the most important aspects of their culture and identity. Particularly for the participants that grew up away from their biological families, connecting with family seems an important part of knowing themselves. "P" says:

> I would like to get to know my blood family better. Like I know a little bit on Facebook or whatever but I'd like to maybe like go back to my community some time and like live like their way of life because I think it's like more different than the way of life that I was brought up with and just to see different things.

"V" also feels that something was missing from his life growing up:

> My birth family, actually, I had lots of contact with them when I was young, like … but then after I was put in that foster home I lost all contact with all my family. And I always missed them. I always … you know, I always wondered who my family was growing up and I always … you know, something was missing and I realized … you know, I always felt I was going to go back home one day, see who my family is and … when I went back when I was eighteen it's like they all remembered me and … but I didn't remember them, you know.

For others who lived parts of their lives in other communities, the desire to return home and spend time with their family is also part of understanding themselves. "P" says:

When I go there now its to spend time with my grandmother and my aunts...Life is really hard there, it costs $26 a week for your water to drink, to bathe, to do your dishes... I remember it being really expensive...but I'm glad I did it, it was my education in process to find out who I was.

Despite the fact that "identity building" participants may have less opportunity to travel to their ancestral lands or communities, it remained an important strategy for those that were searching to better understand their cultural backgrounds.

***Learning language / traditions / spirituality***. Some of the participants expressed an explicit desire to learn more about traditions and spirituality. "K" talks about her search for spirituality:

> So I've been looking for a way to practice spirituality. And in the mainstream society of religions and such, it would maybe be Buddhism that I might be more interested in learning about, but I think it would make more sense for me to learn Native spirituality. And I think that - that would be helpful for me with my - with my depression.... I also think that revitalizing some of the traditional knowledge around spirituality, I'm interested in knowing about that. Also traditional medicines...

"P" discusses wanting to know more about healers and the potential for healing in her own life:

> Well I would even like to know more about like this … what do you call it for the healers or whatever. Like a healer came to our program and like we smudged and then this lady read our aura, she said to me that it's really important for me to … I don't know how she put it exactly but the way I interpreted it is it's really important for me to … she asked me have you ever been in Native like regalia and I was like at first I was like no but then I thought after when I was in Vancouver we did YMCA and I was like the Native in the

> Village People and I guess I was like dressed up Native then but I was like no and then she's like it's really it's really important for me to find my Native something, that's what she told me and then I was like well I guess that's true.

"K" says: "I've always wanted to do a sweat, its something that I you know – yeah, its something that's on my list". For these participants, it is not necessarily important to find spiritual practices that are part of their own specific cultural backgrounds, but rather incorporating spirituality that has a healing component and that may have meaning in relation to their identity as Indigenous people.

"A" talks about the fact that her father is no longer alive and that it is more difficult for her to learn Inuktitut without having him here: "If he was there I'm sure that I would you know be able to learn a bit more Inuktitut than I do. Languages is one of my favourite things to – I put a lot of effort into learning Inuktitut and other languages".

"C" felt that he missed out on his culture growing up and would have liked to have learned more. He could learn at the Native Friendship Centre and has gone there sometimes and believes it is important to have places like that. However, the dialect of Inuktitut spoken there is very different from his dialect (paraphrased).

Some participants were more successful than others in finding opportunities to learn more about their cultures. This may have to do with the fact that in any urban centre, the Indigenous groups that make up the largest percentage of the urban communities will have better chances of finding cultural activities that respond to their needs.

**Culture maintenance**. Some of the participants had strong feelings about their cultural identity that seemed to be related to growing up immersed in their cultures and languages, but they were cognizant of the potential to lose what they had grown up with if they

could not find a way to maintain it. These participants were more likely to want more culture-specific activities or centres where they could speak their language and be with other people that were from the same or nearby communities.

***Maintaining language***. Most of these participants grew up speaking their languages, with their biological families and in their home communities. "M" describes her strong feelings about maintaining her culture:

> I think just growing up in a small community and being surrounded by my family – my whole family is there – everybody is there in one place, so I guess it just makes you you know – love for family, you know I love my family and I am very family-oriented, so I think that makes up a big part of me. Um, growing up on the reserve and learning my language, I have lost quite a bit of it now. And its something that's important to me. And its something I feel, I am always striving for is to learn about my culture. Um, I grew up going to school on the reserve, where um I was raised Catholic and uh, I never really knew about the Longhouse, I mean aside from going with my childhood friend to the Longhouse every now and then I never – I don't know about the ceremonies there, I have no idea. I have a vague idea about the ceremonies and the songs, and the festivals and what goes on, as well as the language; um I'm beginning to forget, because we don't speak it.

Despite the fact that "M" attended immersion school and grew up speaking her language, she still feels that she has lost a lot of her language because she does not speak it every day. She also feels that she has so much to learn about her own culture including ceremonies and the Longhouse.

Some of the participants that had never learned their language, or that wanted to improve their language skills talked about acquiring a better grasp of their language. "O" talks about returning to his community to improve his Atikamekw: "It's for sure that for me, one day I will return to Manawan to learn Atikamekw where my godfather is a language teacher. They are making an Atikamekw language dictionary".

"D" was interested in learning Inuktitut and felt that they training program that he was attending lacked language training for Inuit:

> Yeah. Like a course for … If they know that person is an Inuit they should make a course just for those people in Inuktitut that's what I think, because in schools around here they don't have like Inuktitut course so all they talk about is English and French. So it will be better if they had a course Inuktitut for Inuits.... If there were more cultural teachings at the school, I would fell more part of my culture. The best cultural teachers would be elders or other Inuit. I am planning to return up North and hopefully learn the language there. My aunt tries to teach me Inuktitut, but it is difficult to learn (paraphrased).

Several of the participants had plans to learn or improve their language skills. This was a surprising finding given the amount of resources that it takes to learn a language and the degree to which many of the participants had presumably much more pressing priorities. Particularly for first generation urban participants, finding a job, learning French and dealing with the complexities of adjusting to urban living would seemingly be more important than learning their languages. Although these issues certainly took precedence for periods of time, participants seemed to understand the importance of maintaining a cultural connection for their spiritual health.

***Passing on culture to the next generation of youth.*** For some youth, passing on their culture to future generations was one way of maintaining a strong cultural identity. "A", who learned how to make amautis (a carrying pouch for infants) from an elder by going back to spend time in her father's home community talks about how she would like to pass on this skill to other youth:

> I have another project I want to whenever I get the time because I learned to make amautis – not everybody knows anymore, its something that lots of people don't know how to sew anymore so I want to teach people I want to be able to – I was thinking maybe at the Friendship Centre, but I'd need to work on that as a project, either that or it depends – just something with amautis.

"D" has thought about teaching Inuktitut to Inuit living in the city that have never learned it, or who are afraid of losing it. She says:

> Yeah. If I did … If I get a diploma I wold love to teach Inuit from here to talk in Inuktitut, like their alphabet and numbers and everything, you know. But I still don't know everything.

For these participants, understanding the importance of culture in their own lives makes them empathetic to other youth who may struggle with the same issues living in Montreal.

***Staying connected to culture through family or traditional activities***. Many of the participants talk about the ways that they have found to stay connected to their cultures while living in Montreal. These are diverse and include keeping in contact with friends and family back home, continuing to partake in traditional activities and looking for ways to connect to other urban people from their cultures. "L" who moved to Montreal as an adult in the last

decade feels that it does not matter where she lives, she can maintain her culture simply by making an effort to do so. She says:

> Its really your choice, and if you make those choices that you are starting to lose, its really you. And if you want to maintain your culture, you just keep your culture. That's what I think anyway....I constantly talk to my friends up north. I talk to my dad, my brothers, my sisters. If I wasn't talking to them, I'd be lost.

For others, culture is part of their everyday lives. "R" carves stone on a regular basis and it has something he has done since he was a teenager:

> I like Carving so much...every time I carve I get skills that are getting better at sculpting. But when I don't carve for a while it looks like beginner's sculpture again. But then when I'm more into it most of the time I get nice sculptures.

For "J", going into the woods is what keeps him connected to his culture:

> I think every Indigenous person, no matter what their nationality, we like to go into the woods, often its what our ancestors did, its what instilled a little family, but we lose it a bit also, like kids that will be born soon will not have the chance to go, and its culture that gets lost, you could say its not important anymore, but for the Indigenous, there are, you know certain projects (translated from French).

"M" says that being Inuit is an important part of her life and she has been able to keep up her culture by going to the Ivirtivik Centre and also she knits with her mother sometimes. She used to go to the Native Friendship Centre, she doesn't go there anymore, but her mother used to go there to talk, to hang out and to eat. There is an Inuit feast every month that she goes to sometimes. It would be good to have an Inuit Centre to get people together that they don't see every day (paraphrased). Even though "M" finds ways to incorporate being Inuit

into her life, she still feels that it would be good to have an Inuit centre or somewhere that Inuit could meet on a regular basis. Similarly, "R" would like more of an opportunity to go and be just be with other Inuit, he says:

> If there … If you would like it if there was like places that you could go and you could be with other Inuit like to have dinners or to speak Inuktitut or to carve or that kind of thing. If there was a centre just for Inuit in Montreal that would be something that I would go to (paraphrased).

There appears to be a group of people that would like a place that is only for Inuit to gather and feast. Other participants do not appear to want something as concrete as gathering places, but instead find ways to be who they are that are privately meaningful. For example, "B" says that she does not consider herself traditional, but nonetheless incorporates aspects of her culture into her life that are meaningful to her:

> Even though I'm not traditional, I've kind of incorporated a little bit of it into my life somehow, like even just as a figure skater, you know a simple thing as my costume – you know as soon as my seamstress would make it she would kind of add some sort of little Native thing to it – regardless of if it would be like double curves which is a symbol you see in Miq'maq paintings or artwork or stuff like that – you know that kind of little identity, and like little things like that, like even if it was something in my hair piece, if it was a feather that was kind of like you know um – I'm just thinking about this now, I've never thought about it before, but its true like she would always add some sort of like uh Native element to it somehow, in a way that was subtle and contemporary.

There are a large number of ways that participants tried to maintain their cultural identity while living in Montreal. From learning or improving their language skills to continuing

to do traditional activities, to wearing symbols of their culture, it is clear that culturally specific ways of expressing themselves are important to many participants. In some instances, participants were able to see how engaging in these activities benefitted their sense of cultural identity or pride in themselves and their cultures. These will be discussed below in the 'outcomes' section.

## Outcomes of Identity building or Culture Maintenance Activities

**Outcomes of identity building activities.** There were several concrete examples that participants were able to provide on how incorporating identity building or cultural maintenance strategies has helped them feel increased pride in their cultural identity and has allowed them to feel like they belong. For identity-building participants, a stronger Pan-Indigenous identity and greater feelings of belonging are the outcomes of the strategies they employed. For cultural maintenance participants, whether or not they were actually able to engage in the strategies they mentioned, were clear that greater access to culture-specific activities would help decrease feelings of isolation and increase feelings of pride.

G" who teaches children about Indigenous cultures at her job feels proud to have learned more about her own culture in teaching others:

> I'm really proud that I can do that and identify with my culture and I teach Indigenous dance, but I don't teach any Dene dances, I teach the makooshaw, Innu dances, I just teach like basic steps too, but its just to get them moving and understanding

"K" who has struggled with depression since she was a young adult says that getting to know other Indigenous youth really helped her:

> ...I started going to the First Peoples' House at McGill and I started to meet other um Indigenous people my age and uh yeah, just making friends with other Indigenous really, really helped.

A few of the participants grew up entirely outside of their culture. One participant was raised in an adoptive white family and has come to learn aspects of her culture that have become very important in healing her substance abuse issues:

> Making dream catchers at home like it keeps me like calm and level and clears my head and like it keeps like a meditative state and it's positive, it's a positive … I can bring my positive energy into it and just all of my positiveness and it's like I'm using my … if I'm feeling better or whatever I just take the time and I am more positive. I feel more empowered now and embracing it is a good thing instead of denying it and taking it as a bad thing....It makes me feel like whole … like there always was this gap that was missing and now it feels like that's what was missing and that's what I need to fill in.

This participant is referring to the fact that she felt badly about her culture growing up because of all of the teasing from other children at her mostly white high school in a small town. "V" also grew up outside of his family in non-Indigenous foster homes. His brother was raised in an Indigenous home and he sometimes got to attend different celebrations with his brother.

> And, like, the reason why I had … I got to go to powwows and, like, all these good things is because my brother, he was put in a different foster home. He was put in a Native foster home in Kahnawake... And, like, whenever he would go to cool events and stuff I'd get invited..As a kid, it was awesome..I loved it.

Although "V" grew up outside of his culture, he nevertheless felt that getting to experience parts of another Indigenous culture helped provide role models for him of proud Indigenous people.

For those that engage in "identity building" strategies, the outcomes appear to be that the participants learn more about their own culture and Indigenous cultures and worldview(s) in general and in so learning, feel an increased sense of pride in who they are. These positive feelings lead them to continue the cycle of engaging in identity building activities; however there may be certain supports that make it easier for them, or barriers that may stand in the way of these activities. These supports and barriers will be discussed in later sections.

**Outcomes of cultural maintenance activities**. If participants were able to engage in any of the cultural maintenance "strategies" listed above, they pointed to some potential benefits for their well-being. "N" says that the more she learns about her culture, the more her cultural identity grows:

> And it's also made me want to search for more of my culture and who I am because I … like, many Indigenous people, you know, we've lost a lot of ceremonies and our songs and … and our dances. And, for me, I want to … I feel like I'm still on a constant search to find those things, and I feel like I'll be searching most of my life but I'll be learning as well as I go along and that will make my cultural identity grow.

In contrast, "B", who performed a lot as a child, grew up with her family and was made to feel proud of her culture because of the effort that her relatives took in ensuring that she did:

> I had like a black body suit and she painted a totem pole on the body suit and every like character and symbol had specific meaning to like representing me or like my family and it was even my aunt and uncle – he's an amazing artist, he made the headpiece for me – that was like this giant eagle head and its really like – its like moments like that that I think have brought out you know this like sense of pride of who I am because like its always fascinated people.

Similar to identity building participants, cultural maintenance participants also benefit from opportunities to maintain their culture while living in Montreal. These strategies may help them overcome feelings of shame as a result of racism or stereotypes. Although it was not stated explicitly, many participants hypothesized that having more supports available may help them feel less isolated and support their transition to urban living. The extent to which participants spoke about outcomes was limited, either because they were only beginning their journeys to explore or build their identities, or because there were not services or supports available to allow them to engage in these strategies. Furthermore, there may be intangible benefits to engaging in identity building and cultural maintenance strategies that participants could not put a name to, or that have not yet been realized.

## Supports for Identity Building or Culture Maintenance Activities

Several of the participants mentioned some of the supports that are already available to them in Montreal, such as the Native Friendship Centre, the monthly Inuit feasts and employment programs, such as Projet Kamamukanit and the Ivirtivik Centre. Despite the existence of these programs, several people mentioned that they would either find additional resources helpful, or that cultural elements could be added to existing programs to make them more meaningful or relevant. The types of supports differ by whether the participants fell into the "identity building" or "cultural maintenance" groups.

**Supports for Identity Building**. "J" talks about his encounters with other Indigenous youth and his reflections on the importance of more centralized spaces to come together:

> I'd say lately I've come across other Indigenous people and its from their reactions that I've come to understand that it would be good if there were centres or something to get

> together, because I remember a reaction from someone that said, "oh let's exchange phone numbers, I'm looking for Native friends" and me, without expecting that, I was like "no problem!". So you know at the same time it made me realize that that it would be great to see that that's probably not the only person who feels that way, I don't think so anyways, you know I'm sure she doubted that there were others here in Montreal (translated from French).

It is not clear why this young person that "J" met did not feel that places like the NFC would not meet this criteria, or perhaps it was that she was not aware of the centre.

In "G"'s opinion, one of the best ways to re-instill a sense of pride in youth is to give them more opportunities to learn and maintain their languages. She says:

> I think there should be like a language forum or something – when there are some of the Innu kids on my facebook that are from Schefferville, or the Inuit kids that I met in Kuujurabik, and they are always talking to each other in Cree and Inuit and I think that's a resource that could be developed. I guess that could be a form of education towards my community's language, cause I know people still speak it in my community, like my dad is in his 50s now and nobody under 50 speaks. All the kids do in my community is watch tv, watch movies, there is not that many activities and so if the activities could be focused on something that would give them pride.

Some of the participants mentioned the impracticality of offering language courses in a city where there are dozens of Indigenous cultures and languages represented. An online forum or online language courses are one solution for keeping youth engaged and likely responding to the multiple needs of diverse urban youth populations.

**Supports for cultural maintenance.** "C" uses the NFC to get resources, gather with Inuit, play drums, stone carve, story-tell and for recreation. He still goes there sometimes when he has the time but stated that he would be happy if there was an all Inuit Centre in Montreal for all Inuit to be together and for better employment opportunities. He is currently enrolled in an employment centre for Inuit, but does not necessarily feel that it will lead to a job at its completion. Furthermore, despite the benefit of the NFC, he would also like to see a centre specifically for Inuit. "D" makes the same sentiments as "C" explicit in his comments:

> There is a culture centre in Ottawa where you can learn to read and write Inuktitut, learn how to throat sing, there are courses and my cousins went there. I think there should be something like that in Montreal. They should also have cultural teachers at the school I am attending....If there were more cultural teachings at the school I would feel more part of my culture. The best cultural teachers would be elders or other Inuit (paraphrased).

"D" is also enrolled in the employment program that "C" attends and would like more cultural components integrated into the program, including language components. Despite the fact that this program focuses on the skills that people need to succeed in Montreal, the participants seem to feel that continuing to learn more about their own cultures is an important and complementary aspect to surviving and thriving in an urban setting.

"L" mentions that the Inuit feasts that used to be held monthly have now ended because the church space that was used was sold.

> Well, there was a church that was holding Inuit feasts like once a month but the church was bought so they don't have a place to do the feast anymore. And apparently it used to be every last Saturday of the month but they don't have that no more, you know, and I was thinking maybe, you know, maybe the centre could contribute something, you know,

> because we could do it. It's not something that's impossible. It's very possible, you know. Everybody … Like everybody saying when are we going to have the feast, you know, because they get country food like caribou, fish, you know, bannock, you know, and little things like that.

The risk of relying on temporary spaces or programs means that any community that is created from these events may quickly disintegrate. "L" suggests making the feasts part of another Inuit program that already exists and has ideas on how her and her classmates can re-create these gatherings. Both sets of participants make it clear that more supports are needed in order to build and maintain their cultural identities. From spaces for Inuit feasts, to more social gatherings and services, the participants notice a gap in Montreal and have even identified services in other cities that they would like to see developed in Montreal.

**Healing from trauma**. Participants from both identity building and cultural maintenance groups identified numerous traumas and losses that stem from colonial acts and have infiltrated their lives. Some of the losses such as the loss of language, culture, and land have been detailed in previous sections. Certain consequences of colonialism are more insidious. Inter-personal trauma such as addictions, mental health problems and family violence and political and economic consequences such as poverty and fewer employment opportunities are detailed below, as well as the participants' feelings on the need to heal from these traumas.

Several of the participants mentioned the pervasiveness of addictions in their own lives, in the lives of family and friends, and among Indigenous people generally. "J" speaks about his observations of the impact of alcoholism on homeless Indigenous people in Montreal:

> But I know there are a lot of homeless Indigenous in Montreal, I know Montreal by heart and when I was young I walked downtown, and sometimes it's still the case with my

> friends, we take a walk and everything. And I cannot deny that I recognize them, and it's sad to see, they are on drugs and alcohol and ask for money, and it's sad. The way they dealt with us in the past, it was part of the game. We were set apart from others and it's hard to accept in your own home... We were classified as savages when we were colonized (translated from French).

"J" equates being treated as "savages" to the fact that there is a visible problem with homelessness and alcohol and drug addiction among some Indigenous people in Montreal. I took this to mean that he is implying that there is an intergenerational impact of colonization that continues to manifest itself in trauma such as alcohol and drug addictions. Another participant below describes what it was like for him when he went back to his home community after growing up in foster care for most of his life:

> And it was crazy because the drinking, my mom was an alcoholic, my brother too, and most … a lot of my family over there, most of my cousins, my aunts, uncles, a lot of them were. It was just too crazy. I couldn't find a place to stay where there was no alcohol abuse, you know.

This participant points to the insidious nature of alcoholism and how entirely it has affected his community of origin. Other traumatic impacts include family violence and mental health problems. "F" talks about some of the current struggles she is dealing with:

> Yeah, I'm going through a very depression, a very bad time – I just adopted (out) my baby this summer and like just broke up with my boyfriend last month and like I have to get out of the house, like I have so much depression right now.

The participant above is dealing with multiple stressors after moving to Montreal two years ago. She had to move away from her home community because of the housing shortage and the fact

that she could not stand to live with her father and step-mother because of their addictions. "F" mentioned that she was worried about losing her culture living in Montreal, but there were so many other more pressing issues in her life right now that needed to be addressed first.

Violence, abuse and mental health issues are a part of inter-generational traumas that can be linked to the effects of colonialism. "A" spoke about the turning point of realizing the impact of colonization was to blame for the problems of not only her own family, but many other families as well:

> it was more one on one when -- when younger. And as I got older, I could see that this was more of a tendency and more widespread than just -- it's not just me or my family that's like that. I can see that it happens to other people, too...You could say, you know, difficult situations. They have adapted by drinking a lot of alcohol and trying to forget or something like that.

"A" is relating that she now understands that alcoholism is a widespread problem, and she attributes problems with addictions to people trying to forget what has happened to them. She also insinuates that despite the fact that there are hundreds of different Indigenous cultures in Canada, many families ended up being impacted in similar ways because of the great cultural, interpersonal and economic losses that they suffered.

"J" discusses the rate of suicide in Indigenous communities and how this is related to both cultural and economic losses:

> The suicide rate is very elevated in every Indigenous community. Me, being there with nothing to do in a house, there are no jobs, you just eat, drink, consume, you just drink and if you have drugs you take them, sometimes money problems, fighting...Employment centres, I don't know, therapy centres, give a budget to Indigenous schools, there is

> nothing like that, nothing is offered for them. The only thing is the band councils that manage the money. And some communities aren't in agreement...And everyone aks – why, why don't they get out of there and look for a job like any other immigrant? (translated from French).

"J" points out how the lack of healing opportunities, educational opportunities and employment all contribute to people moving into urban centres like Montreal. They then have to struggle to find work while dealing with the adjustment of moving to the city. The cycle continues in Montreal when there are not adequate resources to support and address the consequences of intergenerational trauma from centuries of colonialism. Additional supports to heal from generations of trauma would potentially provide safe spaces that take into account the important role of building or maintaining culture in this process. The two cannot be separated, and thus culturally targeted services are urgently needed to aid in the process of healing from historical traumas.

## Barriers to Identity building or Culture Maintenance Strategies

**Barriers to identity building.** Several of the participants talked about the frustration that they felt in encountering people that were ignorant about Indigenous people and history, that made stereotypes and generalizations, or that made subtle or blatant racist comments. These experiences may impede their desire or hamper their pride in increasing their cultural identity or knowledge.

"H" discusses his experiences in school where he feels that Canadian education system teaches very little about Indigenous people and the positive aspects of the different cultures and histories. He says:

> But it needs to be presented in a positive view in … you need to get the real story through … through school. I mean, I don't understand why we don't have, like, a whole … I mean, we have black history month. Why don't we have … I think there's a Latino one too now, March or April...I mean, why don't we have a First Nations month that is solely dedicated to just teaching non-Natives about Indigenous culture... So I definitely think if things were presented more positively, I think if the marches stopped to educate people instead of just showing the sensationalized parts, I think it would be … have a much better impact on teaching non-Natives.

"H" feels that one of the only things that Québecers are aware of is the negative media associated with the Oka crisis over 20 years ago. "B" grew up in her community surrounded by both French and English Québec communities, and says that the first time she really experienced racism was in Montreal:

> Like I was in a CEGEP class ...and there was this prof who – like I understand that Native people have high statistics for suicide, for abuse, for everything – substance abuse – whatever – you know I could go on and on. But I feel like there's a way to present those statistics and that history to a class and at that moment, I felt really embarrassed to be Native because the way that he was doing it was so belittling and I was just ashamed. And I don't know I was only 17 back then, still kind of struggling with just general identity as it is but its like, in that moment I didn't want to say that I was Native cause I knew that I was, I mean from looking around that I was like the only one in there....So ya, so since moving to Montreal, that's the only time I've really experience racism and its – which for me because here with the whole Oka crisis and everything else, there's that whole historical aspect what people view here in Montreal and how people view Natives

> cause they're used to the media being like – they block the road, they block the bridge again, like whatever you know and not realizing that its just that community – it doesn't mean that all First Nations folks are like that across Canada. But also like them not understanding – like the ignorance of why certain aspects have been done...

"M" points out the burden of always feeling like she needs to educate others that are ignorant on the reasons behind the types of statistics that are mentioned above.

> Yeah, yeah. They don't understand how … they don't understand how the Indian Act makes us … basically, rules our life. They … they don't understand that. And, for me, I don't want to be the talking Indian that basically tells them, you know, the … how it is

"M" relates out that it is unfair that Indigenous people have the burden to teach others about the policies and practices that have caused the alarming statistics and inequalities, or to feel that they make everything politicized.

One of the participants mentioned trying to hide his cultural background when he applies for jobs because he doesn't want to feel he is at a disadvantage if they know he is Native.

> So often when I apply for a job, the first name I give them is Steven (name changed), just so that the employer understands it right away and we can move on, so they don't ask too many questions about my Native name, the pronunciation is difficult sometimes, and I just say "call me Stephen". And often when I meet new people I just tell them "it's Stephen" (translated from French).

Many of the participants have adapted to try and anticipate encounters that leave them feeling bad about themselves and their cultural backgrounds. These examples show how participants might shy away from identity building or cultural maintenance strategies when faced with experiences that cause them to feel badly about their culture. When others do not

understand or deny the existence of their histories, it can make them question their own self-worth and potentially discourage further work towards identity strengthening.

**Internal shame as a barrier to identity building and cultural maintenance.** A few of the participants felt ashamed to be associated with other Indigenous people who had problems with addictions, as though it reflected on them as people. "L" relates: Because there's drunken Inuit there – I've heard that saying so many times, alcohol problem and – you know I'm not trying to be mean to them at all, it just makes me feel uncomfortable.

"L"'s feelings of discomfort in associating with other Inuit point to the danger of racism becoming internalized on herself and also cause Indigenous to be pitted against one another if they feel that some people are to blame for the racism and stereotyping by non-Indigenous people. Similarly, "O" says that he feels more comfortable around other Québécois than Indigenous people in the city, the majority of whom he believes drink alcohol and use drugs:

> I am more used to Québécois in general because the reason why I came to Montreal, it was to get away from what I didn't like about communities, like police, and everything and drugs. But when I come to Montreal and see the Indigenous, the majority are drinking and using drugs so I don't feel very comfortable with them. There are just a few, among all the people that I see that I feel comfortable with. Those that have goals in life and are ok, they are at least able to control their alcoholism (translated from French).

"O" has chosen to make friends with Québecois instead of seeking out connections with other Indigenous youth, because of his perception that the majority of Indigenous people are "drinking and doing drugs". It is possible that the relative visibility of homelessness and addictions, and the relative invisibility of permanent cultural and social networks for Indigenous people in

Montreal may present a barrier for Indigenous youth to find ways to engage in identity building or cultural maintenance strategies.

**Barriers to cultural maintenance.** Living in the city can be difficult for many people, particularly for those that have to deal with a huge change in lifestyle, linguistic issues, isolation and racism. It is easy to see how maintaining or learning more about culture becomes less of a priority when faced with a drastic change in lifestyle and struggling to find work, housing and connections to other people. "C" describes how drinking alcohol was one way of breaking his isolation and hopelessness when he arrived in Montreal:

> Moving to Montreal is one thing that changed my drinking habits. I had no close friends or family, no work, there were people around but it was not good for me to hang around with them. It was a big change moving from a small place to a large place, there were different values and cultures.....There were too many buildings, everything has rules – like you cannot jay walk, back home you can walk through the street without being pulled over. Also Montreal is different because its very diverse and I did not speak French (paraphrased).

Although "C" states that it was not good for him to hang around with people that he knew, he was doing the only thing that felt good and that was to be around other people that were experiencing similar issues. He went from living in a small town where everyone knew each other and where he did not have a drinking problem, to moving to the city and developing a drinking problem.

"T" also describes having a difficult time adapting to living in Montreal:

> The first time I came to Montreal and started to know about all these drugs and alcohol that's gone on around me I was a little bit interested to try some of them and I got hooked

> on crack cocaine for three years and when I said this is not the life to live I went to rehab for 90 days to quit. Ever since then I haven't taken any crack cocaine....It's (also) kind of hard to adapt down here in the south of my culture of bringing it down here it's kind of difficult to make changes the way I live.... Like I can't go out on hunting for my food, I have to have money to pay for my food.

"T" had never been exposed to drugs like crack cocaine and was faced with unemployment and culture shock when he first arrived in Montreal. It is easy to see how drugs and alcohol can provide a buffer to help cope and their association with other users can give people a social group where they feel that they belong.

"N" empathizes with those that have had to move from the north to Montreal, and recounts that even going to school in the city from a community quite close to Montreal she experience cultural shock:

> Its very hard and I think it must be hard for somebody coming from the north to come here, and they have those language barriers and the racism, it must be very hard for them culturally. Because even growing up and coming from the reserve it was a culture shock coming to school here. I went to school in Westmount – it was mostly Jewish, and it was, it was a whole different culture for me, cause I had grown up, and they told me, oh, you talk with an accent, what do you mean I talk with an accent? I thought I talked normally – they had an accent. So for me it was, you know, a total culture shock.

"O" grew up in Manawan and decided to leave his community to attend CEGEP in Trois-Rivières so that it would not be as difficult an adjustment for him to move to Montreal as an adult. He describes the degree of cultural shock and isolation that he felt, even moving to a small city:

> I think its more of a cultural shock, I think the first two months, I went to high school in Trois Rivières, the first two months I spent there I didn't speak to one person. It took two months for someone to approach me. They knew I was Native. They didn't know how to approach me, and I was pretty shy then. And, yeah, I think most of the time they didn't understand my culture and they were shy too. And that didn't help cause I was shy. But I think that if we go to the city at a younger age, its easier to adapt. So that's what I said to myself, the sooner I move to the city, the quicker I'll get used to it (translated from French).

"E" has tried to get a job since she moved down south five years ago, but says she always gets told that she either does not have enough education, or that her French is not good enough (paraphrased). Not all of the participants experienced the same struggles with finding a job or learning French – those that have been in the city for a longer period of time, already came knowing French or that chose to come to the city for higher education such as university did not have the same obstacles to overcome. Nevertheless, it is ironic that that language, which is at the heart of culture for many of the participants, is again being forced on them as it was in the residential schools. In contemporary Montreal, the consequences of not assimilating may mean not being able to enter the job market, and in worse case scenarios ending up homeless, or with amplified stressors as a result of diminished opportunities.

## Findings Summary

Figure 2, an emergent model of the role of culture among urban Indigenous youth presents a depiction of the relationship between the themes discussed by the participants. Overall participants expressed a desire to learn more about their cultures and languages and sought out ways to do so in an urban setting. There appeared to be certain experiences that made

participants more likely to make efforts to be close to their cultures – such as making other Indigenous friends, travelling to their home communities or expressing a desire to learn their Indigenous languages. Participants that were able to learn more about themselves, their identities and their cultures expressed feelings of pride and positive identity, which then resulted in a type of feedback loop that made them even more likely to continue to engage in cultural activities. The context in which the participants lived had an impact on the extent to which they were emotionally able or ready to seek out new experiences. Some of the participants that had grown up in their communities and had moved to the city more recently instead engaged in what I have termed 'culture maintenance' activities. They may have a desire for more culturally specific teachings and gatherings in order to help them decrease feelings of isolation and culture shock in moving to Montreal. Finally, there were certain experiences that either supported or discouraged identity building and culture maintenance activities. Access to services and centres that promoted culture or offered cultural teachings or supports specific to Indigenous youth were mentioned as being helpful and necessary. In addition, there were a number of participants that mentioned the need for culturally specific places to heal from intergenerational traumas and the ongoing impacts of colonialism in their lives. Both of these types of services could potentially increase participants' understanding of the events that they and their ancestors have lived through, both pre and post contact with European colonisers. Barriers to identity building and culture maintenance activities included the difficulties that come with urban migration and the multiple stressors involved in moving to a new place, often due to financial difficulties or other hardships. Racism and the lack of knowledge that the rest of Canadian society holds about Indigenous peoples are also discussed by participants as the causes of a lot of pain and anger. Negative stereotypes can leave people feeling ashamed of their cultures or ancestry that may

impede the identity building or culture maintenance that could otherwise increase their pride. The next chapter will discuss the implications of these findings for theory, practice, policy and research.

# Discussion

The previous chapter presented the findings that I grouped into a model that was based on interviews with 20 Indigenous youth who lived in Montreal. Although each and every participant had a unique background and diverse viewpoints on the role of culture in their lives, there nevertheless emerged two groups of youth: those who seemed more interested in building up their cultural identities, whom I termed "identity building" participants, and those who were more interested in maintaining their cultures and languages, whom I termed "culture maintenance" participants. This chapter will discuss the findings that stem from all of the different components of the emergent model of culture among urban Indigenous youth (figure 2) with respect to existing literature.

## Context of the Role of Culture Among Urban Indigenous Youth

**Context of city living**. The length of time participants had been living in Montreal and the reasons that they or their ancestors originally came to the city were important contextual factors in their lives. Howard and Proulx (2011) wrote that there may be many faulty assumptions that urban Indigenous people move constantly between two worlds, or have frequent access to the land, ceremonies and Aboriginal languages. From the diversity of responses that the participants gave for having moved to Montreal, it becomes clear that not only is this assumption faulty, but that even those that have moved to Montreal recently do not necessarily have access to a healthy community rich with pre-contact culture.

Similar to the findings from the Urban Aboriginal Peoples' Survey, the participants in this study also ranged from first to third generation residents of Montreal. Moving to the city to have better opportunities for employment, education, to be closer to relatives and to access better

health care for their relatives are all primary motivations for urbanisation (Environics Institute, 2010). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples argued that the decision by federal and provincial governments to build post-secondary institutions and hospitals in areas with greater population bases makes financial sense, but also ensures a certain degree of assimilation will take place. In fact, this policy was made explicit in the Hawthorn Report released in 1966. The report emphasized mobility and increasing educational and employment opportunities off reserve and in urban settings. Opportunities that allowed people to remain in their communities were seen as secondary (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996e). Many of the participants in this study moved to Montreal in order to access resources that were not available in their home communities on behalf of themselves or their families. This is consistent with the literature on the push and pull factors of immigration (Van den Berg & Bodvarsson, 2009). Although decisions of where governments build or provide resources can be seen as purely logistical, the lessons from residential schools should have more of an impact in teaching policy-makers the harms of forcing people to leave their homes to access services. Particularly with health care, where millions are spent flying those living in remote communities to southern parts of the country, there seems to be little reason not to build up infrastructure in the northern centres that focus on meeting the needs of the remote northern communities (Sandiford Grygier, 1994).

Reasons for coming to Montreal were important in considering this element in the overall emergent theory of the role of culture in the lives of urban Indigenous youth. In general, those who had lived in Montreal for all of their lives or a large part of their lives tended to fall into the "identity building" group in the grounded theory model, where they felt that they knew very little basic knowledge about their cultures and wanted to learn more; whereas those who had lived in

Montreal for shorter periods and had grown up with their cultures were more likely to make attempts to maintain their cultural practices.

**Definitions of culture.** The purpose of this dissertation was to build a grounded theory model to describe the role of culture in the lives of urban Indigenous youth in Montreal. In order to do so, the first part of this process was to determine the meaning of culture for the participants. One finding that became evident in attempting to uncover the themes that participants identified was that "pure" or pre-contact definitions of culture were much more common than contemporary notions of culture relating to post-contact identity. These findings stand in contrast to what Coates (1999) suggested, that young people might not recognize the importance of participating in traditional activities. The fact that most of these participants define culture as values, traditions, languages and ways of life suggests that young people may implicitly understand these elements as important to the survival of their cultural identity. That is not to say that the participants' definitions will not have been impacted by their contemporary realities, but rather that they feel that a link to the past is important in discussing culture.

Waldram warned against trying to make concrete links to the past when employing culture in the process of healing. He said:

> The question of what constitutes a traditional practice is as complex as the question of efficacy, and a too intense search for concrete links with the past may detract from the more important fact that the very idea of traditionality, in the contemporary context, provides an emotional safe place for troubled individuals where they can link their troubles to a historic past. If the clients say that the Medicine Wheel is an age-old model of healing, its actual origin is irrelevant to its use in healing programs as a symbolic representation of a holistic way of life that is promoted as a positive Aboriginal legacy

(Waldram et al., 2008, p. 6).

For Waldram, it is the connection to the past that is important in utilizing culture in healing, not the rigid adherence to "tradition". In contrast to the participants who linked culture with the past, there were a few participants who did not feel they could define the concept of culture. These participants tended to have multiple identities and may have grown up in non-Indigenous homes or outside of their communities. Froman (2007) also found that urban participants of mixed ancestry struggle with society's continued reliance on the colonizers' definition of identity of who is and who is not Aboriginal and what is a 'real' Aboriginal, which is tied into issues of living on the land. Thus urban youth of mixed ancestry may be at particular risk of feeling illegitimate about claiming their cultural identity, and therefore may not reap the potential benefits of cultural pride (Delgado-Torres, 2007; Phinney & Cahvira, 1992).

**Colonialism.** Although each participant experienced different aspects of colonialism dependent on which part of the country they had migrated to Montreal from, and which cultural group they are a part of, there were certain acts of colonialism that ended up impacting participants in similar ways. Several participants discussed the loss that they felt at not being taught their parents' language or culture. The reticence to pass on their cultures and languages was explained as the shame and punishment that their parents or ancestors had experienced in residential schools. Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski's (2004) historic trauma model could account for the cultural losses that the participants feel as this model hypothesizes that impacts of inter-generational traumas can include physical, cultural, social, economic and psychological consequences. Similarly, Evans-Campbell (2008) discussed the cultural break-down that can occur through the devastating consequences of community-level traumas.

The accounts of other participants seem to fit well with historic trauma models; a couple participants discussed the impact of forced settlement and the sedentary lifestyles and unemployment and other social problems that resulted from it. They both pointed to high rates of addictions as a consequence of the distress of feeling worthless and being far removed from traditional ways of life. Again Evans-Campbell (Evans-Campbell, 2008) pointed to three levels of trauma: individual, family and community. High rates of unemployment and the move to sedentary lifestyles impact the entire community, whereas the individual impacts may better explain the fact that only some individuals turn to addictions as a way of escaping negative feelings of low self-worth. It is important to highlight colonialism as a shared experience of many of the participants in this study, because they are an extremely diverse group of young people that have similar historic relationships with colonial, Canadian and provincial governments. It is because of these shared experiences that the grounded theory model may apply to such a diverse group of people.

## Pre-conditions for Identity Building or Culture Maintenance Strategies

**Processes that shaped identity and amplified feelings of pride and shame after moving to city**. Despite the fact that "identity building" participants and "culture maintenance" participants valued different strategies in terms of incorporating culture into their lives, they had a lot in common in terms of the mixed experiences of pride and shame that eventually came to shape their feelings about their cultural identities. In some cases, participants cited conflicting feelings about their cultural identity, where they were proud of their language and where they were from on the one hand, but ashamed at being associated with people from their culture that were struggling with addictions. The problem that needs to be addressed in this case appears to be one of separating the connection between a specific cultural

group and the problem of addictions. This issue has been raised in other settings of peoples oppressed by government policies and historical injustices. In these cases, it has been posited that liberation education can help people feel better about their cultures as they begin to link historical injustices to social problems within their families or communities. This could be seen as similar to what Cross referred to as "Black self-hatred", which was thought to be the result of extreme mis-education as a result of distortions on history of Africa and African Americans (W. E. J. Cross, 1978). There are certainly many parallels between this theoretical notion and the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada and internationally. Mis-education continues to be a major obstacle to feeling proud of one's culture according to many of the participants in this study. As one way of countering this dynamic, Freire (1970) coined the term "liberation education"; whereby he asserted that the purpose of education should be to liberate people so that learners can be actors in their own society. He proposed a "dialogue" approach as an ideal model for education where everyone would participate as co-learners and would create their own social knowledge. The goal of group dialogue would be to pose problems in a way as to have participants uncover the root causes of their "place" in society: their socioeconomic, political, cultural and historical context of their personal, family and communal lives (Freire, 1970). One concrete example of this approach is a federal prison program where Indigenous inmates take part in a Native Studies program. They learn about different cultural practices, as well as the history of residential schools, the Indian Act and the root causes of social issues such as addictions and crime. Although the program has not been formally evaluated, a combination of the Native studies program and healing rituals such as sweat lodges and healing circles have been reported to help inmates feel an increased sense of pride in their cultures (Fournier & Crey, 1997).

Similarly, this type of liberation education or "de-colonizing" in the context of individual or group counseling has also been put forth as a promising practice in working with Native American populations (Duran et al., 2008). The authors advocated for mental health professionals to help clients deconstruct their cultural history in ways that liberate them from the traumatic and oppressive conditions that originally led them to seek help (Duran et al., 2008). To help their clients trace the problems they are experiencing to a place in history where the problems originated, the authors work with their clients and encourage them to make a tribal genogram to find where the specific trauma occurred. By finding the place of the trauma, the client can stop identifying as the "defective Indian" and experience a greater level of psychological liberation (Duran et al., 2008). Although both the prison example and the individual counseling would only reach specific groups of people, the role of education in both instances is key. The more that educators at all levels can help students to understand links between history, socio-economic conditions, injustices and high rates of social problems, the more racism and negative stereotypes can be combatted. In the case of the grounded theory model, this is precisely what appears to happen for the participants in the study. The more they learn about their cultures and histories through various activities, the more they want to continue to engage in cultural activities and to associate with other people from their culture. This theme will be further discussed as a potential barrier to engaging in identity building or cultural maintenance strategies.

Some of the other experiences of participants had to do with the pride that they felt in having acquired cultural knowledge from their families, and in sharing that knowledge with other people. Both of these feelings may be well explained by Brendto, Brokenleg and Bokern's (1990) explanation of how Native American peoples traditionally considered the education and

empowerment of children as one of the primary roles of an adult. Children receive feelings of significance from the acceptance, attention and affection of others and virtue is a feeling of being judged worthy by one's own culture and significant others (Brendto, Brokenleg & Bokern, 1990). In contrast to feelings of loss that other participants mentioned as a result of not learning their cultures or languages, the participants that were able to acquire these teachings feel a sense of completeness and pride in their cultural identities.

**Feelings of exclusion**. There were several different ways that participants expressed feelings of exclusion. However, unlike the previous theme on mixed experiences with pride and shame, it was mainly the "identity building" participants, or those who may have come from multiple backgrounds or had less connection to their communities of origin who expressed feelings of exclusion. One of the reasons that participants expressed feelings of being excluded from multiple worlds was because they were not have been 100% Indigenous, but still suffered from the impacts of racism. The Indian Act has played a central role in causing internal divisions among Indigenous people and has also resulted in non-Indigenous people taking away ideas about who is authentic, who has culture and what it means to be an Indigenous person (Coates, 1999; Froman, 2007). Coates described the ongoing membership debate in Kahnawake that to this day has strict rules around membership that relate to degree to which one is perceived to be Mohawk. The criteria have changed over the years, with the result being that some people that grew up in the community, but only have one Mohawk parent may never obtain membership (Deer, 2008). For participants that did not grow up in an Indigenous community, especially if they are third generation Montreal residents, their sense of entitlement to explore their Indigenous ancestry may be limited by perceived or actual judgements from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike (Froman, 2007).

A few of the participants grew up in foster homes or were adopted by non-Indigenous families when they were babies. Lawrence (2004) wrote that those that grow up outside of their cultures, even if they were raised in good homes, are raised in ignorance of their culture, with no knowledge of their identity and will have few defences against racism. Indeed, a couple of the participants felt they were devastated by racist comments and worked very hard to fit in, especially during their adolescent years. The impacts of residential schools and the sixties scoop resulted in several generations of parents growing up outside of their cultures. As a result of these losses and the historical traumas that stem from them, Indigenous children continue to be highly overrepresented in out-of-home care (Sinha et al., 2011; Trocmé et al., 2005). Possibly as a result of the increased recognition of the harmful impacts of growing up outside of one's culture, changes to child welfare legislation require child welfare workers to look to family members first when placement outside the home is necessary (Sinha et al., 2011). Thus, placing Indigenous children with extended family instead of in non-Indigenous foster homes appears to becoming more common (Sinha et al., 2011).

There was another group of youth who felt on the outskirts of their culture because of their sexuality. There have been many criticisms to anti-colonial or post-colonial theories; one of the most common of those is that they do not take into account the intersecting oppressions that people experience (Hawley, 2001). However, there are other post-colonial theorists that define the term "subaltern" as those that are on the margins of society and experience oppression for not confining to society's hegemonic definition of normative sexuality (Spivak, 1985) Identifying as gay or lesbian in a heterosexually dominated society is another way of feeling excluded.

Despite the many different ways that the participants in this study have felt excluded,

there was a universal desire to retain a connection to their Indigenous culture. This perhaps fits well with Marcia's assertion that identity is something that is constantly in flux and that people will go through different stages in search of belonging (Marcia, 1980). In the case of the participants in this study, those in the identity-building group would likely be described as belonging to Marcia's "identity achievement" or "moratorium" groups, where they have either decided on their identity, or continue to struggle with where they will situate themselves. However, because one of the criteria for participating in the study was identifying as Indigenous, I may have missed out on some of the youth that are actively in the diffusion or moratorium stages, as they would have self-selected themselves out. Those that are in the "cultural maintenance" groups seem to belong to either the achievement or foreclosure categories, where they have either decided what their identity is, or for those that are struggling with feelings of internal shame, their identity may be parentally chosen and they may have more work to do to get to an achievement phase. The findings also confirm some potential similarities between ethnic minority youth and Indigenous youth, where resolution of issues relating to cultural identity are more important than religion or political affiliation (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992)

Other models that have been developed to describe a type of continuum of identity building include Cross's stages of identity (Pre-encounter, Immersion-Emmersion, and Internalization-Internalization commitment) (W. E. Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). Ferdman and Gallegos have also developed a spectrum of identity affiliations for Latino/Latina people living in the U.S.A. They describe six orientations as: Latino-integrated, Latino identified, sub-group identified, Latino as other, Undifferentiated/denial and White-identified (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). Latino-integrated individuals are proud of all parts of their identities, understand positive aspects of culture and some of problems, Latino-identified individuals would have a "pan-

Latino" identity, and may be part of the Indigenous of Aztlan; whereas those that are sub-group identified feel that they are part of a specific cultural affiliation and do not identify with Latinos in particular. Latino as "other" may not be aware of their specific Latino background (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). Although caution should be used in comparing Indigenous people to cultural groups that have very different histories and experiences, it may be that there are some similarities when it comes to the way that they go through the experience of understanding their cultural identities as a result of some of the shared experiences of racism, mis-education and ongoing oppression. Thus, the same factors that make post-colonial theories relevant for such diverse cultural groups may also explain some of the similarities when it comes to cultural identity among diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Turning points.** As one of the pre-conditions for engaging in culture maintenance or identity-building activities, there seemed to be a distinct turning point where youth made the decision to get closer to their culture in some way. For some participants, it was the realization that their children would grow up in a city, removed from their language and their families. For another participant that grew up outside of her biological family, it was becoming an adult and deciding to reach out to her birth family to learn more about where she came from. Even for those participants who felt they had a strong sense of who they were and where they came from, the late teens to early twenties appeared to be an important turning point in taking steps towards strengthening their identities. This perhaps supports Erikson's theory of adolescence, where those in their teenage or young adult years are "at war with themselves" (Erik H. Erikson, 1968). However, it could be that the way children are educated has a lot to do with this somewhat arbitrary developmental stage. Before the introduction of formal education, many Indigenous cultures had a system for educating their children that was connected to the skills that they would

need to live off the land and take care of their families. There were intricate sets of protocols and rules that children learned at a young age in order to survive in harsh climates where starvation was always a possibility (Miller, 1996; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996c). In today's urban environments, adolescence and early adulthood are major times of change where one is supposed to finish high school, decide what to do for the rest of one's life and take steps to obtain additional training, post-secondary education or employment. In addition, it is generally considered time to find a life partner, move away from one's family home and start having a family. It is little wonder that pondering all of these enormous changes brings to light questions of identity and belonging.

There are also implications regarding government age restrictions for locating biological families for youth that were adopted. For example, some adopted youth may only be permitted to find out who their birth parents are once they reach the age of majority. Indigenous families are overrepresented in the child welfare system, and children also placed in out of home care more often (Sinha et al., 2011). For those that ended up being adopted, this age limit inhibits their personal agency and potential search for cultural identity at a younger age than the one designated by the government.

However, it could also be that adolescence and early adulthood are one of several turning points in peoples' lives. It is possible that the participants begin their exploration of their cultural identity(ies) during this time and return to it at one or many points in time in the future. All of these findings justify more research specifically on identity among youth, but also more research that explores the role of cultural identity development across the lifespan.

## Strategies for Identity Building or Culture Maintenance

**Identity building strategies.** There appeared to be two distinct sets of strategies that reflected the diversity of the youth in this study: "identity building" activities, which primarily involved learning more about one's culture and "culture maintenance" activities, which involved more culturally-specific pursuits. Although several studies now ask about involvement in "cultural activities" or "traditional activities", there is little research on some of the other ways that people might connect with their cultures. In his study of urban Aboriginal men in Toronto, Froman (2007) found that having Aboriginal friends was one way of connecting with Native spirituality and exploring identity. Although taking part in "traditional" activities – learning the language, participating in ceremonies, listening to stories from elders – were some of the ways that participants in this study tried to work on building their identities, there were several other avenues including re-connecting with family, finding ways to become friends with other Indigenous youth, and providing leadership to the next generation of youth.

***Connecting with other Indigenous youth***. For many of the participants, meeting other Indigenous youth was one way of building their cultural identities. For some, it was not important whether or not other youth came from the same Indigenous culture as themselves, whereas for others cultural specificity was important.

This split among the participants may support evidence of what Merlan (2009) referred to as a more internationalized definition of Indigenous peoples that some of the participants in this study appear to identify with. The United Nations definition of Indigenous includes the following condition: "(Indigenous peoples) are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as a people" (Lee, 2006). It may be that the participants that I`ve identified as

belonging to the 'identity building' group are also more likely to accept the idea of pan-Indigenous peoples; whereas the 'culture maintenance' group may be more likely to reject this definition and identity with a more localized group of people and set of norms (Lee, 2006). . For example, Zhou writes that for Asian American, the process of assimilation may give rise to a heightened sense of non-whiteness or a "pan-minority identity" that may be expressed in a variety of ethnic identities rather than a single one. Thus, as members of the second and later generations become more fully incorporated into America's racialized social system, a pan-ethnic identity may become more salient and inclusive (Zhou & Lee, 2004).

The Royal Commission Aboriginal Peoples found that people living in cities with larger Indigenous populations may feel more of a sense of cohesion or community (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996f). It was interesting that none of the participants in this study talked about feeling they were part of an "Aboriginal community", as it was the one thing that the Montreal needs assessment found was the primary need for urban Indigenous people living in Montreal, and therefore may indicate that despite efforts made by the Urban Aboriginal health strategy NETWORK to better coordinate services for Indigenous people in Montreal, this has not translated to greater feelings of "community" (Regroupement des centres d'amitié des autochtones du Québec, 2008). This may speak to the fact that there continue to be fewer Indigenous peoples in Montreal than many other large cities, and that they make up a smaller percentage of the overall population than do Indigenous peoples in the West. Another possible explanation for this finding is the fact that Montreal's urban Indigenous population has the largest percentage of first generation residents, and therefore both formal and informal networks have had more time to develop in other cities (Environics Institute, 2010). It is also possible that the issue of language politics plays itself out in so many ways that the development of distinct

ethno-racial communities is inhibited (Croucher, 2006).

***Re-connecting with family***. Amongst the group of youth that grew up outside of their cultures, re-connecting with family, extended family, community members and elders was one of the primary ways that they pursued to build their identities. The pre-contact cultures of the Nations reviewed in this dissertation all considered extended family and community members important parts of helping to educate and care for children. Before the imposition of permanent settlements, Indigenous peoples travelled in small bands or lived in longhouses with clan members (Morantz, 2002; Pertusati, 1997). With the residential school and sixties scoop, children were removed from these networks of care, sometimes for long stretches of time and lost connections to family and community members (Miller, 1996; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996c). The increased urbanisation of Indigenous peoples and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in out of home care may also continue this cycle of being apart from family and community (Environics Institute, 2010; Sinha et al., 2011). Thus, re-connecting with family becomes an important element of decolonization and identity building for the youth in this study.

The importance of cultural identity for youth that grew up outside of their cultures appears to be gaining more recognition amongst service providers. There are a few examples in Ontario that do not yet exist in Montreal; the Odawa Native Friendship Centre offers a program specifically for 'youth in care' or that grew up in foster homes or adoptive homes that gives them a chance to meet other youth in similar situations and feel a sense of belonging that they may not have had growing up outside of their cultures (Odawa Native Friendship Centre, 2013). In 2013, for the first time in its existence, The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies offered a gathering for Aboriginal youth in care. The Association has a long history of supporting the

National Youth-In-Care network, which is comprised solely of young people that grew up in foster homes (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2013). The recognition of the need for a separate group for Aboriginal youth speaks to a growing recognition of the importance of cultural identity for this group of young people.

***Working with or helping other youth***. A few of the youth had thought about ways that they could help the next generation of young people to have better opportunities then what they have had access to. In some cases, this involved returning home to their communities to work on creating more programs and opportunities for youth living in these communities. The amount of services available on reserves or in northern communities varies drastically depending on funding formulas between federal and provincial governments and the provision of any specific agreements such as the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (Sinha et al., 2011; Vick-Westgate, 2002). Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada is currently being taken to court in a Human Rights case where they are being held accountable for funding formulas that provide few provisions for social service programs that help to support families and youth (Blackstock, 2011). The fact that these youth recognize these disparities and wish to help give youth opportunities to remain in their communities is one way of fighting back against the more insidious ways that Indigenous peoples continue to be assimilated by having little choice but to move into urban areas. Thus, despite the fact that most of the youth stated that they did not engage in social justice activities, many had clear goals to give back to their home communities and/or to future generations of youth.

In other cases participants would like to help build up urban services. For some youth, it is not feasible to live on reserve or in a northern community. Particularly if they are second or third generation urban residents, are gay, or have one parent that is non-Indigenous, they may not

feel that they belong anywhere but in the city. They might also be in the best position to understand the needs of other urban youth. In one case a participant mentioned taking part in building an employment network for urban Indigenous people, and in another a participant wanted to offer up her skills in making Amautis to other urban youth that may not have the opportunity to acquire these skills elsewhere. Froman (2007) found that mixed ancestry youth struggle with issues related to identity and racism and they might need the extra support and encouragement to turn towards the types of identity building strategies outlined by participants.

***Learning language/traditions/spirituality.*** There were a few participants that talked about wanting to participate in traditional healing ceremonies such as sweat lodges or about traditional medicines as a way to learn more about their cultural identities. There have been some studies done with on-reserve populations in the U.S.A. that have found culture and spirituality were associated with better mental health outcomes, particularly among youth (M. Walls, Johnson, K., Whitbeck, L. & Hoyt, D., 2006; Whitbeck et al., 2002), however these studies did not specifically look at how participation in cultural activities strengthens cultural identity. The Urban Aboriginal Peoples' Survey found that those who regularly engaged in cultural activities were less likely to worry about losing their culture (Environics Institute, 2010). While the Montreal NETWORK's urban Aboriginal health needs assessment was not disaggregated to differentiate the needs of youth, it found that 31.5% of study participants said they used traditional healing methods within the last 12 months, 6.7% said every 1-2 years, and 19.1% said over 2 years ago and 32.6% said never. Access to traditional/holistic healing practices, such as natural medicines, healing circles and other ceremonies and the counsel of Elders were the most commonly mentioned types of practices that the participants used (75.9%). However, when asked how difficult it was to access such practices, over 20% said that it was

very hard and 58.4% identified difficulties they faced when trying to access traditional/holistic healing practice (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012). This study demonstrates that the desire to have access to traditional healing practices in Montreal outweighs the number of services available.

**Culture maintenance.** For some of the youth, having access to culturally specific activities and gatherings was more important than "pan-Indigenous" activities. Particularly for many of the Inuit participants who were first generation urban dwellers, culturally specific activities were mentioned as being more helpful than other kinds of activities. Places to be with other Inuit, to speak or improve their language, and to eat country food were all mentioned as things they would like to see more of in Montreal. In the context of this dissertation, most of the Inuit fell into the "cultural maintenance" group. The Inuit have a very specific history within Canada's colonial history, from their non-inclusion in the Indian Act, more recent history of sustained contact with fur-traders and other outsiders, to the dog massacres and re-locations, and the high percentage of the population that continues to reside in northern communities and speak Inuktitut (Films new media, 1993; The Canadian Press, 2011; Vick-Westgate, 2002). It thus serves to reason that they would both require and feel more comfortable with culturally specific services, from healing to employment help, ideally offered in Inuktitut.

**Maintaining language**. The most frequently mentioned aspect of wanting to learn more about culture among the culture maintenance participants was an interest in learning or improving language skills. In many cases, participants felt that it would be next to impossible to learn their native language in Montreal, often because there were few opportunities available. Even among Inuit participants that were part of an Inuit-specific employment and training program, there was no opportunity to learn the language as part of the program. The Avataq

Cultural Institute in Montreal offered Inuktitut courses for the first time in 2013; however the availability of other Indigenous language courses in Montreal is very limited.

***Passing on culture to the next generation of youth.*** This type of culture maintenance strategy is very similar to the 'identity building' youth that want to find ways to give back to the next generation. Traditionally, the role of passing on culture to the next generation is the job of elders in Indigenous cultures (Brendto et al., 1990; Wadden, 1996). The Montreal Health Needs Assessment found that access to elders is limited in Montreal, and therefore it is possible that the participants in this study feel they have a responsibility to ensure that future generations of youth have access to cultural traditions and teachings and are willing to take on this role themselves (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012).

Montgomery (2003) spoke about the potential pitfalls of the "liberal cultural pluralist" model that exists in the Native Friendship Centre network and how this may either group all cultures together or favour certain cultural traditions over others. This finding appears to echo the sentiments of several of the participants in this study who mentioned that their expectations in finding cultural teachings at the Native Friendship Centre were not realized because they did not talk about the ways up North, or because the Inuit that did attend the centre spoke a different dialect. This finding once again underlines the need for both culturally specific and pan-Indigenous type of cultural programming and activities in Montreal.

***Staying connected to culture through family or traditional activities.***

Remaining part of a community, despite living in the city was a strong feature of the responses from the cultural maintenance participants. The participants were very adept at finding ways of integrating cultural activities into their lives, such as stone carving, going into the woods, or knitting, however the participants also felt that it would be helpful to have a permanent place that

they could go to in order to participate in activities, and be with family and community members. Having access to stable sources of funding to support cultural activities is something that is sorely lacking amongst First Nations and Inuit groups alike. Often funding is renewed on a yearly basis, and initial applications to build or create services are complicated due to uncertainties about whose responsibility are Indigenous peoples living in urban centres. Typically urban programs receive support from a combination of federal, provincial and municipal governments (Nakuset, 2013). However, being dependent on government funding also means that programs can be cut altogether or have their funds decreased. In order to continue to offer programs that families have come to rely on, there is often a need to fundraise and apply for new funding takes away time and resources from organization and community members that are already stretched thin (Nakuset, 2013). It seems that the only long term stable funding that is guaranteed is when communities or nations are able to sign self-government agreements, as with the James Bay and Northern Québec agreement (Vick-Westgate, 2002). Indeed, Chandler and Lalonde's landmark study shows a relationship between improved mental health outcomes when communities have more control over their own resources. The Urban Aboriginal Health Strategy Network is likely the vehicle for urban self-government in a city like Montreal, and its ability to gather together over 600 organizations, conduct multiple needs assessments, and make inroads into Indigenous employment, education and housing programs demonstrates its ability to effectively manage financial resources. Ideally this organization could be given a long term stable funding base from which to manage its own funding and would therefore be less vulnerable to yearly changes in governmental budgets.

## Outcomes of Identity Building or Culture Maintenance Activities

Most of the participants who discussed feeling better about themselves did so in the context of identity building activities. This may be because those that wanted access to more culturally specific activities did not feel that they were available, and therefore could not benefit from them. I will discuss these potential obstacles in more detail in the barriers section. Those that were able to describe changes after engaging in identity building activities referred to many instances of "Pan-Indigenous" activities, such as attending pow-wows, teaching several types of First Nations dances to children and meeting other Indigenous friends. Adelson (2000) asserted that Indigenous practices and healings have flourished in recent years and have come to increasingly symbolize transnational Indigenous identity. However, Adelson spoke about these practices in the context of Indigenous peoples living on reserve. One study of ethnically diverse youth living in the U.S.A. that looked at changes in identity over time found that those that moved from one stage of identity to the next (an increase in cultural identity association), had higher levels of self-esteem (Phinney & Cahvira, 1992). There are a few reasons why research in the area of cultural identity is limited in discussing outcomes. First, if identity is a constantly changing entity, as suggested by the available literature, it is difficult to determine causation at any given point in time (Marcia, 1980; Phinney & Cahvira, 1992). Second, the limited amount of available research in this area also inhibits discussion of outcomes. Third, in the context of urban Indigenous youth, the lack of available services and opportunities for engaging in either identity building or culture maintenance activities may inhibit some of the potentially positive outcomes that could arise from engaging in these activities. More longitudinal research looking at changes in identity over time among urban Indigenous youth may contribute to an understanding of which elements of identity building and culture maintenance activities are particularly helpful.

## Supports for Identity Building or Culture Maintenance Activities

**Supports for Identity Building and Cultural Maintenance.** Many of the participants expressed a desire to have more cultural resources in Montreal. They asserted that better access to resources would help them feel more connection their culture, would aid in adjusting to city living and could decrease feelings of isolation. These findings are consistent with the Montreal needs assessment, where participants stated that their biggest thing lacking in Montreal was a sense of Aboriginal community (Regroupement des centres d'amitié des autochtones du Québec, 2008). Examples on what having community would entail included having a place to gather and interact with other Aboriginal people, building a support system for families and having access to community centres that could provide Aboriginal cultural content and languages, and provide a full range of services and events (Regroupement des centres d'amitié des autochtones du Québec, 2008).

***Healing from trauma.*** Some authors, particularly in the field of education, discuss the importance of integrating healing and cultural activities into every aspect of and Indigenous persons' life (Regnier, 1995). In this way, cultural services and healing services are not two separate entities, but are all part of the ways that urban Indigenous people may feel supported in their daily lives in urban centres. These findings are consistent with what Fiske (2008) asserted that healing can only happen when a strong, coherent sense of identity is achieved: thus cultural and emotional needs are not two separate entities, but both integral parts of the healing process for Indigenous peoples.

The Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Needs Assessment found that there were huge gaps in service provision and that most respondents were unable to access traditional healing services (2012). Many of those who were able to find traditional services were unsatisfied with

them. This finding could be linked to the fact that urban service users do not feel that they are being consulted in the organization of services. For example, about half of the service users in the study were unsatisfied with how health services in Montreal were administered and the same number felt that they were not partners in their relationship with health care providers (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012). Similar to the participants in this study, the respondents from the health assessment listed access to addictions services as one of the greatest needs for urban Indigenous people (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012).

## Barriers to Identity Building or Culture Maintenance Strategies

**Barriers to Identity Building.** There were several barriers to identity building and cultural maintenance mentioned by participants. Racism and the lack of education on the histories and policies facing Indigenous peoples were discussed interchangeably. Some of the participants had had negative experiences in classrooms, and it was frequently teachers that perpetuated negative stereotypes and made the participants feel ashamed of their cultures. It stands to reason that if the educators of the rest of the population are under-educated when it comes to the histories of Indigenous peoples, the cycle will continue on with the students they are teaching. This finding was confirmed by the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey which polled non-Indigenous Canadians on the amount of knowledge they had on contemporary Indigenous peoples. They divided the respondents into four groups: cultural romantics, dismissive naysayers, inattentive skeptics and connected advocates. Dismissive naysayers and inattentive skeptics make up about 40% of those surveyed, and cultural romantics made up another 45%. Connected advocates were only about 15% of those surveyed. Dismissive naysayers and inattentive skeptics had the most negative things to say about urban Indigenous peoples, and also

had the least contact with them. Connected advocates were aware of the cultural contributions of Indigenous people, but also aware of some of the barriers that they face such as racism and fewer economic and educational opportunities (Environics Institute, 2010).

Despite the fact that post-secondary programs in Indigenous studies are growing, there are still large numbers of non-Aboriginal Canadians who lack historical and contextual understandings of Indigenous peoples, particularly the realities of urban Indigenous peoples. Kempf (2006), was a former high school teacher in Ontario examined the different models for teaching history to high school students. Kemp found that high school history textbooks taught in Ontario primarily teach Canadian settler history and glorify the story of settler domination. Overall, the textbooks provide an inaccurate and exclusive portrayal Indigenous peoples and do one of the following: 1. Accept the colonial project as inevitable and normative, 2. Treat Indigenous peoples as Anthropological subjects of the past and ignore resistance to colonialism, 3. Omit Indigenous people out of Canadian history, identifying history as the project of white expansionism or 4. Identify Indigenous peoples as trans-historical rather than historical and discuss some of the ways they have resisted, but fail to adequately address the degree to which they have been oppressed (Kempf, 2006). I could not find similar studies of Québec's post-secondary system, but from anecdotal accounts from students, it appears that there exists a similar situation as Ontario. Of course, there are always extremes, where some teachers do an excellent job of giving an accurate portrayal of Indigenous histories, whereas others give a very biased account, for example speaking of Indigenous peoples as "savages" that killed the European newcomers that innocently wanted to settle on their land (Cammie, 2013). Our education system needs to do a better job at all levels of education if we have any hope of

combatting racism and providing accurate information of the realities of Indigenous people in this country.

Furthermore, for youth that felt that they had multiple identities, helping people to understand that they belong to multiple worlds or identities can be particularly taxing. Howard and Proulx (2011) discussed the popular notion that there are no authentic urban Indigenous communities, and that an Indigenous person is seen as a relic, tied to and made authentic by their connection to land. Our education systems need to do a better job of providing a realistic and contemporary understanding of Indigenous peoples in Canada in order to increase the number of people that could be considered "connected advocates".

**Barriers to Cultural Maintenance**. Many of the participants discussed the culture shock they felt in moving from a smaller, more isolated place to Montreal. Participants provided various examples of the changes that came with moving to a city such as not being able to hunt for food or having access to recreational drugs for the first time in their lives. In addition, the extra challenge of needing to learn French to find employment was a huge obstacle in feeling they had successfully integrated into urban life. If the City of Montreal is serious about fighting homelessness, they have to fully understand the barriers in becoming economically stable. The goal of Bill 101 is to make French the language of Government and the Law, as well as the normal and everyday language of work, instruction, communication, commerce and business. However, it is interesting that the Bill also states that the National Assembly is to pursue this objective "in a spirit of fairness and open-mindedness", recognizes "the right of the Amerindians and the Inuit of Québec, the first inhabitants of this land, to preserve and develop their original language and culture" (Office Québecois de la langue Francaise, 2013). Part of preserving language and culture is being able to earn income in a way that respects the language of urban

residents and does not force them to learn another language in order to gain employment. Although there are several newer excellent employment and education programs for Montreal's urban Indigenous population, in speaking with participants, there appear to be few placement opportunities after completing the program for participants that do not speak French. Exceptions to the rule of Bill 101 would certainly seem feasible given the clause that recognizes the rights of Québec's Indigenous population. If having access to identity building and culture maintenance activities leads to increased pride and stronger cultural identity, urban Indigenous peoples in Montreal should be given every opportunity to access these supports without additional barriers being put in their way.

**Internal shame as a barrier to identity building and cultural maintenance**. There was another group of participants that felt their parents had passed down feelings of shame about their cultures to them. In one case, the participant felt this was a result of residential school experiences of her grandparents that then got passed down to her mother. In another case, the participant felt that his mother had stereotypical judgements about the type of people that frequented the Native Friendship Centre. Marcia (1980) suggested that there are four states of identity development: identity achievement, foreclosure, identity diffusion and moratorium. Youth in identity achievement have made a decision with regards to their identity and are consciously pursuing self-chosen ideologies or occupations, whereas in the state of foreclosure, adolescents are also committed to ideologies or occupations, but these are parentally chosen rather than self-chosen (Marcia, 1980). In both cases of the latter examples, the participants decided that their parents' feelings of cultural shame would not let them be stopped from learning more about who they were and where they came from and would be considered to be in a state of identity achievement. This finding is interesting in that it suggests that youth may

want to learn more about their cultures despite mixed or negative experiences regarding their cultural identity and that there is a possibility of feeling good about their cultures, thus breaking a pattern of intergenerational transmission that has been suggested by historical trauma theories (Braveheart & Debruyn, 1998; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Despite this positive finding, internalized shame may nevertheless become a barrier to further exploration or maintenance of culture if appropriate supports are not available to urban Indigenous youth.

## Summary of Discussion of Findings

The findings confirm the utility of a number of theoretical models and prior research pertaining to identity development among youth. First, for the participants in this study, colonialism and historic trauma models are useful tools with which to understand the context in which they live. Second, theories of migration and particularly of internal migration can apply to Indigenous peoples that migrate to urban areas in search of resources such as lower costs of living, education and employment. Third, previous theories on identity development such as Marcia's framework appear to have some merit in understanding the post-contact cultures and identities of Indigenous youth. Fourth, the specific experiences of urban Indigenous youth living in Montreal are impacted by the language politics and policies. Finally, two distinct pathways of identity development among the participants in this study may help to reconcile conflicting findings from previous research.

# Implications and Conclusions

## Why this Study is Unique

This study is unique for a few reasons; there has been little research that has looked at cultural identity formation for urban Indigenous peoples, and what does exist has not focused on youth (Froman, 2007; Lawrence, 2004; Restoule, 2008). Although adolescence is not necessarily considered a developmental phase that is important to highlight in Native American developmental writings (Brendto et al., 1990), the loss of traditional culture as a result of colonialism and a focus on formal education, may have resulted in adolescence as a difficult time in identity development for Indigenous youth.

In addition, previous studies have elucidated several important themes that are important for urban Indigenous peoples, but none have used grounded theory in order to look at the inter-connections between the thematic areas. Lawrence makes an enormous contribution to understanding the perspectives of urban Indigenous people of mixed ancestry, but does not cover the potential differences and similarities between urban youth of mixed ancestry, and other urban youth that may feel similarly displaced (Lawrence, 2004).

Furthermore, the fact that the study was conducted in Montreal, where the dominant language group (French) in the province is the minority language group in the rest of the country, has resulted in some interesting findings. In some cases, youth end up moving to Montreal because of a lack of employment opportunities in their home communities. Those youth for whom English is the language they were forced to learn from the nearby "colonizers" several generations ago essentially get penalized for not having instead learned French. These youth

now find themselves in some cases needing to learn a third language and are at a distinct disadvantage in the job market. Furthermore, the fact that Montreal is home to far fewer immigrants than other large cities may reflect a provincial government that is less open to a diversity of languages and cultures than other provinces. The French language law (Bill 101) and the recently proposed Charter of Values (Bill 60) certainly seem to suggest the government's tendency towards favouring assimilation over diversity (Croucher, 2006; The National Assembly, 2013).

## Implications for Practice, Policy and Research

There are several implications that stem from this research for social work practice, policy and research. The emergent model on the role of culture among urban Indigenous youth lends empirical research to a field that is limited with regards to the needs and perspectives of urban Indigenous people. The finding that there appears to be two distinct pathways to identity development among urban Indigenous youth supports the continued creation of both Pan-Indigenous and culturally-specific services and healing programs. The emphasis the participants placed on wanting to learn or maintain Native languages, traditions and ceremonies may appear to be counter-intuitive, particularly in urban settings where education and obtaining employment tend to be favoured by governmental and non-governmental organizations alike. Furthermore, a diverse array of strategies is employed by participants in order to develop or maintain their cultural identities. The fact that these strategies are better explicated through the emergent model of culture among urban Indigenous youth may help policy makers tap into alternative resources such as extended family and community networks.

**Implications for practice**. Although the youth in this study are not representative of all urban Indigenous youth in Montreal, or elsewhere, their stories and experiences give a good indication of the types of resources and services that may be helpful to youth in meeting their mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural needs.

Through this study, several types of needs related to social work became evident. It became clear that in order to engage in identity building or culture maintenance activities, participants first had to have had their needs met in other areas of their lives. For example, for the youth that were newer to Montreal, finding a job and a stable home were of primary importance. Their basic needs had to be addressed before they had the ability to think about maintaining their culture in an urban environment.

***Cultural needs.*** All of the participants in the study had made efforts to increase their cultural knowledge or connection to other people of their culture. There did, however, appear to be two distinct streams of cultural needs. For those that were new to the city, spoke their language and were struggling with finding employment or housing, a more formal and culture-specific set of services seemed to be required. In this study, it was primarily the Inuit youth that had grown up in their communities, and had moved to Montreal in order to better their social or economic situations that utilised what I termed "culture maintenance" strategies in the emergent model on the role of culture among urban Indigenous youth (Figure 2). These youth spoke about the desire to have places to go to be with other Inuit and speak Inuktitut. Some of them spoke about the 'cultural shock' of moving to Montreal and coming into contact with so many different people, learning the different expectations and having to learn a third language (all of the Inuktitut speakers already spoke English as a second language). Their goal was not to exclude

youth of other cultures, but they mentioned that going somewhere like the Native Friendship Centre did not necessarily keep them connected to other Inuit or allow them to use Inuktitut.

There was a second set of youth are referred to as 'identity building' participants. These youth generally did not speak their Native language, may have spent little or no time in the north or community of origin and/or may have come from mixed backgrounds. They all felt that they wanted to know more about their own cultures, but many of them also felt that they had a lot to learn from other Indigenous people as well, and that there was a Pan-Indigenous set of experiences and beliefs that resulted in feeling at home with other Indigenous youth, even if they were from different cultural backgrounds.

Both groups of youth had clear ideas about what would better suit their cultural needs in Montreal. A few of the participants that were newer to Montreal mentioned programs that they had visited with relatives in other cities, such as the 'TUNGASUVVINGAT INUIT', a community-based counselling and resource centre specifically for Inuit in Ottawa. Many of the members mentioned the need for services such as the ones provided at this Ottawa-based centre. At this centre, the staff spoke Inuktitut, there were language courses and community feasts, Inuit could come to gather informally, and there was help with finding housing and employment. Some of the participants were involved with an Inuit-specific employment program in Montreal that they were quite happy to be a part of, but also mentioned that it would be even better if there were elders on site, if some of the staff spoke Inuktitut, if there Inuktitut language courses in addition to French courses, and if there was an expanded centre where all members of the community could gather and receive help when required.

Although many reserve communities are now offering language courses for adults, and some offer immersion programs for younger children, not all urban youth have what they

consider a "home community". Others live far away from home and the costs of travelling back and forth are prohibitive. Learning the "host" language of a city is often the focus of policy-makers and social work or social service practitioners. In the case of Québec language politics, it may seem odd to encourage people to learn any language other than the one that will assist them directly in obtaining employment. However, research has found links between strong cultural identity and better self-esteem, which in turn leads to greater odds that people will be able to integrate into a new work force (Phinney & Cahvira, 1992). Furthermore, offering Indigenous language courses in urban centres may also encourage non-Indigenous people to learn Indigenous languages alongside Indigenous people, which could potentially lead to better equipped social workers and other members of the public that work with urban Indigenous peoples. Learning another persons' language is a way of showing respect and also helps to incorporate cultural nuances that may not translate in other languages. Anecdotal reports of Francophone doctors that work in Nunavik with Inuit found that those that make efforts to learn Inuktitut make greater connections with the Inuit and are perceived by their patients as being more helpful (Morel, 2013).

**Social needs.** Many of the youth in the study spoke about looking for connections with other Indigenous people in the city. Almost all of them had been to the Native Friendship Centre, but some felt that the Centre did not provide the type of environment they were looking for. For example, a few said that they were interested in more structured cultural activities and others did not feel that there were enough culturally-specific activities where they could learn about their culture. The Inter-tribal youth centre (ITYC), which is part of the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM), has been going through many changes in recent years. In April 2012, the NCFM were told that they had lost all provincial funding and were also going to be cut

off from the Association of Native Friendship Centres funding (CTV Montreal., 2013). In the end, the ITYC retained core funding, but had to cut almost all of their structured programming. Some staff reported that they felt they had lost support from the Aboriginal community at large because they served many of the homeless youth in the city and critics wanted them to provide more cultural programming (CTV Montreal., 2013). In some ways, these criticisms speak to the fact that there cannot be a "one size fits all" program for Indigenous youth. That is not to say that there is not room for Pan-Indigenous programming, or for services to homeless youth, but rather that a large variety of services needs to be offered to the Indigenous population in Montreal in order to meet the different kinds of needs of the extremely diverse population. These needs will be physical, but also cultural, social, spiritual and emotional.

***Emotional needs.*** Almost all of the participants in this study touched upon the intergenerational or "historic" trauma that has impacted their lives either directly or indirectly. The importance of culture in healing seems to be two-fold in discussing the implications for practice among urban Indigenous people. First, many mainstream services are becoming more aware of the need to be "culturally competent". However, cultural competence in working with Indigenous people may need to be broadened to incorporate an understanding of cultures that have been targets of genocidal policies (Braveheart & Debruyn, 1998). It may be not enough to understand cultural differences; but rather it is just as important to understand how the Canadian governments, supported by Canadians, have consistently made attempts to undermine Indigenous wealth, health and overall well-being. In addition, the participants felt that the ignorance of many Canadians, particularly teachers or professors that are influencing new generations of young people, contributes to ongoing misunderstanding for the differential rates of poverty, addictions and mental health problems among Indigenous peoples. In order to begin to heal from

these traumas, cultural competence should mean that mainstream urban organizations work with Indigenous peoples to transform their services into places that are culturally safe and include Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff that have a solid understanding of Indigenous histories and contemporary realities. A recent report released by the Health Canada Council based on a series of meetings with urban health care providers found that Aboriginal people are not using mainstream health services because they do not trust the health care providers and have experienced racism on many occasions (Health Council Canada, 2012). The Montreal NETWORK health assessment, which interviewed both service providers and health care users confirmed these sentiments (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee (MUAHC), 2012) .

One example of a gradual move towards Indigenous control over social services is the increasing number of Aboriginal-delegated child welfare agencies. As of 2008, First Nation communities have at least partial control of child and family services for 442 of 606 reserve communities in Canada (Sinha et al., 2011). In many cases, these agencies began by offering only voluntary counselling or parenting support and gradually gained the necessary approval to conduct their own child welfare investigations and provide follow-up services (as well as having control over options for out-of-home placements) (Sinha et al., 2011). Several cities now offer Aboriginal child welfare and prevention services as well; Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg are among the cities moving towards more Indigenous control over services (Sinha et al., 2011).

**Implications for policy**. One major theme that came out in the "barriers" section is the extent to which non-Indigenous people are poorly educated, misinformed and lacked empathy about Indigenous people. Some mainstream education systems in Canada either ignore Indigenous history all together, or lumps all cultures together and provides gross stereotypes (Kempf, 2006). Although the education of non-Indigenous Canadians may seem less urgent than

addressing social disparities, politicians and policy-makers will never be able to adequately understand the importance of self-government and other forms of Indigenous stewardship if they do not understand the history and worldviews of Indigenous groups.

Another area that is pertinent to policy is in the area of employment. Despite the fact that many of the participants cited culture and identity as important aspects of their lives, some participants made it clear that they had other priorities at the moment and that identity was not at the forefront of their concerns. One program that some of the Inuit participants attended was created in order to support Inuit adults that wished to return to school, improve their French language skills or polish their computer skills. However, in addition to moving to a new city and organizing housing and childcare, it seems hypocritical to force Inuit and other Indigenous people to learn French in order to be able to work in Montreal (or other parts of Québec). Historically many of these participants' ancestors lost their language and were forced to learn English. Although there is no easy solution to this dilemma, governmental and corporate sectors could be provided incentives to hire Indigenous peoples and perhaps provide on the job language training, or have these people work with the English clientele. Language laws in Québec such as Bill 101 were created in order to protect the French language, but Indigenous people have even more of a reason to be protected from language laws that do little to serve them.

**Implications for research**. There are several important implications for research that can be taken from this study. The sample included youth from many different cultures, but shared histories of colonialism and the multi-cultural context of urban living. However, a few other important variables in conducting research among urban Indigenous youth became apparent during the interviews. First, the reason that youth lived in the city was an important factor in determining their views on the role of culture in their lives and how their identities had

been shaped. Second, participants that had been in Montreal for only a few months or years had very different views on their culture than those that had been here all of their lives. A goal for future studies with this same population should be to increase the number of French-speaking youth because language may prove to be an important variable in employment success.

One major implication for my own future research is the extent to which "problems" lay with mainstream society and our conceptualization of the past and how it relates to the present state of contemporary social issues among Indigenous peoples. The more I learn and speak to Indigenous people, the more I realize how much we as a society need to be open to learning about Indigenous histories, cultures, languages and worldviews. That also means that we have to accept that Indigenous people know how to go about solving issues that impact their families, communities and nations. I have learned so much about many amazing programs that have the potential to heal past traumas, but it is up to the different levels of government to let go of the control and the assumption that they know what is best for Indigenous people. I believe it is my responsibility as a researcher to first of all share the stories of the participants in this study, and second, to begin a new path as a researcher that looks at educating students and policy makers that have the potential to work with Indigenous peoples on how to really listen to the solutions of Indigenous people, when it comes to their own lives.

## Limitations of the Study

Despite the strengths that this study afforded by presenting Indigenous youths' voices; there were a number of limitations. First, and most importantly, despite the fact that I am Métis, I have struggled with positioning myself in relation to the participants and consider myself somewhat of an outsider in terms of my cultural knowledge and identity. Although I believe that the research conducted was ethical and adhered to O.C.A.P. principles to the fullest extent

possible, the fact that I did not speak the same first language as some of the participants, that I may have been considered in a position of power, or as part of a group of people that had been proponents of colonialism and racism may have certainly detracted from the amount of trust the participants had in me. Trust is important in research, particularly when the participants are in a vulnerable position of sharing intimate information about themselves and their lives. Furthermore, it may have been both easier and more comfortable for the participants that did not speak English as a first language to have been able to be interviewed in their mother tongues. This aspect is important for two reasons: one, they may have shared more or differently had they had the language to do so, and two, I may have misunderstood the meanings of their responses due to miscommunication or misinterpretation. I believe that the member checking provided a good opportunity to clear up some of these potential misinterpretations, but it remains possible that they exist nonetheless.

In addition, the cultural diversity of the sample may be considered a weakness. It may be that there were too many cultural differences among the participants to be able to adequately infer themes. This may have been less of an issue if there were a larger sample size, however I did feel that the categories were saturated, and this is one check against this potential limitation.

Furthermore, it should be noted that these responses capture the viewpoints of participants at one point in time, and their feelings about the importance of culture and the role it plays in their lives might change many times throughout their lives.

Finally, the extent to which I was able to speak to outcomes was limited, as in many cases, the participants may still be in the midst of exploring their culture(s) and identity(ies) and thus it is difficult to project the outcomes of these processes. Furthermore, if the participants had made efforts to learn more about their cultures by seeking out services, and finding them

inadequate, for example, it would be impossible to know what would have been different had they found services that they considered helpful.

## Concluding Reflections

One aspect of the findings that challenged my hypotheses was the fact that all of the participants considered their culture to be an important part of who they were. In addition, they had all made efforts to learn more about their culture, or to maintain what they knew already. There were, however, certain pre-conditions that appeared to increase this motivation or desire. These included both positive and negative experiences related to their culture; having their loved ones take interest in their culture, having special memories of learning from their grandparents, or being the victim of racism were all experiences that shaped the way participants felt about themselves and their cultures. It was interesting to note that even negative experiences could be shaped into feelings of pride and positive identity if the participants engaged in some of the strategies to increase or maintain their cultures.

In addition, those participants who had multiple identities appeared more likely to have earlier and greater number of experiences that forced them to examine their cultural identities. Often feeling like they were on the outside of their Indigenous culture(s) and other culture(s), they were made to strengthen their Indigenous identity in order to feel proud of themselves. In the case of Indigenous urban youth with multiple identities, meeting other youth that have had similar struggles with identity could no doubt go a long way in making them feel like they are not alone and could perhaps provide a safe place from which they could further explore their cultures and identities.

For many participants there was a turning point that seemed to enable them to be ready to explore the role of culture in their lives. For some it was different life events such as having

children or becoming adults themselves that caused this shift; and for others it was starting to understand the way that racism had shaped their views on themselves and other Indigenous people. One thing that became clear was that youth may not constantly need access to services that help them explore their culture, but when they begin to question their identity and wish to learn more, access to services and the ability to meet other Indigenous youth can certainly help to ease their journey.

There were several "strategies" that participants used in order to engage in increasing or maintenance their cultural knowledge. These included making connections with other Indigenous youth, learning about language, traditions, art or spirituality, working with or for other Indigenous people, or re-connecting with family. There were two elements that may be important when considering strategies for increasing positive cultural identity for Indigenous youth: one is that youth may go through some periods in their life where they are explicitly searching for cultural connections or knowledge. It is during these stages when resources or services may benefit them most: employment opportunities targeted for Indigenous youth, language or cultural programs, or having social activities or more informal spaces to meet other Indigenous youth. A second factor is that for the participants in this study, the developmental stage of adolescence was where they had some of their most positive or negative encounters relating to their cultural identity. Experiences of racism seemed particularly harmful to some of the participants, especially those that did not have caregivers to turn to that could help reinforce positive feelings of identity. It may not have been until early adulthood that the participants felt strong enough to then go look for ways to feel better about their identities. Thus there are two potential social work practice and policy implications that become apparent from the strategies phase: 1. Indigenous youth should be given every opportunity to feel good about their cultures,

even before they are consciously looking for these strategies. One way of increasing these positive experiences is that teachers, social workers and the general public require a higher quality education on Indigenous histories and cultures, 2. When youth are looking for strategies to increase or maintain their cultures, they should be accessible, inclusive, diverse and numerous.

In the emergent model of culture, gauging cause and effect relationships between strategies and outcomes was not immediately evident. There were, however, clear examples of youth for whom engaging in identity building and culture maintenance 'strategies' felt proud and had a stronger sense of their cultural identities. From having cultural supports at universities where youth can meet other Indigenous youth, to having the opportunity to teach others some positive aspects of Indigenous cultures and dispel negative stereotypes, the participants cited the strategies as something that made a difference in their lives.

Future research could ask questions about outcomes more explicitly, or interview youth that are involved in cultural activities before and after their participation. However, it is important to point out that there appear to be some processes that are more difficult to account for than others. In the participants' responses and stories of their lives, it appeared that one opportunity or chance encounter led to another and that the important aspect was being open and interested in learning more about themselves and their cultural identities. In the case of the participants in this study, the one element that they all seemed to have in common was a belief that their culture was important in their search for identity.

There are an increasing amount of examples across the country that provide culturally-grounded and Indigenous-led examples for creating better supports for urban Indigenous people. The NETWORK in Montreal is a relatively new initiative, but has already made huge inroads in creating and adapting culturally diverse and inclusive services for the Indigenous population

(Reseau Montreal Network, 2013). From social services to employment and education training programs, to conducting a large-scale health needs assessment, the NETWORK will no doubt continue to take the lead in providing higher quality supports to Montreal's Indigenous population.

Ironically, the barriers that impeded the participants' ability to engage in identity building or culture maintenance activities were often related to elements such as the culture shock of moving to a big city such as Montreal or the lack of knowledge that the general public had about how to act towards Indigenous peoples. What stood out the most is the extent to which these "newcomers" to Montreal were forced to adapt to the mainstream cultures and realities as opposed to society adapting to meet their needs. Despite the fact that many people are becoming aware of how social policies impact peoples' ability to survive in the north, or other isolated areas, the onus continues to be placed on the individual who is forced to leave their home to adapt culturally and linguistically to their new home.

I have learned so much about myself throughout the process of this dissertation. I feel especially grateful to the participants who shared their stories, insights and hopes for their futures and hope that I have done their words justice. I have realized that deciding to undertake this dissertation was my own "strategy" for "identity building". When I turned the interview questions back on myself, I realized that I had a lot of shame and avoidance about my Mennonite side of my identity based on my own negative experiences as a child. I could easily see how young Indigenous people would shy away from learning more about their cultures if they feel that they are not "Native enough". I also realized that although culture is important for Indigenous youth, "culture" exists everywhere, whether or not we acknowledge it. It shapes mainstream stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and also makes the majority cultures believe

that only minority people have "cultures". More than anything, this process has taught me to question my own values and beliefs and to tread very carefully when trying to make any broad inferences about another person's culture, spirituality or religion. During the latter stages of the dissertation writing I had a chance to re-connect with one of my cousins who has a very strong Métis identity. His father (my uncle) now works as a Métis elder in the Manitoba prison system and has kept the stories of my grandfathers' culture strong and alive. My cousin is adamant in his assertions that Métis identity has little to do with blood quantum, but more to do with personal worldview and how we go about our work in this world. I have always felt connected to my Métis ancestry and having someone else with similar experiences has helped me to feel that I am not alone in this process of exploring my own identity. This process will no doubt continue as I continue to go through the identity building cycle. One of the biggest contributions that I believe I can make as a result of this process is to help non-Indigenous peoples understand the wealth of Indigenous' knowledge and solutions in addressing the ills of colonialism.

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# Appendix A: Recruitment flyer, English version

**Centre for Research on Children and Families**
McGill University
3506 University Street, Suite 106
Montréal, Québec, Canada H3A 2A7
Tel: (514) 398-5286
Fax: (514) 398-5287

## Recruiting Aboriginal Advisory committee members

**Description of Research Project:**

- This will be a qualitative study seeking to interview approximately 20 urban Aboriginal youth (two interviews each);
- The goal of the interviews will be to explore the role that culture plays in the identity of youth that are either new to an urban environment, or have lived in one for some or all of their lives;
- An advisory committee comprised of urban Aboriginal youth will help to guide all major decisions pertaining to the research;
- The research project has obtained ethics approval from McGill University

**Requirements:**

- Currently reside in Montreal or surrounding area;
- Identify as Aboriginal;
- Interested in ensuring research is guided by Aboriginal people;
- Interested in understanding the role of culture in the formation of identity for urban Aboriginal youth;
- Between the ages of 18-30;

**Responsibilities:**

- Attend 8 meetings of approximately 1.5 hours each from September 2011 to April 2012
- Review questions to ensure they "make sense" to interviewees
- Help to interpret major themes that come out of interviews
- Decide how results should be presented or reported to Montreal urban Aboriginal community
- No work outside of meeting time is required
- Committee members will help interpret themes but will not see interview transcripts which are confidential
- Members will be asked to sign a consent to have meetings tape recorded or transcribed
- Advisory committee members will be reimbursed $35 per meeting for their time

**For more details please contact:**

**Student: Elizabeth Fast**
**McGill University**
**School of Social Work**
**514-398-4864**
**elizabeth.fast@mcgill.ca**

**Supervisor: Nico Trocmé**
**McGill University**
**School of Social Work**
**514-398-4864**
**nico.trocme@mcgill.ca**

# Appendix B: Recruitment flyer, French version

**Centre for Research on Children and Families**
McGill University
Montréal, Québec,
3506 University Street, Suite 106
Canada H3A 2A7
Tel: (514) 398-5286
Fax: (514) 398-5287

## Recrutement des membres d'un comité consultatif des autochtones jeunes adultes au milieu urbain

**Description du Projet de recherche:**

•Ce sera une étude qualitative qui vise à interviewer environ 20 jeunes adules autochtones en milieu urbain (deux entrevues chacune);

•Le but de l'entrevue sera d'explorer le rôle que joue la culture dans l'identité de jeunes adultes qui sont soit nouveaux dans un environnement urbain, ou ont y vécu pendant tout ou une partie de leur vie;

•Un comité consultatif composé de jeunes adultes autochtones en milieu urbain aidera à guider toutes les décisions importantes relatives à la recherche;

•Le projet de recherche a obtenu l'approbation éthique de l'Université McGill

**Exigences:**

- Résident à Montréal ou ses environs;
- S'identifient comme autochtone;
- S'intéressés à assurer que la recherche soit guidée par les peuples autochtones;
- S'intéressés à comprendre le rôle de la culture dans la formation de l'identité pour les autochtones en milieu urbain;
- Soit entre les âges de 18-30;

**Responsabilités:**

- Assister à 8-10 rencontres d'environ 1-1,5 heures chacune de Septembre 2011 au avril 2012
- Assurer que des questions d'entrevues «font sens» aux personnes interrogées
- Aider à l'interprétation des grands thèmes qui ressortent des entrevues
- Décider comment les résultats doivent être présentés ou signalés à la communauté autochtone urbaine de Montréal
- Des membres du comité consultatif seront remboursés de 35 $ par rencontre pour leur temps

**Autres informations**

- Pas de travail en dehors du temps de réunion est nécessaire
- Les membres du comité aider à interpréter les thèmes, mais ne verra pas transcriptions d'entrevues qui sont confidentiels
- Les membres seront invités à signer un consentement à avoir du ruban réunions enregistrées ou transcrites

Pour plus de détails s'il vous plaît contacter:

**Student: Elizabeth Fast**
**McGill University**
**School of Social Work**
**514-398-4864**
**elizabeth.fast@mcgill.ca**

**Supervisor: Nico Trocmé**
**McGill University**
**School of Social Work**
**514-398-4864**
**nico.trocme@mcgill.ca**

# Appendix C: Research Consent Form – McGill University

**Researcher**: Elizabeth Fast
PhD. Student in Social Work
3506 University Avenue, suite 106
Montreal, Québec
H3V 2A5
elizabeth.fast@mcgill.ca

**Supervisor:** Dr. Nico Trocmé
3506 University Avenue, suite 106
Montreal, Québec
H3V 2A5

**Purpose of the research:**
This dissertation project will aim to understand what identity means for a sample of urban Aboriginal young adults living in Montreal, Canada. I propose to conduct a qualitative study of young adult participants (18-30 years old) at the Inter-tribal youth centre in downtown Montreal to answer the question: "What does culture mean to Aboriginal (Inuit, Mohawk, Métis, etc.) young adults living in Montreal"? The goal is to understand the role of cultural identity among a sample of young adults in order to help inform program and policy changes that target culture as a protective factor for Aboriginal youth. This research may be useful for other urban organizations that already focus on promoting knowledge of Aboriginal culture and spirituality in order for them to get a better sense of how young people understand their cultural identity and provide them with other ideas on how to best incorporate material for diverse cultures in an urban environment. For organizations that do not provide any cultural elements or only focus minimally on these components, this research may help to provide ideas or an understanding on what is a priority to young people and what factors help to promote or hinder identity development. This project may also inform future research that focuses on targeting specific groups of youth that are at a high risk for addictions, mental health problems and or involvement with the criminal justice system.

The interview I would like to conduct with you should take about 45 minutes. I will be asking you a series of questions about your life and your cultural identity. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the project at any time and are not obligated to answer any or all the questions if you do not want to. I would like to audio record this interview and I will use the results for my doctoral dissertation and possibly in future publications or conference proceedings.

Anything you say will only be attributed to you with your permission; otherwise the information will be reported in such a way as to make direct association with yourself impossible. My pledge to confidentiality also means that no other person or organization will have access to the interview materials and that they will be coded and stored in such as way as to

make it impossible to identify them directly with any individual (e.g. they will be organized by number rather than by name)

**Consent:** I wish to be identified in the report
Yes € No €

**Audio-Taping**: Please indicate whether you agree to an audio-taped interview
Yes € No €

Please sign below if you agree to participate in this interview.

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| Signature of Participant | Signature of Researcher-Student |
| Date _____ | Date _____ |

# Appendix D: Interview Guide

## An exploration of cultural identity among urban Indigenous youth

**Exploratory questions**

1. What is your definition of culture? Or what are your ideas of what culture is?
2. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? What makes you, you? What are some of the things that you choose to do and are passionate about?
3. What is going on in your life right now? (how old are you? What is your level of education? What is your current work/school status? )
4. Where did you grow up?
5. What were some of the most positive or negative events in your life that are important in understanding who you are as a person? (if they are comfortable answering this question)
6. As a teenager, what were some of your favorite hobbies/sports/activities?
7. When you were in high school, how did you picture your life? (What did you see yourself doing as an adult? Where did you see yourself living?)
8. Has that changed now? What are your goals for yourself?

**Identity questions**

9. What has culture meant for you in your life?
10. Is there a particular culture that you identify with or want to identify with?
11. Where /from whom did you learn about your culture? Are you interested in learning more about your culture? What steps are you taking to learn more?
12. Is there anywhere that you go / anyone that you go to learn about what it means to be Indigenous(or Inuit, Mohawk, Métis, etc.)?
13. Do you think that you could learn about your culture in Montreal or are you interested in returning to your community to learn more?
14. How have your feelings about yourself/your culture changed over time? If you think back to when they were a teenager, what did being Indigenous/other culture mean to you?
15. Have you ever participated in any demonstrations, protests or events promoting social change?
16. Are you interested in social change? What kind of social change would you like to see?