

***INDIGENOUS CULTURE AS A STRATEGY TO DETER MUSHKEGOWUK YOUTH  
FROM CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR IN MOOSE CREE FIRST NATION***

by

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## **Abstract**

The over-representation of Indigenous Peoples within correctional facilities is a growing concern in Canada. This research study aims to determine if the community members of Moose Cree First Nation find it feasible to initiate traditional culture as a course to deter Indigenous youth from criminal behaviour. The study consisted of interviews with eight First Nation individuals by way of purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Three major themes were discovered in the semi-structured interviews: Mushkegowuk Culture as described by the community members residing in Moose Factory, Intergenerational Impacts on fragmented Culture as experienced in the recent past and/or today in Moose Factory, and, Protective Measures to ensure safety of youth residing in the community. Themes expressed were built upon by a grounded theory providing direct knowledge based on the experience of the residents in Moose Factory. Overall it was discovered that introducing more culturally relevant programming and education could cease undesirable behaviours and assist with healthy life choices for future generations.

**Keywords:** Moose Factory; Mushkegowuk; Indigenous; Remote; Culture; Intergenerational Impacts; Substance Abuse; Prevention; Resilience; Over-representation; Incarceration

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**Dedicated to the First Nation Peoples in Canada**

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

In 2015, Correctional Investigator Howard Sapers of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) disseminated his findings in a report on the over-representation of Indigenous offenders. It revealed 24.4% of all federal inmates within Canada are Indigenous which is a startling statistic due to the fact that only 4.3% of Canada's total population are Indigenous. Not only are the Indigenous people of Canada over-represented in the correctional system, but in the last 10 years there has been a 50% increase of Indigenous offenders in the federal system. This is a concerning statistic when equated to the general 10% population growth during the same time frame. This indicates that Indigenous peoples are accountable for half of the increase of inmates in the past 10 years (CSC p. 36).

There have been multiple issues that have led to the increased over-representation of Indigenous people within Canada's correctional systems including: economic and social marginalization, racism, poverty, welfare dependency, alcoholism, drug abuse, physical/sexual abuse, lack of education, dysfunctional family structures, child neglect, generational transmission of trauma, unresolved grief and fear of the future (Adelson, 2000; Bracken, et al. 2009; Cunneen, 2011; Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Ross, 1992; Ross, 2004; Turner & Sanders, 2007; Weatherburn, et al., 2008). The Indigenous people of North American began to encounter the social issues listed above due to colonization, Canadian Federal and Provincial legislation, residential schools, the 60's scoop, and long-term racism and oppression (de Leeuw, Greenwood, & Cameron, 2010; McCormick, 2007; Overmars, 2010). These colonial policies have had a devastating impact on Indigenous people's culture. According to Cunneen (2011),

Colonial policies have at various times sought to exterminate, assimilate, “civilize”, and Christianize Indigenous Peoples. This colonization has occurred through warfare, the establishment of reservations, the denial of basic citizenship rights, the forced removal of children and forced education in residential schools, the banning of cultural and spiritual practices, and the imposition of an alien criminal justice system. At the heart of these colonial interventions was the goal of eradicating Indigenous culture and identity. (p. 320)

The Indigenous people of Canada have been marginalized and pressured to conform to Western ideologies for decades and it has led to high incarceration rates among the Indigenous population due to systemic racism, which by way of “...social, medical and educational systems continues to reinforce the assimilation and integration of Aboriginal peoples into general Canadian population” (Poonwassie, 2001, p. 64).

There has been extensive research compiled on restorative justice and traditional healing lodges as a rehabilitation method and a solution to over-representation (Gray & Lauderdale, 2007; Dunn & Totten, 2011; Waldrum, 1997). The government of Canada implemented legislation to decrease the staggering amount of Indigenous over-representation within the federal prisons by employing section 81 and 84 as seen in the Correctional and Conditional Release Act of 1992: “Currently, section 81 and 84 of the CCRA are critical sections for Aboriginal offenders, as these sections offer the opportunity for offenders to serve their sentence according to Aboriginal spirituality and tradition, with the financial and structural support of the CSC” (Nuszdorfer, 2012, p. 6). Within the 1992 Correctional and Conditional Release Act, section 81 and 84 support contracts for Traditional programming within correctional institutions, allowing inmates to have spiritual and cultural counselling as well as take part in ceremonies

(1992). According to Nuszdorfer (2012), the CCRA sanctions community based releases to Traditional Healing Lodges typically after one third of the inmate's sentence is carried out, and only if it is beneficial to both the inmate and community they will be released to. This allows inmates to integrate back into their community and continue their traditional healing (p. 8). Although this legislation has been passed in 1992, the over-representation of Indigenous people is progressively increasing as highlighted above by Howard Sapers of (CSC).

The idea of incorporating traditional values and ceremony as a preventative method to over-representation occurred while I was working in the Sudbury District Jail as a Native Inmate Liaison Officer (NILO). I was under contract with White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge (WBHRL), and I would assist with the Indigenous programming for the Indigenous inmates. After a sharing circle and drumming session with the male inmates, a man in his late 40's shared with me the following (paraphrased): "I think if I learned this...you know as a kid...I wouldn't have spent my life in and out of jail...it's sad that I only learned who I am as a Native person from being in jail" (personal communication 6 November 2013). I listened and reflected upon what he had shared and the next time I saw him in the sharing circle I asked him, "After learning about our culture and teachings, does that help you when you are released?" and he replied "It does for a time...then, I see old friends or family and I fall back into my addictions and end up in here again" (personal communication 13 November 2013). Addictions are powerful. Even if one person has received counselling or help to recover, when they are sent back into their communities or cities without support, they are entrenched with the same issues that revert them back to their addictive/dysfunctional behaviours.

## **Positioning Myself**

*Aanii, Boozhoo, Kwe Kwe, Waachay. Nimkii Benishii Niin, Migizi ndodem. Natalie Lacasse ndizhnikaaz, Mushkiigoom naang Ndoonhjii.* Hello I am Thunderbird, I am from the Eagle Clan. My given name is Natalie Lacasse and I am Cree from Moose Factory.

I was born on the Island of Moose Factory, which is situated within Hudson Bay, Ontario. It is a remote community, the only access to Moose Cree First Nation is by train, plane or by the ice road known as “Wetum Road” in the winter months. The majority of my life I have lived off reserve, with my father Arthur JR. Lacasse and my mother Nancy (Hicks) Lacasse. My birth mother is Shirley Davey and she remains in Moosonee, Ontario, with my four younger half-siblings. Moosonee is on the mainland across the river from the reserve of Moose Factory. I had met them once in my life at the age of 25 years old before moving there to complete my research. My older sister and I share the same birth mother and we lived together on and off as children, although within our adolescent years till now we have seen each other seldom.

Comparable to many Indigenous youth today I was very unaware of my own cultural values and traditions. I had no substantial knowledge of what it meant to be an Indigenous person of Canada. My exposure to Indigenous culture and history was limited to the inadequate capacity demonstrated within Ontario’s schools curriculum, stereotypes perpetuated within society and popular Canadian culture, and the inverted outlook demonstrated by my displaced family members. My paradigm altered significantly at the age of 15, following a seminar for the Mukwa Healing Circle Initiative in which Elder Vince Pawis from Shawanaga First Nation was the facilitator. As I began to walk the red road with Vince Pawis I occasionally stumbled, as a youth I began to abuse drugs and alcohol although never veering completely off course. Through

traditional teachings I realized I would have to cease abusing substances to take part in ceremony. My prior ignorance involving the social discourse of Indigenous peoples was diminished throughout my undergraduate studies. As described within RCAP, the social construct that the Indigenous peoples of North America have been under was to conform to European ideals, worldview and methodology since European contact (1996). The Indigenous people of Canada were subjected to federal and provincial legislation such as residential schools and the 60's scoop to name a few. As a result of long term racism and oppression, social issues such as alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide, high mobility, poor education, apprehension of children, low self-esteem, lateral violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, dysfunctional families, unresolved grief, internalized colonization and much more plagued Indigenous communities. Cunnenn explains that the destructive effects of colonialism has led to high incarceration rates among the Indigenous population of Canada causing over representation within the correctional systems (2006).

Following my undergraduate studies I gained an internship with White Buffalo Healing Lodge, which provided me with an understanding of the correctional system that I was so eager to learn about. Interacting with Indigenous inmates through Indigenous programming and absorbing cultural knowledge shared by Elders instilled a tangible Indigenous perspective for developing a preventative methodology using the medicine wheel. My day-to-day interaction with the inmates was eye opening and thought provoking. Reflecting back, I describe this as follows,

*I wait with anticipation to sign my given name on their docket, receive my nametag, wait for the controlled doors to open and enter into their world. There are blank faces that stare and show no emotion, I grow anxious. It's concrete, suffocating, bland, and without hope, the opposite of*

*everything I know and cherish. I make my way through additional controlled doors and out to the courtyard where there are two teepees. I enter the one farthest away and take a seat alongside Elder Vince Pawis within the circle. The air in here, it smells of medicine, sage. It's a different realm within the teepee and I feel a calm wash over me. I watch as Vince carefully lays his bundle out in the centre of the circle. The inmate's handcuffs are taken off and they are led into the teepee to take their seats within the circle. The eagle feather is brought out and passed around, some people take their time and speak from their hearts others simply introduce themselves and pass the feather along and listen. No way is right or wrong here, this is a sacred space even within the confines of this concrete jungle. The Elder receives the eagle feather once more and begins to speak of the five rascals that plague our lives. He then articulates the seven grandfather teachings and we are shown the way to the red road. As the inmates get up and prepare to once again enter their concrete world they now live in, an inmate stops and looks to me and says, "You know, if I was taught to live by the grandfather teachings as a child, I know I would not be here." He smiles bleakly and then the teepee is empty and his words sit with me (Personal Experience, 6 November 2013).*

Schiff indicated that traditional healing has been an important and historical Indigenous knowledge system, however Western ethnocentric culture has made no attempts to investigate the healing benefits for people as a whole (2006). Nevertheless, discovering balance through the seven Grandfather teachings helps Indigenous inmates to develop social constructs to better understand the impacts of Westernized society on their awareness. In the past two decades there have been publications such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) that reference traditional healing methods as a way to help heal individuals who have and continue to feel the impacts of colonialism. As expressed by Cunnenn these negative social deterrents such

as over-policing is what inevitably produces over representation of Aboriginals in prison systems (2006). Positive conversations with Indigenous inmates enable them to dismantle negative social constructs by utilizing traditional culture and values as a preventative method for living a positive lifestyle.

For Indigenous youth to be balanced, Indigenous facilitators such as Vince Pawis and others must immerse future generations within their Indigenous cultural framework of being and knowing. Instructing them on how to live by the Seven Grandfather teachings: Love, Wisdom, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Respect, and Truth are one way of moving forward to live a good life. As stated by Herb Nabigon, instilling full comprehension of these traditional teachings and how to utilize them to ward off the five rascals that all human beings are susceptible to: Uncaring, Inferiority, Envy, Resentment and Jealousy is a useful method used in the retraining of inmates in prison that have shown positive outcomes (2006).

Weaver states that following the Medicine Wheel and Seven Grandfather Teachings and taking part in traditional ceremony creates balance and opens the spirit up to *mino-bimaadiziwin* (the good life) (2002). I truly believe that if we teach our future generations to walk the red road and how to deal with the five rascals of our lives, Indigenous people as well as other cultures could cease the over-representation within Canadian correctional systems.

## **Research Problem**

The over-representation of Indigenous Peoples within correctional facilities has been a growing issue. Why is this occurring? It can be concluded that rehabilitation and reintegration methods for Indigenous inmates is not the optimal or only solution for decreasing the over representation of Indigenous inmates in correctional institutions. There is a need to find

alternative methods that could be put in place to promote healing and healthy lifestyle choices for Indigenous peoples. It is my aim to find possible solutions orientated to younger generations specifically youth. This research project aims to discover solutions targeted for youth to encourage healthy lifestyle developments and cease deviant behaviour.

### **Purpose of Research**

Indigenous Peoples within Canada are currently at high risk for becoming incarcerated; and the risk for deviant behaviour is greater for those that live in remote areas within Canada. Rupert Ross attests to the conditions of remote reserves within Canada:

I have been a criminal prosecutor for 19 years, working primarily in remote aboriginal communities in northwestern Ontario. Sadly, some communities experience such high levels of family violence and sexual abuse that, if we ever achieved full disclosure and full victim/witness cooperation in court, we'd be jailing well over 50% of the adult population. (Ross, 2004, p. 2)

My research investigates why Indigenous youth are more susceptible to crime, specifically those Indigenous youth that reside in remote communities. Once I had reached a consensus within the community concerning the causation of high-risk behaviour, it was my aim to determine if community members found it feasible to initiate traditional culture as a course to deter Indigenous youth from criminal behaviour. It was my expectation that my research will help in developing program initiatives for Indigenous youth within remote communities and furthermore to generate funding needed for the development of programs to succeed.

## **Rationale**

My first priority was to discover what community members in Moose Cree First Nation consider to be traditional culture. My proposed research was based on traditional culture and the values that are entrenched within culture, specific to Moose Cree First Nation. It was also vital to my study to explore the rationale and barriers of enculturation to traditional culture within the community but also specifically to youth. Once I had established a community-based definition of traditional culture and an understanding of community barriers to enculturation, I investigated the possible effectiveness and ways in which to incorporate traditional culture in Moose Cree First Nation.

In what follows, I review the literature on Indigenous people in the criminal justice system in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 introduces the methodological approaches taken and theoretical framework utilized in this thesis. Data analysis, findings of research, discussion and recommendations are the focus of Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

Throughout the literature there is an established link between the Indigenous over-representation, and the negative effects of colonization on Indigenous Peoples. Assimilation and acculturation practices are considered one of the most prevalent reasons for dysfunctional behaviour displayed in Indigenous communities. This can be seen as the starting point of the degradation of Indigenous Peoples as a whole. Early settlers made no attempt to understand the worldview or culture of Indigenous Peoples, “At the turn of the twentieth century a ‘primitivist’ discourse characterized Aboriginal peoples as a homogenous and childlike race, incapable of complex thought and driven by a savage and a simplistic culture devoid of social rules and the constraints of reason” (Currie, Wild, Schopfloche, Laing & Veugelers, 2013, p. 2). Instead of attempting to understand the complexity of Indigenous knowledge and their worldview the settlers deemed it “savage” and forcibly entrenched the Indigenous Peoples within their own worldview. Multiple authors (e.g. Adelson, 1992; Cunneen, 2011; Currie, Wild, Schopflocher, Laing, Veugelers, 2013; de Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron, 2010; Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Poonwassie & Charter, 2001; Ross, 1992; Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Washienko, Walter, Dyer, 1996) have demonstrated the magnitude of problems developed when Indigenous knowledge and tradition were eradicated and assimilation techniques were imposed. Indigenous Peoples participated in ceremonies to keep the mind, body and spirit balanced since this was how the Indigenous Peoples perceived the world and their place within it. For instance, Malloch (cited in Poowassiee & Charter 2001) state:

A goodlife, or good health, is perceived to be a 'balanced of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual elements. All four interact together to form a strong, healthy person. If we neglect one of these elements we get out of balance and our health suffers in all areas'. (p. 65)

Other authors (e.g. Spillane, Greenfield, Venner & Kahler, 2015; Mushquash, Comeau, McLeod & Stewart, 2010; McCormick, 2007; Overmars, 2010; Weatherburn, Snowball & Hunte, 2008; Cunneen, 2011; Adelson, 2000; Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Gray & Lauderdale, 2007) have suggested that colonial policies dismantled all four elements of the good life for Indigenous Peoples. The social transition that Indigenous Peoples went through during colonization was devastating since they could no longer practice their culture. Ross (1992) summarizes this succinctly:

One of our first acts after contact was to denigrate or outlaw the very mechanisms which permitted them to cope with the traumas of life. In essence, I believe we took away much of their capacity to heal themselves. I am here referring to such practices as the pipe ceremonies, sweat-lodge ceremonies, shaking-tent ceremonies, sundances and a host of other practices which we declare heathen... The result was that a people about to face the most overwhelming social disintegration imaginable were left virtually defenseless against anger, grief and sorrow that inevitably followed. (p. 143)

The argument of the lack of traditional knowledge, culture and ceremonies causing dysfunctional behaviour within Indigenous communities supports my research. If the lack of Indigenous traditional culture can be seen in part of the causation for dysfunctional behaviour for

the Indigenous population, could a revitalization of culture be beneficial? Indigenous Peoples cannot blame all of the social difficulties and suffering they are currently facing on colonization, however it is important to understand that the social dysfunctions have stemmed from assimilation and acculturation policies. The Indigenous way of life was disrupted and social modeling was eradicated for those generations who were subjected to residential schooling. “Cultural imperatives are learned, integrated and applied as a result of learning traditional teachings and participating in ceremonies, and through the modeling of appropriate behaviours in everyday life” (Poonwassie & Charter, 2001, p. 65). Residential schools were a tactic to use limited education as a weapon of oppression against the Indigenous people of Canada. Destruction of Indigenous culture was a national approach forced upon all Indigenous Peoples, leading to broken generations without traditional substance. This destruction was intergenerational and although not all Indigenous Peoples were subjected to residential schooling, their children were subjected to the same cultural loss and lack of parenting skills. As indicted by Chrisjohn, Young & Maraun (1997), total institutions are defined as barriers imposed between “inmates” and the world, and highlighted as a synonym of Residential Schools. Total institutions also produce disculturation that leaves the “inmate” unable to care for themselves properly in their day-to-day lives outside of the institution, producing an individual with no healthy values (p. 73). The idea of total institution supports my research on two separate levels: one being that countless generations of Indigenous people that had relatives in residential schools were likely not subjected to traditional culture or values. These Indigenous Peoples could possibly benefit from a revitalization of traditional culture for themselves and their communities. Two being that Indigenous Peoples who were incarcerated have most likely come in contact with Indigenous programming within correctional facilities, and may urge their children, family or

community members to take part in prevention strategies for youth to ensure that the new generations of Indigenous Peoples are culturally aware and have a healthy worldview.

Generations of Indigenous children were unable to learn cultural skills or values from their families and communities. In turn the entire Indigenous population of North America have suffered greatly. Substance abuse within First Nations communities as stated by Mushquash, et al., (2010), is in direct correlation with social marginalization that stems from the disconnection from traditional grounds and traditional cultural methods (p. 297). Many scholars have discussed the effects of substance abuse and its correlation with the over-representation of Indigenous Peoples within correctional facilities. Alcohol is the foremost liability for Indigenous over-representation and there is a consensus in the literature that substance abuse influences violence that attracts the attention of the police (McCormick, 2007; Mushquash, et al., 2010; Weatherburn, Snowball & Hunter, 2008; Garrett & Carroll, 2000). This illustrates how and why a large portion of Indigenous Peoples are being incarcerated. As stated by McCormick (2007), many Indigenous Peoples use substances as a coping mechanism to deal with the cultural loss of the past century (p. 27). Generations have lost their ability to use traditional healing methods to cope with their feelings and have used alcohol to numb their pain. Due to the fact that substance abuse places Indigenous Peoples at a higher risk for incarceration, we have seen the incorporation of holistic healing for inmates within correctional facilities. Waldram (1997), illustrates that holistic healing conducted by an Elder does not only focus on the inmate's crime or influence during the crime. The Elder goes beyond the initial act itself and incorporates the individual within the historical factors that have predisposed Indigenous Peoples to criminalization, which includes: colonization, residential schools, and assimilation policies. The

incorporation of Indigenous spirituality and culture that was lost through assimilation practices is essential in treatment for rebuilding a healthy self-image as an Indigenous person (p. 111).

For true healing, people need to process what has happened in a safe environment. As stated by Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun (1997), many Indigenous offenders that have been to Residential Schools are currently incarcerated, and their children are also incarcerated due to their lack of parenting skills and trauma that is then perpetuated onto their families (p. 75). Furthermore, Chrisjohn, Young and Maraun (1997) indicate that there is a need for traditional healing methods not only for those who are already imprisoned but as a mechanism to stop the continuous cycle for their children to ensure they do not share the same fate as their family members. There is however, a significant gap in the literature in terms of utilizing traditional culture as a preventative method for Indigenous youth within communities to hinder dysfunctional behaviour and enhance balanced healthy lifestyles. Preventative methods for Indigenous youth are not highly researched topics; most efforts are based on restorative justice. However the Indigenous peoples in New Zealand have implemented indigenous culture and values as preventative methods to guarantee safety of youth and community. As stated by Richards, Rosevear & Gilbert, (2011), “ Indigenous community strengths that could be drawn on include kinship systems, cultural identity and spirituality, and community knowledge (e.g. of Elders). Research in New Zealand has also indicated that incorporating extended family and traditional knowledge can improve the effectiveness of interventions with juveniles” (p. 5).

There is a urgency for preventative methods dedicated to Indigenous youth, scholars have noted that restorative justice programs are essential but only one part to the solution to help break the dysfunctional cycle that is plaguing most Indigenous peoples around the world. According to Gray and Lauderdale (2007):

Focusing on the restorative aspect of justice without incorporating the preventative mechanisms creates injustice, for it breaks the Circle of Justice and leaves individuals and the community without the necessary cultural foundational structures to heal and prevent crime. Colonization has, for many communities, destroyed or displaced these essential foundational traditional teachings. (p. 218)

Restorative Justice and traditional based intervention programs are highly researched and discussed but are only one crucial part to the cessation of Indigenous over-representation. As stated by Morris & Maxwell (2001), restorative justice aims to heal what is broken not just incarcerate the offender, punishment for an offence is not dealing with the issue at hand that brought the offender to be incarcerated. Restorative justice reduces recidivism and gives the victim a chance for closure if they want it. If traditional healing methods are available to the offender and victims it can certainly be applied to families and communities that are suffering from dysfunctional behaviour that engages them in criminal activity. However utilizing traditional culture as a preventative method was diminutively mentioned throughout the literature, even though many scholars (e.g., Adelson, 2000; Currie et al., 2013; Garrett, & Carroll, 2000; Goudreau, Weber-Pillwax, Cote-Meek, Madill, & Wilson, 2008; Gray & Lauderdale, 2007; McCormick, 2007; Richards, Rosevear, & Gilbert, 2011; Ross, 2004) agree that traditional culture can be seen as a positive outcome for those Indigenous people who have committed crimes or have substance addictions. If traditional culture can be seen as a positive outcome for restorative justice and interventions, why is there not more urgency on preventative research for Indigenous Peoples?

Multiple authors (Currie, Wild, Schopflocher, Laing & Veugelers, 2013; Rowan, Poole, Shea, Gone, Mykota, Farag & Dell, 2014; Totten & Dunn, 2011; Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles,

Washienko, Walter & Dyer, 1996) have reported that traditional culture has been found to have positive outcomes with participants in relation to restorative justice and addictions programs. The authors above also concur that the use of traditional culture positively reinforced lowered rates of substance abuse among their participants. “Identification with traditional culture is an important protective factor associated with reduced substance abuse and suicide and improved mental health within Aboriginal communities” (Currie et al., 2013, p. 1). Traditional culture has been discovered through studies to improve the overall health of Indigenous Peoples, however Currie et al.’s (2013) study provides two options for a healthier lifestyle, one being enculturated into one’s ethnic culture and the other being totally acculturated into the current Euro-American society. Not all researchers share the same results on what would benefit minority youth. For instance, Losoya et al.’s (2008) study focused on Mexican American youth and substance abuse, and the authors found that youth and families that have submerged themselves in the values and social norms of the popular culture are more likely to be functional citizens (p. 18). This finding has implications for my research since it is possible that some individuals may not want to engage in traditional culture as a deterrent to criminal behaviour. In the same study Losoya et al., (2008) mentioned being immersed in one’s traditional culture is being fluent in one’s language, and could have a positive outcome when coupled with community values. Suggesting that youth that are enculturated to the point where the native language is mostly spoken within their communities may have more positive outcomes than those who do not speak their language (p. 18). Language may be considered one of the leading characteristics of traditional culture however this is not mentioned too often within the literature. In order to either accept or disregard traditional culture, there needs to be an outline of what traditional culture entails. This leads me to a noticeable gap in the literature regarding culture. Various authors (Currie, et al.,

2013; Losoya, et al., 2008; Robbins, et al., 2014; Totten & Dunn, 2011; Zimmerman, et al., 1996) had no direct definition of what traditional culture is. Participants in studies may have varied views on what traditional culture is to them; for instance: living off the land, using medicines, participation in ceremonies, living on reserve, speaking one's language, etc. This was a motive for my research to ensure I have a direct definition of what traditional culture is to the community of Moose Cree First Nation.

Traditional culture in the literature has encompassed pan-Indian teachings: the four directions, medicine wheels, spirituality, and ceremony. Each Indigenous group may have some similarities but they also will have differences depending on their location and worldviews. As stated by Spillane et al. (2015), it is important that researchers do not generalize different Indigenous tribes/nations due to regional and tribal variations of culture, ceremony, social norms, diet, etc. (p. 232). Spillane et al., are the only authors thus far to highlight the importance of not generalizing Indigenous Peoples culture, many different tribes hold pride in their distinct culture and ceremonies. Rowan et al. (2014), mentions that pan-Indian ceremonies are better suited when utilizing traditional culture as an intervention method:

One possible resolution to this challenge is to compare cultural interventions not so much on their distinctive forms (e.g., sweat lodge vs. shaking tent) but rather on their common functions (e.g., accessing traditional spirituality, enhancing cultural identity), with integration of these components into addictions treatment framed as events within complex dynamic systems. (2014, p. 22)

In Rowan et al.'s (2014) study, there were many different Indigenous groups being treated and it was more pragmatic to utilize pan-Indian ceremonies rather than distinct ceremonies to certain

regions to ensure inclusion for ever distinct group. These scholars (Currie et al., 2013; Losoya et al., 2008; Totten & Dunn, 2011; Zimmerman et al., 1996) used ceremony as a portion of their study however they did not specify the tribe that they were basing their teachings and ceremonies on. There was also no mention of using a generalized method as a way of inclusion for all Indigenous Peoples and therefore one can only conclude that they based their ceremonies from a pan-Indian outlook.

There is also a lack of literature dedicated to reserves. There was an abundance of literature based on programs for addictions, gangs and restorative justice, however I only found one case study that was specific to community healing, *The Eketemc (Alkali Lake)* written by Bopp and Bopp (2011). They based their study on personal healing and community restoration through cultural revitalization and intervention and had positive effects. The lack of literature dedicated to reserves may be due to researchers not being able to access information from the community because they were viewed as outsiders. As stated by Sanders (2007), the support of the community being researched will help the success of project (p. 41). If the community is not supportive or does not trust the researcher then it would be substantially harder for the researcher to gain meaningful data. It is vital to my research that the community supported my work, I needed full co-operation of Moose Cree First Nation community members to ensure that my data I received from interviews was honest and directly relevant to Moose Cree First Nation.

In regards to traditional culture, elders are considered very valuable. However there was only one study where elders were interviewed on how often they disseminate traditional knowledge to Indigenous youth. Robbin, et al. (2005), highlights the important role of grandparents and elders within the community, as role models for children and families (p. 63). Elders are knowledge holders and if their knowledge is not passed down, it will be lost to future

generations. According to Robbin et al. (2005), “All of the participants expressed feelings of enculturative responsibilities, in greater and lesser degrees. Only one person was tentative, stating that he would not take an assertive role in this area, but would wait to respond to his granddaughter's own interest to discuss tribal history and beliefs” (p. 64). The relationship between elders and youth should be explored more thoroughly. Throughout my research I examined this relationship to determine the role of elders in the preventative process.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Theoretical Framework**

A resilience theory framework informs my research. I have chosen resilience as a theoretical framework due to the factors that are associated with Indigenous peoples in Canada, specific to the realities encountered in remote communities. As stated by Adelson (2000), Indigenous peoples in Canada are amongst the most marginalized peoples facing high rates of violence, abuse, poverty, disease, suicide and incarceration (p. 12). Indigenous peoples in Canada are undoubtedly one of the most marginalized groups in the country. They have undergone multiple colonial experiences that have attacked their culture and way of life for centuries. This resiliency theory I have applied in this research study was fitting in nature due to the primal resilience that the First Nations peoples have demonstrated time and time again throughout history. The fact that the Indigenous peoples of Canada to some extent are still able to speak their languages, proves how resilient they are as a people. Not only have the Indigenous peoples of Canada kept their language alive, they are still practice ceremony. Their culture and values are still being passed on to younger generations, in a manner that is culturally relevant to their group. The oral tradition of passing ceremonies, medicines, history, traditions, and stories is a true testament to their resilient nature.

The Indigenous peoples of Canada have been resilient in keeping their culture alive, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada conveyed a resurgence of the importance of culture as healing and the importance of practicing our culture as Indigenous peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) reports:

Many survivors told the commission that reconnecting with traditional Indigenous spiritual teachings and practices has been essential to their healing, with some going as far to say “it saved my life.” One survivor said, “the Sun Dances and all the other teachings, the healing lodges, sweat lodges...I know that’s that helped me keep my sanity; to keep me from breaking down and being a total basket case. That’s what has helped me- the teachings of our Aboriginal culture and language.” Losing the connections to their languages and cultures in the residential schools had devastating impacts on Survivors, their families, and communities. Land, language, culture, and identity are inseparable from spirituality; all are necessary elements of a whole way of being, of living on the land as Indigenous peoples. (p. 224)

In the literature there were different ways in which authors described or defined resilience. In relation to this research study I felt the following quote best suited the depiction of resiliency displayed by Indigenous peoples of Canada. According to Fergus and Zimmerman (2005):

Resilience refers to the process of overcoming the negative effects of risk exposure, coping successfully with traumatic experiences, and avoiding the negative trajectories associated with risks. A key requirement of resilience is the presence of both risks and promotive factors that either help bring about a positive outcome or reduce or avoid a negative outcome. (p. 399)

The resilience described in the latter quote are the effects experienced by Indigenous peoples that are exposed to high risk situations in family, community, or independently in remote First Nations communities. Many people in Moose Factory are attempting to overcome these harsh realities and it is my aim to determine if community members find it feasible to utilize

culture as a preventative method for youth. Protective measures for youth accompanied with resilience and culture can be a possible positive outcome or reduce the exposure to negative outcomes. Programs geared towards culture for youth should be created using support from protective models of resilience Fleming and Ledogar (2008) support this idea:

In the protective model, assets or resources moderate or reduce the effect of a risk on negative outcome. Protective factors may operate in several ways to influence outcomes. They may help to neutralize the effects of risk; they may weaken, but not completely remove them; or they may enhance the positive effect of another promotive factor in producing an outcome. (p. 6)

As pointed out in my literature review, historical trauma encompassed by youth residing in Moose Factory has been evident and has led to a major discussion topic being intergenerational impacts. The vulnerabilities Moose Factory youth displayed place them at high risk and create a space to work within a resiliency theory framework. There is an urgent need for protective measures being put in place for the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous youth within Canada, especially for those living in remote communities.

The resiliency theory framework is attached to the individual in correlation to the fact that each distinct member in Moose Factory may have similar challenges as a community; however as an individual, they ultimately will face diverse advantages and disadvantages. “Resilience is created when these factors initiate certain processes in the individual...building positive self-image, reducing the effect of the risk factors and breaking the negative cycle so as to open up new opportunities for the individual” (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008, p. 3). Indigenous culture incorporated in the lives of the youth can enhance the latter described by resiliency

theory. Indigenous knowledge can inform and enhance how the youth relate to the world around them and hopefully prevent deviant behaviours.

It is vital for the individuals themselves to overcome hardships faced in their social, economic, cultural and political lives to really embrace resilience. The community as a whole can play a role in fostering resiliency methods for the younger generations. Fleming and Ledogar (2008) have attested to findings that resiliency research has not only been attached to the individual but increasingly prominent in communities as a whole in recent years (p. 1). My primary focus essentially was to determine if culture could be beneficial for youth residing in Moose Factory as a protective factor. During my field work I came to the conclusion that the community as a whole would be the preeminent method of incorporating indigenous culture into the lives of the youth. Fleming and Ledogar (2008) comment that “community or cultural resilience is the capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctness” (p. 3). The main focus of this research project is to determine if the peoples of Moose Cree First Nation find it feasible to preserve their historical distinct culture and pass on the knowledge to the younger generations in hope that it will help with the negative social issues that are plaguing the youth. Resilience theory in relation to Indigenous peoples of Canada and their culture is evident due to the fact that the culture is still apparent, and that is the basis of what encompasses resilience. As determined by Cummin, Barnes, Perz, Schmink, Sieving, Southworth, Binford, Stickler and Holt, (2005), “Although specific components and relationships within a complex system will change over time, the essential attributes that define its identity must be maintained if the system is to be considered resilient” (p. 978). Acculturation

of Indigenous peoples of Canada was not successful. There are still multiple Indigenous peoples in urban, rural and remote locations that are still practicing their distinct cultural identities.

Resiliency theory is best suited for this research project as it shows the determination of the Indigenous people to support their unique culture and identity. Resiliency of identity not only for the individual but collectively in families, communities, cities, and as a Country. “Examining aspects of indigenous resilience can create helpful ideas and practices for the current decolonizing efforts in Aboriginal communities” (McGuire, 2010, p. 127).

## **Methods**

I utilized a qualitative research method as I thought it would work best in this study because it is more compatible to the local culture. Because I had intentions of conducting a case study, my first step was to immerse myself for 3-4 weeks within the community and engage in the following activities: join social groups, visit different Elders, attend town meetings, attend different religious gatherings and view provincial court hearings for criminal and family law.

Once I had interacted with the community I began my research by applying a Convergence Indigenous Methodology. According to Ray (2012), Convergence Indigenous Methodology employs a broad understanding of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge systems that are current and are motivated by decolonization and revitalization efforts informed by Traditional Knowledge. They work towards the inclusion of Traditional Knowledge within westernized methodological approaches towards research (2012, p. 87). Although I had established a literature review, it was pragmatic to initiate an ethnographic methodology to investigate the actualities of the issues displayed within the community, such as discovering the hidden social patterns that may have not been thoroughly researched or that have altered in

recent years. During my field research I had documented my interactions and public observations in a reflexive journal to note the community dynamics that may not be discussed during interviews due to community members unconsciously accepting behaviour as the norm. There is a lack of literature in relation to preventative methods for youth, especially in remote reserves. Therefore, a theory would have to develop from my initial stages of research and continue to lead me through my data analysis, since there were no previous theories associated to this situation. A grounded theory was chosen as a part of this researcher's methodology, as stated by Strauss and Corbin (1990) grounded theory was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another. A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind (unless his or her purpose is to elaborate and extend existing theory). Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. Theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the "reality" than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience...because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action (p. 12).

### **Sample**

The sample group for my research consisted of eight full First Nation ("Indian") status individuals (four women and four men) all of whom were raised in, and currently reside on the reserve of Moose Factory, Ontario. The purpose of this research project was to investigate the perspectives of consenting adults about the over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in correctional facilities and how to positively affect the welfare of society as a whole. To ensure I had received valid information based upon the criminal justice system and traditional culture, my

target group included local Indigenous professionals i.e., lawyers, social counsellors, band council members, teachers, health care professionals, elders etc.

Although I am a member of Moose Cree First Nation, I had grown up off reserve and was generally seen as an outsider to the long time community members. Therefore to gain access to my target group, my sampling techniques I conducted included, purposive and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling had been my initial method and consisted of networking to identify 1-2 initial individuals whom I had approached for a voluntary interview. I subsequently ask these participants for recommendations for additional participants. Reasoning for the purposive sampling was to ensure my participant sample was representative of the population (e.g. as a control for the over-representation of family groups or gender). My participants were subjected to semi-structured interviews that had been audio recorded and transcribed.

### **Ethics and Consent**

In the past, Indigenous peoples as a whole have been over-researched and often in a non-ethical manner. As stated by Castellano, (2004) “Research acquired a bad name among Aboriginal Peoples because the purposes and meanings associated with its practice by academics and government agents were usually alien to the people themselves and the outcomes were, as often as not, misguided and harmful” (p. 98). Due to this, I sent a letter of intent to the band council of Moose Cree First Nation (Appendix A), to request that I may facilitate my research study within the community. As a researcher it is vital to request permission to conduct any research before commencing a study, especially of a vulnerable population. Once I had received the authorization letter of approval of research (Appendix C) from the deputy chief of council of

Moose Cree First Nation, I began my process of searching for two participants to conduct my initial research.

All of my voluntary participants were presented with a written outline of my proposed research (appendix A) parameters of the study: reason for research, process, methods, audio-recording, researcher development of findings of research and possible publication. This outline was given to the participant and was theirs to keep for additional information. Verbal explanation was also conducted as an extra precaution to ensure participants fully understood the parameters of the study. Participant consent forms were also presented and verbally clarified to the participant before signing the document (appendix B). It is vital to note that the consent form clearly notes that the participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any point and time, along with the right to not disclose any information they do not feel comfortable answering. Confidentiality and security of the information obtained during the study was also explained to the participant to ensure their confidentiality throughout and following the study.

The Moose Cree are Aboriginal Peoples in Canada and are identified as a vulnerable population in the TCPS. Questions about the social activities within the community, and traditional culture are not deeply sensitive information. I considered that this information should not place them in psychological or physical harm. With respect to special consideration of culture, I have had a strong cultural foundation for the last ten years working with a First Nations Elder. Where appropriate, I ensured that the Cree protocols such as gifting tobacco, cloth, and medicine are maintained throughout the research. As well, I drew upon Elders to be guides for this research. There were no physical risks associated with my research study because I relied on interviews only. The Consent Form indicated that participants can choose to stop the interview at any time, take a break at any time, or withdraw from the study at any time. Lists of available

counsellors from the Moose Factory area were given to the participants (appendix E) with the Consent Form. I verbally indicated these options to each participant. Interviews were conducted when the participants were readily available and where they were most comfortable. I conducted interviews in a safe area i.e. Band office, or public space, library, youth centre etc. within the community.

### **Data Collection**

The main research data collection conducted during this research study was compiled by utilizing semi-structured interviews. While immersing myself into the community, I documented social dynamics and overall demeanor of the community within a reflexive journal through personal observation. However, the semi-structured interviews were seen as the primary source of data collection in this study. “Semi-structured interviews are often preceded by observation, informal and unstructured interviewing in order to allow the researchers to develop a keen understanding of the topic of interest necessary for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, p. 1). Previous to moving to the reserve of Moose Factory, I compiled nine open-ended questions. My observation within the community reinforced my questions that I had previously set and no alterations were made. As stated by Turner (2010), “This open-endedness allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up. Standardized open-ended interviews are likely the most popular form of interviewing utilized in research studies because of the nature of the open-ended questions, allowing the participants to fully express their viewpoints and experiences” (p. 756). The open-ended format of my questioning allowed for in depth answers and varied viewpoints on multiple issues. It also led to new insight on questions that I had not previously thought about. My

probing questions also allowed for me to gain more information from those participants who were not as forthcoming with information.

## **Procedures**

My initial interview was set up with a member of the community who had good insight into the youth and community issues within Moose Factory. This participant also had community suitable networking abilities through their employment and was able to suggest a couple people whom I could contact for initial interviews. Each participant suggested additional community members to contact for possible interviews. These eight participants of the community varied in ages from 20-70. I had equal views from both male and females. Interviews were scheduled according to the participant and what best suited their schedule and was held in various locations around the First Nation.

Most participants were interested in my family ties to the community and most interviews began with participants asking me questions about family. Participants often questioned my interest in my field of study. I found that this casual interaction before the interview process allowed for the participants to feel at ease and allowed for the participants to see me not solely as a researcher but as a concerned community member as well.

Once I felt the participant was comfortable, I shared my letter of intention (Appendix A) and instructed that it was theirs to keep. I then guided them through the consent form (Appendix B), which I ensured to read to every participant and allowed for a question period in which participants could inquire about the formality of the study. This process led each interview and all documents were signed and consent for audio recording was verbalized once more before commencing the interview process.

The last question during the interview allowed for the participants to speak to anything they found I had missed, seemed vital to the topic at hand and/or if they had any questions for me before the audio recorder was turned off. Once I had completed the formal interview process, I had thanked the participants and gave them an honorarium for their participation in the study as gratitude for their time dedicated to the study.

Once all audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed, the knowledge shared by the participants through semi-structured interviews was examined and general themes were drawn out by the use of thematic data analysis. I employed an emic approach to my data analysis of the interviews, to ensure the participants' representations were established from their viewpoint on the issues being investigated. Because my research in part was based on an ethnographic methodology I had also used a reflexivity approach by use of a reflexive journal to determine cause and effect of the relationship between traditional culture and values and over-representation as seen within the community of Moose Cree First Nation.

### **Key Assumptions and Limitations**

The premise that the Indigenous Peoples of Moose Cree First Nation are open to the idea of utilizing traditional culture as a preventative method to over-representation is a key assumption. Some individuals within the community may have different spiritual or religious ideologies and are not accepting of traditional culture or its values.

An additional limitation is my operationalization of traditional culture. I had interviewed adults within the community in an attempt to discover if traditional culture could fit well into their community as a prevention method for youth. The youth in the community may have drastically different ideas about being involved in traditional Indigenous culture. Another major

factor is that the study was conducted in an isolated community and it may not be applicable to other studies that are focused on urban areas.

## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis, Findings, Discussion

#### Data Analysis

The qualitative research approach I had constructed for this study employed community observation. I began by attending community events, making connections with people within the community. I also made connections through my own family lines and found that although people in the community knew I was conducting research, they did not treat me as though I were a researcher. Although my preliminary research tactic was community observation I found that I had an outsider's perspective. I had not grown up in this community and my outlook on life and how I perceive the world around me is totally different even though I am a First Nations Cree born in Moose Factory. Castellano discovered that researching Indigenous peoples in their communities created an impact on the individuals within the community. "Aboriginal research means research that touches the life and well-being of Aboriginal Peoples. It may involve Aboriginal Peoples and their communities directly. It may assemble data that describes or claims to describe Aboriginal Peoples and their heritage. Or, it may affect the human and natural environment in which Aboriginal Peoples live" (Castellano, 2004, p. 99). It was vital to my research that I immerse myself in the community to better understand the people that create this community. Not being raised in Moose Factory I actively attempted to not compare the urban community I grew up in to the community of Moose Factory. To ensure accuracy and to ensure no possible misguided perceptions I have based the majority of my findings from my semi-structured interviews to ensure proper data analysis and safety of the peoples in Moose Factory.

The data that I compiled besides my community observations were eight transcribed interviews that were an average of 10 pages long; the shortest interview being six pages and the

longest interview being 16 pages. The data analysis method I chose was an inductive method which led me to three major themes: Mushkegowuk Culture as described by the community members residing in Moose Factory, Intergenerational Impacts on fragmented Culture as experienced in the recent past and/or today in Moose Factory, and lastly, Protective Measures to ensure safety of youth residing in the community. Themes expressed were built upon by a grounded theory rather than a hypothesis being tested which I believe gives rich direct knowledge based on the experience of the residents in Moose Factory. Service, (2009) attests to this:

Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. Theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the “reality” than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation (how one thinks things ought to work). Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action (p. 12).

Induction rather than deduction was utilized to ensure all information was thoroughly examined before reducing to major themes. This method was implemented to guarantee actualities and develop patterns of how the First Nations people within Moose Factory perceive prevention methods by way of culture to ensure a healthier society and safety of community members.

### *Analysis Procedure*

The sheer quantity of the transcribed interviews led me to review the full transcript multiple times. Audio recordings of the interviews were also utilized as a method of becoming confidentially familiar with the participants and their view points in relation to the research questions.

Once familiar with the raw data, groupings of content were developed, put into sections that related to one another, coding of particular words were developed. Multiple themes were drawn out by way of induction methodology.

The following are some of the purposes underlying the development of the general inductive analysis approach.

1. to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format;
2. to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and to ensure that these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research); and
3. to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data. (Thomas, 2006, p. 238).

In the theme of Culture, words relating to water, land, and ceremony were used multiple times in describing the current culture as it is within Moose Factory. Colonization, loss, identity, and substance abuse were highlighted in the theme of intergenerational impacts. Programming, education, enculturation, and resilience were used in relation to the theme of Protective Measures. Thomas (2006) states that:

The evaluator's view capture the key aspects of the themes identified in the raw data and are assessed to be the most important themes given the evaluation objectives. Inductive coding that finishes up with many major themes (e.g., more than eight) can be viewed as incomplete. (p. 242)

Once I had reduced the themes that were overlapping or similar in theory I was left with the three major themes previously stated. Within the major themes, sub-themes were created to organize the copious amount of information discovered.

Prior to my community observation, I had not developed a theoretical framework in which to begin the study. I held an understanding that the grounded theory would guide me towards an appropriate theoretical framework that would mirror the content of the study. Community observations initially led me towards my theoretical framework but analysis of the data confirmed that I would be using a resilience theoretical framework. It best suited the viewpoints of the participants and how they view their community as well as my research scope of utilizing culture as a preventative method in remote communities.

## **Findings**

A magnitude of information was discovered during the interview process. Multiple participants wavered from the initial questions out of pure passion and concern for the youth and general population as a whole. Multiple issues affecting the First Nations peoples were discussed, however in the course of the data analysis, some issues were not considered as pragmatic in relation to the research question. Although they are important issues, there was expedient raw information and could not all be applied.

For this research study, it was vital to understand how the First Nations peoples of Moose Factory viewed themselves as one. The participants in this study all had similar views that indicated that there was an overall consensus on how to describe the people as a whole.

The data revealed three main themes that I will use to support the research topic. Within these themes, multiple sub-themes were created to support the information discovered. Culture was seen as a major theme with subthemes of land, language, community faith with a two-part sub-theme of ceremony and religious conversion. Participants in the study had correlating opinions on what constituted culture within their community.

Throughout the data analysis loss, identity, substance abuse and crime were grouped together to form sub themes under the theme of intergenerational impacts. These impacts were constructed under circumstances of colonization that the First Nations peoples experienced for several decades. Various participants specifically used the word colonization in an undesirable notion. I have chosen not to use colonization as theme. This is in no way to undermine the data or in anyway not validate the participants point of view, it was determined that there are abundant documents attesting to the detrimental effects of colonization therefore this research study will attempt to steer clear of focusing on that term. Instead will use the theme of intergenerational impacts. It is believed by me that the over use of the word colonization in this study may bring readers to focus solely on past issues. The history of what occurred to the First Nations peoples of Canada is relatively a new topic, one that has only recently been discussed in an open forum. This researcher is well aware of the cause and effect of colonization and mentions it exclusively for those readers who may not be as well versed in Canadian Indigenous history. It is an important topic and it was vital to mention in previous chapters to establish grounds for relevancy to this research. However this research project is solution orientated and

focus should be highlighted to the future, a better future. Again, this is in no way to undermine the horrendous actions that were emplaced on Indigenous peoples through contact.

Protective measures were formed into the final theme as participants expressed ways in which to decrease the amount of deviant behaviour expressed by youth within the community. Subthemes discovered were programming, education, and resilience, which were seen as methods to be put in place to benefit the youth and community. Resilience of conforming to Eurocentric social structures that are currently assisting youth to abstain from deviant behaviour displayed within the community.

### **Moose Cree First Nation**

A definition of who the Moose Cree First Nation peoples are, was deemed vital to this study due to the inherent fact that they are the people in which this study is being positioned. Descriptions that were given were all similar and key words mentioned were in direct correlation with the themes that were later compiled. Participants used the Cree language, Mushkegowuk, which translates to People of the Mushkeg. This was a large indicator that language was seen as vital to the people. It was also noted that some participants specified that their ancestors were forced to move to the reserve of Moose Factory however they are adaptive, strong resilient people that view themselves as friendly and welcoming. There were strong indicators associated with the land. Every participant mentioned at one point that they are either people of land, take care of the land or are water people. This leads me to the position that their environment in which they reside has a large impact on their identity. The remoteness of their community was also an important factor to their identity. The participants viewed themselves as different from southern reserves due to the isolation that they experience. Participant M7 summarizes *“I would*

*say Moose Cree, I only know surrounding communities around here and I see we are different from other southern First Nations...we are very land based people still eh, that hunting, fishing trapping”(M7).*

## **Culture**

To gauge if Indigenous culture specific to Moose Cree First Nation has potential to be established as a preventative method for the over-representation of Indigenous people in correctional facilities, it is imperative to first establish what culture entails to the peoples of Moose Cree First Nation. Culture is fluid and determined by multiple factors in relation to different groups of peoples. As discussed by Barnhardt (2005), culture should not be generalized. It is dependent on the knowledge systems of the peoples in different locations. How they view the world in which they live shapes their unique culture and is always adapting and is diverse in the systems that shape it (p. 10). It was determined that land, language and community faith are central dimensions of the unique culture of the Mushkegowuk people.

## **Land**

Land through the eyes of these First Nations peoples was described as a living being, something that is sacred and was given to the people to care for, in return it would provide for the people. It is a different concept from what non-Indigenous peoples may experience. Trees, rocks, water, soil etc. are not seen as inanimate but as animate beings with spirits to the First Nation peoples. Every participant had mentioned the land in some context which could be attested to the fact that the forest, water and the lands that surround them was discovered to have a massive impact on the Moose Cree First Nation peoples.

Participant M2 described his relationship with the land and the health of the land has a direct relationship to the health of the people.

*“There is a lot of stewardship, we have a role and responsibility to take care of that land, its who we are...the land, the water, all across that land there are grave sites, spiritual sites...animals, they migrate, come and go, come and go...the health of the land, that determines how we are going to be as people and that is how I can describe who we are as Moose Cree people...using the word **Illuewuk...people of the land**”(M2).*

Moose Factory is an island surrounded by water. Not only is there a river surrounding the island, but James Bay is connected to Hudson Bay, flowing into the basin where Moose Factory is situated. The water is seen as a vital part of the culture to the people. Indigenous women from assorted tribes in North America are seen as water carriers, protectors of the water, women have a special connection to water because of their life giving abilities. As previously described, women are known to be “carriers of water... women not only have the responsibility, but also the power to take care of the water, and it is women who pray over water in their ceremonies” (Anderson, 2010, p. 31). Protection of the water is culturally the women’s role because when women carry children for nine months they are carried in water in the womb. It was discovered that more women within this study mentioned water more significantly than men. Participant F8 describes culture today being very land based and goes on to describe what the culture and health of the people use to be in the past by using a water metaphor.

*“Culture of these people, my people...ummm were very much on the land...all over the bay...all over this land, if you look at our territory you’ll see where the people moved around, all over this huge river system and all of the water leads to the bay, this reserve is so young...before that we were all over this land, the river it flows like an organ...just*

*pumping, pumping, pumping and people were healthy physically, spiritually, emotionally, mentally, to me that was culture of the past from this area” (F8).*

Participant F8 describes what the culture of Moose Cree First Nation peoples had in the past as a whole. She later indicates that it is still this way for some people. However due to intergenerational trauma of some community members they are no longer living healthy lifestyles. In general the community is still very much land based.

Participants M2, F3, F4, M5, F6, M7, F8 all provided examples of how Mushkegowuk peoples are still currently living on the land. Living off the land in terms of gathering, hunting, fishing or utilizing the land as a way for mental health therapy. Participant F3 has expressed in terms of culture that, *“the majority of it involves living off the land”* (F3). Participant F4 had a similar response to land and culture, *“I think...more people would relate it to...just living off the land and hunting and fishing regularly”* (F4). There was a large emphasis on harvesting and gathering food in the area surrounding Moose Cree First Nation. There was a sense of pride taken by the participants that they are still current in living off the land. Participant M5 emphasized hunting and gathering as well when questioned about current Indigenous culture specific to the area, *“The Cree though, we are hunter gatherers...I would say on the land”* (M5).

The community of Moose Cree First Nation remains isolated, to the degree where neighbouring First Nation communities up the coast would take several hours to travel to. One particular participant held large prominence in mentioning that Northern First Nation communities are fundamentally unique in comparison with Southern First Nation communities and that this can be demonstrated by the level of land-based activities that are intertwined into the Mushkegowuk culture.

*“I only know surrounding communities around here and I see we are different from other Southern First Nations...we are very land based people, still eh, that hunting, fishing, trapping, and if you think about it...Moose Factory in the spring, comes around, Moose Factory is like a ghost town...practically everyone is hunting, the whole family, they take the little ones, I would say we are very strong people...very strong on land based stuff”* (M7).

Participant M2 shared the duality of a strong spiritual connection to being on the land especially when one hunts. Animals have spirit just as we humans do, we must honour them and their lives and treat them with respect because they are committing the ultimate sacrifice for us; giving their lives so we can continue ours.

*“It is important to understand the spiritual connection with the land and animals and hunting...we harvest to survive and these animals are giving their lives for us to survive not to be trophy kills”* (M2).

Participant M2 also shared the spiritual connection of the people and animals that we share the land with, in the form of a memory of a trip up the river with one of his late Uncles, when they harvested two moose. Not only does this quote provide a powerful message of how the Mushkegowuk culture and values are shown with respect of the land and animals we harvest for nutrition.

*“**Sham-go-naw**...he said “their feeding us” and with those words he said “remember what I am saying...they are feeding us” It has a strong meaning to it, to who we are as Cree people”* (M2).

Participant M2 also highlights the importance of language in relation to the land with the previous quote. The Mushkegowuk language is so rich in meaning, and it's very descriptive and displays how as a people they view the world. This leads this research to the next subtheme of language.

## **Language**

Language was seen a major factor in relation to the Mushkegowuk culture by almost all the participants. The word language was used in describing culture point blank however many participants showed engrained signs of language use entrenched in culture without noticing. It was second nature to them, which highlights that language is central to the Mushkegowuk culture.

Participant F6 spoke a Cree word for drum when discussing what is culturally relevant and what some people view as not part of our culture. *"They say, they say that's not us, it's not our culture, we've never done that... "I've never heard of that" and the drum, even the drum itself Da-why-he-gan they don't know that we've had a drum"* (F6). Participant F6 used the language in second nature manner to describe that drumming is part of the Mushkegowuk peoples historical past. This was also viewed with Participant M2 who used words like Illuewuk and Sham-go-naw when describing the land.

Participant F8 and M5 were more direct by means of stating that language is culture.

*"To me culture involves language and that's when you talk about nations and sovereignty, you know, that language is a part of it and I know that we have taken steps in this community to try and revive the language...and that is culture...the language"* (F8).

*“(L)anguage is traditional culture for the Cree” (M5).*

Various amounts of participants expressed concern in the fact that language and culture cannot live without one another however language is being lost and therefore so is cultural knowledge. The majority of Cree language speakers are elderly. Very few youth or young adults know the language. Participants M1, F4, M5, F6 and F8 highlighted concern for language loss. A quote from Participant M1 encompasses the connection between language and culture and the effect it will have if language is lost.

*“Well, at the present time...because the youth have lost their language and connection to culture...because **language is culture**, they have lost that language, eh...and for them to really get to understand... all they want to do is write down what culture is on paper, and that loses its meaning...the concept of learning is so different from culture, like when you go to a Sundance for example or sweat, you don't take your paper and pens, you learn holistically, emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually and that's how we learn...**unfortunately the youth today have lost their language...so the meaning for them is very difficult to understand**” (M1).*

Expression of language survival being vital to the culture also ties in with the next subtheme of ceremony. The Cree language has such in depth meaning that a part of the culture would perish if the significance engrained in the language was absent when speaking about ceremonial aspects of the culture.

### **Community Faith**

Faith is a major component of any culture and participants in this research study expressed significant divisions within the community of Moose Factory. There is a strong

following of Christian religion as well as a recently growing following of Indigenous spirituality and involvement in Indigenous ceremonies. It is noticed more so due to the small population of Moose Factory. Both faith/religion are seen to be engrained in the culture of these community members. It is dependent on how they were raised or their life experiences. The participants involved in this research study had some involvement in ceremony to a certain extent or had converted from Christianity to practice their Indigenous culture. The data analysis revealed that there is a strong alteration occurring in the community, gradually people are converting to Indigenous spirituality and committing their time to ceremonies as opposed to attending Church and practicing Christianity.

### *Ceremony*

More emphasis on land and language was discussed during the interview process in regards to culture and ceremony. Certain families in Moose Factory have had resilient generation-to-generation teaching methods of ceremony. Two participants expressed that they have been raised in ceremony since they were infants. They have never wavered from their spiritual beliefs and have continued to take part in ceremonies. Participant M7 shared his experience with ceremony, being raised with ceremonial beliefs and understanding the connections between ceremony and the land.

*“In Moose Factory everyone knows how to hunt or goes hunting or fishing...not everyone goes but everyone knows how important it is, and that ceremony part, its making a comeback in Moose Factory now, I was lucky enough to be raised that way, but now that I am older I see the connection between hunting, fishing, trapping, being on the land and that connection to ceremony...when I was growing up it was real small, the traditional*

*ceremony it was very small...we have quite a few people now. It's huge...huge in Moose Factory, there's a sweat every week...two sweats every week, doesn't matter where it is, there is always a sweat going, that's what I see" (M7).*

The connection of land and ceremony for Participant M7 was thoroughly vocalized. This participant described the two components of culture as intertwined and inseparable. The knowledge acquired is continuously built upon and teachings constantly erudite.

Participant F4 expressed ceremony and connection to land as well. This participant used an example of a fasting ceremony on the land and the connection one feels to the land, to the creator and to the self.

*"My traditional understanding of culture or teachings is that there is a lot of healing energy out there in the land...going out there alone is the best thing for anybody. I fasted four times now, four days each time and when people don't understand what that's about its hard to explain...but it's very refreshing and I feel we're meant to do it once and a while...to ground us, you know...we need to take care of our relationship with the Creator" (F4).*

The participants who are engaged in ceremony describe it as vital to the people and the soul. It is one of the most important aspects of who they and what their culture is built upon. Sweat lodges are important parts of ceremony to the Cree people along with Shaking Tents and Sun Dance ceremonies.

Participant F8, speaks about her memories of going up the river as a child with her family and other families to take part in ceremony and how this participant continues these teachings with her own children.

*“I was given opportunities to participate in ceremonies. I remember when we were at our camps in Hanna Bay at our fall camps...I remember there was ceremony there...the practicing of Shake Tents or Sun Dances, that’s part of what I do and teach my children...is the ceremony part...the spiritual part...it’s a big part of our culture” (F8).*

Two participants were raised in ceremony and one participant has practiced for several years now. These three participants F4, M7 and F8 were supporters of ceremony being a vital component to culture within Moose Cree First Nation.

### ***Religious conversion to Indigenous Spiritual belief system***

Raised in Indigenous ceremony was not the norm especially for community members who are older. It was a rarity. Many participants mentioned that in recent years there has been a resurgence of ceremony and spirituality within the community. Participant F3 comments on how growing up in Moose Factory ceremony was not talked about but presently in Moose Factory it is not only heard but seen.

*“I don’t really remember sweat lodges and stuff when I was young but we would have the pow wow...you know...and in my late teens and early adult years there wasn’t much around yet, and it’s probably in the last ten years where people have had sweat lodges, you know...sweat lodges in their back yards, and there is more walking out ceremonies, traditional honouring of the first kills of their moose, so in the fall we have a big feast, you know...those kinds of things, they are just slowly coming back, naming ceremonies and getting your colours that is also coming back” (F3).*

Expression of family backlash due to converting one’s spiritually was mentioned by Participant F4. Initial confusion and disarray was exhibited however once people began to notice

an improvement in lifestyle choice, it became accepted. Acceptance of ceremony as culture to the Moose Cree First Nation's people is altering gradually as attested by Participant F4:

*“I remember when I wanted to start attending ceremonies my parents were kind of a little bit...they weren't negative about it but they kind of you know just didn't say anything, yeah...and they just didn't know what to say and I just kept telling them what we were doing and how it was helping me and how I was helping our family, my boys and I...and so they could see that to because I was sober now and my life was different so they changed their view of it all too” (F4).*

The culture in ceremony perspective is one that was not largely noted during the interview process. If individuals were not raised in ceremony, they were likely to not be exposed to ceremony. Participant M5 indicated that it was viewed as taboo for a long period of time, due to Government legislation and missionaries deeming the culture heathen. However many other participants had stated there was a resurgence of spirituality in relation to ceremony.

*“It's getting stronger we are having a more divided community, or not divided community but there is a stronger tradition practiced here...there are more sweat lodges and teaching lodges that have sprung up in the last decade than there was 20-25 years ago, there has been a big shift with younger people following...from going to Sunday school to going over to traditional teaching...and I like that” (M5).*

### **Intergenerational Impacts**

Previous to this section I stated that I will not rehash the horrendous effects of colonization. I will not focus solely on residential schools, 60's scoop, legislation that has affected the Indigenous populations of North America. Participants in the study allude to these

negative effects that have been passed on. Quotes derived from the interview process do include some comments attesting to this fact and I will let the participants speak for themselves. Loss in relation to culture or spiritual guidance was a main theme mentioned by the participants, as well as dysfunctional family structures, identity, substance abuse, and crime.

## **Loss**

Participants F6 and F4 vocalized that the systems put in place to control the Indigenous population have greatly affected their culture. Conforming to another religion caused cultural discontinuity and this has been passed on from generation to generation.

*“Our communities have lost a lot in general, I went to residential school and that’s the first thing I lost, I suffered cultural discontinuity, was removed from my family, so unless you know or have experienced it then you know that’s what you’ve lost, you know, and there’s some people out there that don’t look at it the same way the way I look at it....I think that’s why a lot of people get sick or depressed because they suffered that loss but we don’t know what it is” (F6).*

When discussing the current culture in Moose Factory participant 4 stated, *“it’s changed from generation to generation, because of the residential schools and colonialism” (F4)*. This particular participant had moved from the reserve to pursue a post-secondary education. The term colonization was not commonly used during the interview process. This participant’s education allowed her to describe the process of change through the context of academia.

In the past, Indigenous family units were nomadic and each member of the family had a duty to help with the survival of the family. The way in which First Nations peoples lived was altered to the extreme.

*“You were busy, very busy all the time...every person had a role in their family, every person had a chore that was naturally given out by the parents or grandparents, and everyone was disbursed, there was never a little town that we traditionally lived in...I don’t think being in a town is a natural way for the Cree people, ummm so you can blame Canada’s reservation system for that, that applies to many, many First Nations across Canada” (M5).*

Participant M2 also indicated that the Cree people were nomadic in nature and did not chose to live collectively on an island, *“Moose Factory, that is where we live and to me that is where we were forced to live you know through colonization” (M2)*. These two comments indicate that generational Cree people have lost their nature role with the environment and hunting and gathering skills. Although still prominent within the community, it was a way of life and a necessity of survival. Many people have lost their purpose. The passing or knowledge of survival has not been passed on due to colonial lifestyle that was emplaced and continues today.

It was discovered that there are multiple young families; children are having children. F3 states *“(B)ecause they were young parents themselves, they weren’t able to pick up a lot of traditional knowledge and now they don’t have that knowledge to teach their own children now” (F3)*. Adolescence is the prime time to learn cultural knowledge. These youth are starting families and are not able to acquire knowledge that would benefit their children. This is another generational impact felt within the community.

Participant F8 displayed frustration on family ties. To this participant it was the most important aspect of loss within First Nation culture, the loss of family. *“Families that have lost connectivity to one another” (F8)*. First Nations children were taken away from their home as

children and raised away from their families for years. When they returned they were virtually strangers to their own families and communities. Most children did not learn proper child rearing methods since they were raised communally by priests and nuns. This detachment to family has been passed down generationally and still continues with some families today.

The loss of culture, purpose and family has led to multiple issues plaguing the First Nations people in Moose Factory. It was mentioned this has led to family dysfunction, identity issues, substance abuse and crime and these can be linked to intergenerational impacts of colonization.

### **Dysfunctional Family Structure**

Unfortunately one of the biggest topics brought up when discussing youth in Moose Factory was that most are not supervised and/or supported. Their family structures are dysfunctional. They either have parents or guardians who do not support them emotionally, mentally or spiritually. Their guardians have substance abuse issues themselves, or come from a single parent or broken family so the youth are not supervised to the fullest extent in the years they need it the most. I discovered from my interviews that these issues that pertain to youth in Moose Factory are current and are learned behaviours that have stemmed from the past. Participant F4, M5 and F6 all corresponded in their notion that residential schools had a large impact on how dysfunctional family structures are for most First Nations families, some more than others but there are still lingering issues that are passed on in every family.

*“(P)arent skills coming out of residential schools...there pretty much wasn’t any” (F6).*

*“(T)hey start doing alcohol abuse...self-harm, so they never really get to be a parent to their children that they made and there’s anger and there’s hurt and it’s all kept in this person coming out of residential school” (M5).*

This self-harm and destruction to the family can be seen in multiple First Nations around Canada. It has been studied enough to know that when people do not attempt to heal in a proper way from their emotional or mental wounds they will find additional damaging ways to cope.

Two of the participants had no issues with singling out residential school and the harmful effects it has had on First Nations people. However there was one participant who alluded to residential schools but would not use the direct words, this participant was more passive in nature and would talk around the subject by using alternative words.

*“I think a lot of it is the parents aren’t really supportive and maybe the dysfunction within the family units is still there from the intergenerational stuff, so yeah...that’s what I see” (F4).*

It was noticed the issues stemming from intergenerational trauma are all intertwined and is a continuous cycle. Family dysfunction is caused by learned behaviour from residential school. Substance abuse is a factor in individuals who would like to forget the pain they have suffered, and the substance abuse leads to other facets of dysfunctional behaviour displayed by individuals in Indigenous communities. The cycle is repeated because their children are either being taken away or learning this behaviour which feeds into the intergenerational cycle of dysfunction. Participant F3 highlights this in her interview:

*“Family dysfunction in terms of their parents have addictions themselves and they’re not there, like they’re there physically but they are not there emotionally, for ensuring that their children are succeeding” (F3).*

Emotional and mental supports are not the only ways in which some parents neglect their children. It was discussed that there have been parents whose addictions are so strong that they neglect to physically care for their children. At this point CAS steps in to ensure the child’s welfare and safety is not in jeopardy. *“The child welfare stats are way up there and it is alcohol and drug related” (M2).*

For those children and youth that remain with their families, support was the main issue discussed. *“I think a lot of it is the parents not providing that support or encouragement” (F4).* It was also specified that frequently this is not the intention of the parents, parent or guardian. Large family structures determine a role in this. There are too many young ones to focus enough time solely on one individual. Families that have separated and there is a single mother attempting to support her child/children. Families separate and begin new families with different people and the children are not given enough attention on either side. There are many reasons for children not being supported or encouraged enough. Family connection is no longer a major priority and children are falling through the cracks. It is the children, youth and young adults who are suffering. Participant F3 has observed this in her own family and it can be seen in the community as well.

*“(T)here is still that disconnection and that comes from family dysfunction or family breakdown you know, your parents separate or you were born in the middle of your*

*father having another family, or your mom starting another family... those kinds of things, all that intertwines and causes so much confusion, big problems for youth” (F3).*

These issues may not be so detrimental to the youth in Moose Factory if they had an inherent sense of self or identity. However it was believed that many of the issues pertaining to the Mushkegowuk youth are due to no self-esteem, lost identity, or no pride in their selves as First Nations peoples. This leads me to the next sub-theme of Identity.

### **Identity**

Identity is an important characteristic that helps with pride, self-esteem and behaviour. Identity was a major theme that most participants agreed was an issue that the youth in the community were facing. The youth are not being supported or encouraged to develop hobbies or interests that will help them to identify who they are and instil pride in themselves. Participant M5 believes this is the reasoning for so many youth displaying signs of behavioural issues.

*“I would say early teens 13, 14...they take more chances, they are out on the street more and it’s the critical period for wondering what they are to do, they are wondering it’s a critical stage in life for wondering what to do...they need a sense of belonging or personal purpose” (M5).*

When discussing identity crisis with Participant M5 it was stated that some of these youth are so lost, are angry and don’t know how to express their anger. They need help to identify healthy ways to deal with their self-esteem issues. The youth are following suit with the adults in their lives and in the community. Many people are not dealing with their emotions and letting their frustrations out in non-healthy ways. It is learned behaviour.

*“You know some kids are tempted to throw the rock through the window or damage the car just to release some frustration” (M5).*

The ways in which they are seeking attention is destructive and a healthy self-esteem or identity would benefit the youth population greatly. Other participants illustrated that they are lost because they were never provided a healthy foundation.

*“I think that they need a foundation of who they are they need to start a foundation, something that they are proud of and that they own, like a personal thing, that, ugh they can identify with” (F6).*

Two of the participants feel that our culture is ingrained in our identity and without it we do not have a self. This is a major reason for youth being lost or displaying behavioural issues. They were never given a chance to learn what it means to be a First Nations person. Only the negative aspects that are displayed by stereotypes or intergenerational trauma was passed on from their caretakers.

*“Well in that sense...I’m a strong believer that people are out there getting into trouble because... because there’s something missing in their lives and you know as First Nations people our traditional culture is a big factor in our lives, and if you don’t have it...people talk about how you don’t have that sense of identity or belonging anywhere so you’re kind of just wondering around” (F3).*

*“We were taken away from our parents...our identity was taken from us, you know our involvement on the land and learning how to do things like fishing or snow shoeing, rabbit snaring, you know those things are disappearing” (M1).*

To the latter participants, culture is the First Nations identity and without it the youth will have a difficult time understanding who they are, what they aspire to and this will lead them to undesirable actions and coping skills.

Substance abuse was discovered to be a way in which these youth are coping with their identity crisis. They either use to numb their pain or to forget about their troubles and fool around with their friends or relatives. Participants voiced the prevalent concern of intergenerational impacts is substance abuse. It's a major problem in Moose Factory and as the next theme will display a major facilitator of crime.

### **Substance Abuse and Crime**

Each participant mentioned substance abuse as the number one issue in Moose Factory. Every participant excluding M1 claimed that the youth are experimenting with marijuana at a very young age, 13-14 being the average age and the youngest being 10-11. Other narcotics were mentioned but the participants felt that an older crowd was ingesting these narcotics. The youth are becoming interested and they are hearing more about the younger generations dabbling in it. Cocaine, methamphetamine and opiates were singled out as growing concerns for substance abuse. Alcohol was also a determined factor for poor judgment and reasons for criminal behaviour. Youth have easy access to alcohol from bootleggers.

Participant M5 and F8 stated that youth will abuse substances and from there involve themselves in crime. M5 suggested that the youth are without identity and are easily influenced by other youth in the community. These youth who have low self-esteem will join the pack mentality to fit in somewhere to have a sense of belonging.

*“They are little play-dough’s that the older kids can sculpt, you know being a bad influence on them with their drugs and toxic lifestyle...and so they go out and do physical damage to property or people” (M5).*

Participant F8 believes that their involvement in crime is largely addiction based especially when it involves theft; *“crimes like mischief or theft is another one that really comes out of their addictions....the pill addiction” (F8).*

M1, M2, F3, F4, M5, F6, F8 all suggested that the youth are mostly involved in vandalism and theft; that being the highest form of crime being displayed by youth in the community, followed by assaults, drug dealing and/or bootlegging. Participant F6 indicated that it is easy to tell who are distributing drugs because they are often healthy looking. You notice people coming and going often and then that person’s physical appearance changes. *“The big one that stands out for me is drug trafficking, because I really see it in a lot of people’s physical appearance” (F6).*

Participants M2 and F8 have vocalized that 97%-99% of all crime committed in Moose Factory were done so while the person in question was abusing substances.

*“Those police stats that I was referring to...they are pretty confident that 97% is alcohol and drug related” (M2).*

*“These chargers are all 99% alcohol related all of them” (F8).*

It was determined by these participants that if there were lower rates of drug and alcohol abuse then there would be a lower crime rate as well.

Poverty can be plainly seen in the community, and was mentioned by the participants as a possible reason for substance abuse in the community. Many people are low income and the cost of living is so high that they turn to drugs or alcohol to make themselves feel good. Participant M5, M7, and F8 all mention the poor economy for the idleness of First Nations people and a precursor for alcohol and drug intake.

*“(Y)ou know this community struggles with its own economic issues its own social issues, so there’s a lot of high rate of welfare or recipients on this reserve there’s a lot of people not in school and don’t work” (F8).*

*“(L)ooking into the lack of employment and the high cost of living here so we have a little theory here that if it is more affordable to live here with lower hydro rates or different kind of heating sources...we can raise the happiness level” (M5).*

*“That is one of the things they are cooped up here. You know some people just can’t afford to leave Moose Factory, they can’t just go for a little trip, it’s expensive to leave Moose Factory and that is just Moose Factory, its different up the coast it’s really hard for them to leave. I find a little break from Moose Factory helps me” (M7).*

There is nothing for the youth to do because of isolation factors and poor hours of programming. It cost too much to live therefore there is no money left over to take a trip out and gain other experiences, and what these youth in the community do experience is intergenerational impacts of substance abuse. They see the older people in the community using these substances and learn by example, as participant M5 states:

*“I believe they introduced this to their children and they showed their children and grandchildren and so on and so on, substance abuse that’s like solvents and anything unnatural, right” (M5).*

It was stressed that there needs to be a break in the cycle of dysfunctional learned behaviour through intergenerational impacts on youth. Not only due to the over-representation of indigenous peoples in correctional facilities but for three other major factors that have been displayed by the participants of this study. I found it pertinent to mention that incompleteness of secondary school; accidental death and suicide were foremost initiated by substance abuse.

Participant F3 displayed a passion of the importance of education and links to education, addiction, crime and imprisonment.

*“Dropping out of school or coming disengaged while they are in school... you know how it snowballs eh...they drop out because they are using and don’t attend regularly and you become addicted, and then you have to start doing crimes to support your habit and then you get busted for your crime and you end up getting jail time, it’s just a continuation... it starts somewhere then keeps going and snow balls and I see that” (F3).*

Participant M5 places concern on accidental death and speaks of how often these people are passing away and it’s due to alcohol or drugs.

*“(T)hey got those reports and the amount of alcohol that person had who died, he died really drunk and it was, we wonder.. a lot of our young people...old people, we wonder when they died how much booze they had in their system, it’s like we need to know, it’s a question we wrestle with, we need to know, and speaking with the police they can check a box or a corner to tell them how much booze drugs is in that persons system who passed,*

*so we have to work on that too, it's up to the family to request that, but we need to find out what our people are dying from. So it's a...were focusing on these drugs and I think it is necessary, because, it's the tip of the ice burg and we have a lot of underlying issues"* (M2).

Suicide is another factor that comes out of substance abuse. Participant M7 voices his worry about the substance abuse issues with the youth and how he himself has lost too many people to suicide.

*"Those are things that I worry about, cause you know I have lost a lot to suicide, like a lot of people...friends to suicide. And then that, it doesn't matter there is always, well not always but alcohol and drugs was always involved"* (M7).

There are too many negative effects of substance abuse that are destroying the peoples of Moose Factory and there needs to be better preventative methods put in place as protective factors for these youth to ensure their safety. Dysfunctional family structures, identity issues, and substance abuse that leads to crime are all intergenerational impacts that are learned behaviour for most First Nations peoples in Moose Factory. Participant F8 states, *"(A) lot of families and youth are the product of what their parents could provide"* (F8). The passing of this learned behaviour needs to stop somewhere and through this research study it was discovered that the people of Moose Cree First Nation have many ideas to prevent such devastation and will be highlighted in the next theme of Protective Measures.

### **Protective Measures**

Three main sub themes were correlated: Programming, Education and Resilience. All of the participants had ideas of what they thought would be the best way to help the youth in the

community. Programming was discovered to be the greatest method of prevention for deviant behaviour. Education was the second method in which to support the reserve to have additional educated youth and young adults to help with social and economic issues that are being experienced today.

### **Programming**

All of my participants except two stated that there is not enough programming for youth in the community, or that there is not enough awareness to these programs being initiated. However, Participant M1 had stated that he isn't really aware of any programs that are available in the community. This can be construed as lack of interest on the participant or his involvement with youth programming since the participant's grandchildren are all adults now. Participant M7 believes that there is enough programming in the community and that there is a lot for the youth to do.

*“(T)he youth Centre here, it’s still a pretty new program we have only been here for about a year. We’ve been taking kids hunting, fishing, trapping and then ugh even the Cree gospel they do lots like fire making and lots on the land... there’s lots for youth here” (M7).*

Efficiency of current programs and limited programming were one of the main concerns for the community members of Moose Factory. Many participants were concerned with the hours of operation. It was stated that there is programming but the hours in which they are operating need to be addressed.

*“I think that they should have the doors open until midnight, so when it comes to, I think that we find are you getting to most trouble between those hours, we do have an arena*

*but the ice usually doesn't go in till November now and then even the minor hockey programming it's not up to par either in the sense that sometimes they're only skating until 9 o'clock and then there's nothing else for them to do after, it's a combination of all those things that really... our kids have nowhere to go and nothing to do" (F3).*

Participant F3 was very concerned about the limited capacity and time frames for these youth to engage in programs being offered, more so than most of the other participants.

*"I find and a lot of our youth are interested in learning traditional ways of life, traditional harvesting, the youth centre provides opportunities but they're limited, it's a limited timeframe and limited capacity" (F3).*

Participant F3 voiced that there needs to be more cultural programming due to the limited capacity of how many youth can attend. There are youth that would like to attend but do not get the chance and then may not sign up again.

*"(R)ight now, the center has ages this to this, ages this to this, they don't ever try to incorporate everybody.... Like tonight working to learn how to make bannock on a stick and do it all evening and get everybody to come not just certain ages, you never know peoples schedules and this 8 year old may want to come later or stay the whole time, some people may not be able to come to the scheduled time for their age to...be nice if it was open sometimes for all ages, like you know with proper planning" (F3).*

Participant F3 was also an advocate of proper planning. If there was not a large attendance this participant believe that's they should change something about it. Allowing all ages was one of this participant's suggestions.

Moose Cree First Nation does provide programming although it was discussed that there is not a large attendance at times. Promoting more awareness to youth and parents was a factor that could initiate more participation in the programs already being provided in the community.

*“I think they have some programming at the Youth Centre they’re starting to do more cultural-based stuff but it’s not very consistent and when they do hold that programming there’s only about 4 or 5 kids that actually go so I don’t know if they maybe need to promote it or create more awareness” (F4).*

Another issue of current programming was that there are multiple organizations that are running the same programs on overlapping times. Some workers of these programs are getting mentally and physically drained. A suggestion was made that all the organizations in the community need to work together for the sake of the children and youth in the community.

*“(W)e have a youth worker and we have the youth department here so we have lots of pools of resources so if we all got together and plan we would have a full calendar, you know, and people wouldn’t feel so burned out and we wouldn’t be offering the same things” (F3).*

The discussion of efficiency and limited times and resources was mentioned however they were not the only issues discussed in terms of current programming. What is being offered in these programs was also a vital point mentioned during this study. Multiple suggestions were raised in relation to what should be offered in the community.

As discovered in the previous theme, substance abuse was a major factor affecting the youth in Moose Factory. More awareness of substances and their effects need to be highlighted for the younger people, to ensure they do not fall into the dysfunctional cycle of learned behaviour.

*“(W)e are a reactive community, we’re always reacting to something all of people, we have young families becoming dysfunctional, and having family breakdown because of oxycodone, because of crystal meth, and now people want to start doing something about it, you know we have all these big rallies for all the suicides but you don’t see too many people being proactive in that sense of drug awareness, because these kids here...like my grade (x) that need to be aware that when they go to high school that should not happen”* (F3).

Participant F3 was a strong believer of preventative programming for youth; *“why wait for the youth to fall into bad habits”* (F3). More substance abuse awareness needs to be addressed for the safety of the youth in the community.

In terms of cultural based programs, the participants in this study suggested that it is not vibrant in what is being offered. It was discovered that the Mushkegowuk people are largely land-based people however that is mostly what is being offered. Participant F4, M5 and F6 recommended that there be more alternative culturally based programs that should be provided constantly.

Participant M5 voiced that the annual youth gathering is great for the youth because it is not just land based which can be largely physical programming. The youth gathering allows youth to hear from other successful First Nations peoples which could allow these youth to see or hear about something that they may never be exposed to.

*“(Y)outh conferences can be custom built, you know who is available to speak at youth conferences, you know motivational speakers and people who share their arts, annual*

*youth gatherings held here...that are designed to spark self discovery to promote positive self-esteem within youth” (M5).*

Some youth may not have any interest in learning land based culture however they could be interested in painting, beading, drumming, singing, drama, and writing. There are many other culturally based initiatives that could be put in place for regular programming in the community.

*“(S)o I think that like not everybody is athletic to be nice if we had programming that, that have other interests like music drama, painting but that is all culturally based” (F6).*

Participant F4 stated that the land-based programs are good for the youth but there is no teachings paired with it. For the success of these youth they need to have the teachings that go with the land to fully understand what a healthy life is.

*“ it’s just fishing and they’re just camping out and stuff and there’s no teaching with it, there’s no mental emotional or spiritual side there’s just that physical component I believe, that’s what I see, that’s where I think we need to maybe all of the reserves up here in the north” (F4).*

The meaning of being Cree was also expressed with the interview with Participant M5. This participant suggested fully immersing the youth in what it means to be Cree. There are many different ways in which this could be accomplished.

*“Visuals, I think hosting more Cree events or Cree ummm what was the word influence, genre in Cree, there is a word I can't get right there, you know what I mean they can have teaching lodges or sharing circles you can have pow wows, dances, pow wow competitions, you know anything Cree related, there needs to be more of it, you know*

*hanging pictures on the walls, the teachings, you could have music on the radio or poetry with Cree meaning there are many ways to do it, but we are an audio visual generation now and more of it on youtube, free access where we can stream it” (M5).*

Creating spaces where paints, inspirational quotes, poetry, and teachings could be readily viewed was only mentioned by Participant M5. Programming was the more discussed option in relation to preventative methods of safety for youth however this participant believe our whole community should be engaged in the culture. This would provide visuals in the community for youth to see our culture on a daily basis as a reminder of the culture.

Another opinion discussed was that parents need programming as well. The dysfunction is seen as a circle and for the youth to live healthy lives the parents in the community need to as well. Participant M5 suggested that parents in the community are not parenting their children enough, and that maybe there should be programs that provide healthy parenting skills in the community. *“(Y)ah I think I would say parents need to go parent more or parents need to learn how to parent more” (M5).*

Participant F8 was a big advocator of culturally based programs and stated that it is not just the youth that will need more culturally based programs but the parents as well. There needs to be unity in the whole community.

*“(B)ecause I think it’s in respect of all the families because in order for the culture to be in our fabric I think that the community people and the adults and the youth need to be on the same page as far as spirituality goes” (F8).*

Non-nuclear family structures are displayed in multiple different ways in the community. It is more common to see single parent families or extended family structures. It was stated by

Participant F4 that this a hard facet to deal with and the parents could use assistance in dealing with this. This participant also stated that because the parents are having a hard time with this and are not getting assistance the children and youth are suffering from it.

*“I realize that there is no help for parents who are struggling with those kind of things with the young people. Like I said it was, a lot of it is the split families, or single parents that is really hard for the children” (F4).*

Not only does the previous participant believe that parents are in need of cultural based programs for better parenting skills, but when discussing prevention methods for youth, this participant F4 also suggested that programming for whole families should be provided.

*“I would like to see them have places where they can go before they get into trouble, before they go to jail, before they get into drugs and you know I don’t know start sooner, have a camp ready to go in the summer even with their families” (F4).*

All participants mentioned that they believe that culturally geared programs for youth would be very beneficial. Participant M2 shared a story of how culture has helped him to live a healthy lifestyle and how it could provide a good example of how to live with an understanding of our cultural roots and in turn live a healthy lifestyle.

*“First Nation people we have a legacy we live with legacies and live with cultural genocide. A lot of us are standing up a lot of are healing a lot of us are wanting to know a lot of our young people are paving the way, or creating a new understanding with knowledge you know moving forward dealing with issues, programs but in respect to culture, cultural traditional practices, I think it does help...it helped me and I see it helping my daughter and my friends, you know I’ve been sober for about 29 years” (M2).*

In discussing utilizing culture as a preventative method for youth participant M5 was very optimistic and agreed that youth are in need of spiritual guidance and the importance of understanding the connection of mind, body, and spirit.

*“Yah I do, it does it does give them self-esteem; pride... pride is a very important thing when you want to put yourself out in the world. Ummm gives you something to teach and it gives you a helping tool for other people who have questions or need some sort of spiritual world guidance or that person can share and its good to see in art work, Cree bead work and woodland art but I think that it is good to have for each person to have some kind of spirituality, its needed in any kind of person no matter where you are from because the medicine wheel is in four sections, its mind body spirit and intellect, and your ability to learn” (M5).*

The importance of spirituality was mentioned multiple times. Participant F6 voiced that the youth today are missing their spirituality and this can be a reason for their unhealthy lifestyles. This participant also made a power observation. In the case of new development of programming, to keep an indigenous framework First Nations people should not call it programming but a way of life.

*“Yeah, but the thing is to you don’t call it programming, like you have to come from an indigenous thought, like the way our people used to think, when you make it into a program right away you’re taking that Life of it away from what it really is, so again it is a ceremony, so it is a life, and you choose that life, it’s a way of life, so you choose to live a more spiritual life and for some people it doesn’t happen till later on in their life but for young people that spiritual part is missing” (F6).*

It was determined that all participants agreed that there needs to be alterations made to current programming. Working together would ensure all aspects of programming are met. All aspects of culture should be provided in programs throughout the year and family orientated programs for healthy family development should be encouraged.

## **Education**

Most participants mentioned education as a protective factor for youth in the community. To be better educated to attend post secondary school means they can be successful and help with the economic issues in the community.

Incorporating Indigenous knowledge into the school systems was mentioned as a method to provide guidance to youth in the community as an alternative method for those youth who may not attend programming even if it is offered. Offering cultural education in the school systems could be seen as a reverse residential school technique.

*“I think it would be good to have some stuff in the schools you know especially for First Nations children just because we were taught through the residential school system not to say anything, Not to talk, Do not have a voice...I feel like the public school system is a subtle form of residential school, in a way because they're trying to conform everything so I wish we had our own education system where kids could excel at what they're good at, because that's how our culture worked before” (F4).*

Connecting the youth and Elders was mentioned as an approach to help the youth gain cultural knowledge in the school systems. We can learn so much from our Elders and this participant suggested creating a class in which the students would have to attend to gain a credit towards their education.

*“I think that ugh... connecting people especially elders with students...yah because the elders have naturally you know knowledge...kindness... I think that it is...that’s what I would like to see is...elders or community members that can assist the school” (M2).*

One of the other major issues discussed was the economy in Moose Factory. The youth in Moose Factory have limited opportunities in relation to employment. Participant M5 highlighted that those youth who do strive for higher education often do not return to the community.

*“(If they get their grades up in grade 12 they will go to college or university...ummm but coming back to jobs there are not a lot of jobs to come back to...the community itself is very limiting for opportunity and I can see why youth would move or go to a city instead of coming home” (M5).*

However if there were more programming and more initiatives for incorporating culture into the school systems there would be additional well rounded youth who will attend college or university. This could be a way for the economy to grow more; if more youth become educated and help to develop Moose Factory.

*“I think it comes to, it comes down to economic development to help create more opportunities and training skills, or train our work force our youth with specialty skills, so they can work out in mines or you know or work else where but yah there isn’t a lot of development here” (M5).*

Participant F8 stressed the importance of the standards of education being provided in the schools of Moose Factory. It was brought to attention that the education being provided is not up to provincial standards and the youth who do attempt to gain post secondary education are failing.

*“Education is a huge thing for them I think. And a challenge because our systems are so umm so challenged in themselves because we are not up to provincial standards not at all so that is going to be a challenge for them, so you know it’s a challenge for them when they go down south competing with that” (F8).*

If education standards can be brought to par with the provincial standards and culture can be immersed within it, the success of the youth in Moose Factory can be amplified. Participant M2 and F8 expressed feelings that education can be a powerful tool to help the lives of the community members.

*“(K)nowledge would really help us, just like you universal knowledge is very empowering. It’s what I experienced and I’m assuming that is what you are experiencing all that knowledge you are gaining from university. It is a powerful tool” (M2).*

Participant F8 believes for the youth in Moose Factory to truly have healthy lives, we must provide a foundation to ensure that these youth are not engaging in deviant behaviours that may lead some to incarceration. They will need culture instilled in their identity and education.

*“I think they have a chance to live a very balanced life...a truly bi-cultural life where they know their language you know their culture and you know they, they, they know education is important and I really think that these generations coming up are so immensely powerful people because they are going to be so articulated so educated and they are going to know their history their going to know their past and they’re damn well going to know where their future is going to be and it ain’t going backwards...you know, so that is what I tell them you all have beautiful, beautiful futures you know god gave of this for whatever reason our grandparents have went through this and great*

*grandparents you know our parents have gone through this cycle and that was different their chance” (F8).*

Participant F8 discusses how the opportunities for the older generations were different. “For instance until the mid 60’s secondary school education was not available to youth in Moose Factory or Moosonee. This meant that the youth in the communities were sent to urban centers to become educated, which would be a large culture shock” (personal communication, 3 April 2017). The youth today have more opportunities and more support is starting to be offered. Participant F8 believes in moving forward, not dwelling on the past, understanding the past, but not letting it burden the future for youth anymore. There are community members in Moose Factory who have kept their culture and continue to practice and pass their teachings on to their children and family members. This leads me to my next sub-theme of resilience.

### **Resilience**

The people of Moose Factory are very strong and resilient people. They have overcome so much and the culture is growing within the community. The resiliency of the people was viewed as a protective measure displayed by multiple community members. Participants M2, F6, M7 and F8 all provide examples of how the resilience of the Moose Cree peoples culture has provided healthy lifestyles for their families. The resiliency of the people in the community provides evidence that the culture can be incorporated to ensure the safety of the youth and hopefully cease the over representation of Indigenous peoples in correctional facilities.

Participant F6 mentions that she knows people in the community that still practice their culture but need to be approached. If more youth were introduced to their culture or if these

people in the community were engaged in sharing their knowledge in programs or school programs there would be more resilient youth in the community.

*“(W)e’ve been brainwashed into thinking that our own culture is not us, our own it’s not who we are, because they didn’t live it because they didn’t witness it but I know there are people out there that have that knowledge they just haven’t come forward or we have to approach them” (F6).*

Through all the changes that have been implemented on the First Nations peoples of Moose Factory there are still some community members who are optimistic and have strong cultural roots to their culture and spirit. Participant F6 articulates this and how the Mushkegowuk culture did not disappear with these challenges.

*“(F)irst of all I would talk about the people who lived here for a long time and before all these labels came into being for organizing us, different groups, or to identify us, and it would be based on our language and culture and our way of life. We’ve always lived here and I think through, through changes in our community, like peoples movements, their lifestyle has changed, the economy has changed, we’re still the same people in regards to character traits and culture and we are very adoptive to these changes but I would say we are very generous and kind people and proud people we are proud to be who we are, and I think that we, we are still rich in culture and language” (F6).*

There was discovered to be support of instilling culture into the lives of the youth in the community as preventative methods. Participant M2 states that the people have come a long way and very proud to be Moose Cree. Hopefully this pride can be transferred to the youth as well.

*“(W)e have a lot of strong people I am optimistic, I have a lot of hope I have a lot of faith, and what I said about young people I am willing to hear and view and grow to make our communities stronger. I have a lot of hope, I didn’t shrivel up and crawl into a hole, I am following a lot of these elders who are standing strong and you know taking a stance for our children for our Cree heritage and our Cree identity. You know its we have come along way, and I am proud to be Moose Cree” (M2).*

It was discovered that the resiliency of the people and how there are more and more people in the community that are involving themselves in the culture is providing some youth with a healthy foundation. Participants M7 and F6 have provided examples of this.

*“Yah like I said I was lucky enough to be raised in ceremony, as a baby my mom said I would be sitting in her lap, just a little guy sleeping in her lap, and wake up when it’s time for the berries, then and that’s something I didn’t see until later, till I was about 16-17 I didn’t know how important it was” (M7).*

Some youth may not realize the importance of the values in the Moose Cree culture until they are facing a difficult decision. Participant M7 indicated that he did not realize the importance of the culture until he was at a crossroads. Without that cultural foundation might be on a different path right now in life.

Participant F6 indicated that a family member has been immersed in the culture for some time now. This youth has faulted a few times however is living a good life currently and that is due to the cultural foundation that this youth has gained. This participant also believes it is vitally important to introduce the culture to children as soon as possible to ensure they have that cultural foundation for when they are dealing with pubescent issues.

*“(H)e doesn’t get involved with drugs or alcohol or any crime and that really made a difference in his life and that since he was a young child is always heard the drum, he’s always been to ceremonies, and it does make a difference if you start them off early, he went that way a couple of times but he always came back, because he had that foundation and he loves it, he loves the drum” (F6).*

During this study, this researcher found the next quote to be one of the most powerful. When discussing how to engage the youth in Indigenous culture specific to Moose Factory, the researcher used the word **traditional culture**. Participant F8, through the act of resilience, instructed me that we as First Nations people should not be referring to our culture as something of the past. Programming and revitalization of our culture into the lives of the next generations we need to rid ourselves of colonial words that minimalize our culture.

*“Traditional culture....I find that, I want to talk about that word for a moment, I find that the word traditional it means something in the past. Like it’s a traditional...its in the past...that’s what concerns me about that word as a chief and it use to say on our signs Moose Cree Traditional Territory, and I would say why do we have to say that...it should just be Moose Cree Territory...its not traditional its not from the past its now its in the future” (F8).*

The resiliency of the peoples in Moose Factory is very optimistic for the future generations. It is not everyone in the community but there is a growing cultural community. There are people in the community that can pass along the cultural teachings to the Mushkegowuk youth in anticipation to cease the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in correctional facilities. This is very optimistic.

## Discussion

This research study uncovered that multiple people in the community were pleased to learn that there was a research project being conducted concerning youth, especially that it was localized to Moose Factory. As stated by Turner and Saunders (2007), “Historically, many communities have participated in numerous surveys and research projects, which are often viewed as intrusive, with no observable benefit to themselves” (p. 41). Various individuals in the study suggested that further research needs to be conducted in the community to benefit the people. It can be concluded by these statements that the Moose Cree First Nations people did not find the research invasive.

Land was discovered to be the most prominent subtheme discussed during the topic of **Culture**. Every participant in the study mentioned the land multiple times throughout the interview process. Moose Factory is a reserve that is remote and totally surrounded by land and water, Cochrane is the closest urban center that is only accessible by a five-hour train ride south. Therefore there were some expectations that land would be vital to the peoples that reside here. Vital in the sense that for centuries the people of this First Nation lived directly off the land for survival and it is engrained in their essence. “Less than 50 years ago most people were born *on the land* and lived by hunting, fishing and trapping” (Adelson, 2000, p. 19). The inherent lifestyle is still very ingrained in who the Mushkegowuk people are, and it was evident the land is still vital to themselves.

Participants within this study did mention language being an intricate part of the culture and importance to the people. Participants did this in either speaking about the issues of language dying, not passing it on to their children, colonization of the people or talking about how they

are making efforts to revitalize it. “Language, of course, is a key aspect of culture: it is inherent in a specific culture and also an embodiment of it: If language influences the way we behave and how we perceive things, it means that culture is also inherent in the language itself” (Welch & Welch, 2008, p. 4). Multiple participants voiced concern for the loss of language and how it will affect the understanding of passed down teachings of the intricate details embedded in the language. For many, the culture and the language are one of the same, participant M1 commented vigorously about the loss of language and therefore losing the culture as well, *“because the youth have lost their language and connection to the culture because language is culture”* (M1). Participant F3 and M7 did not specify that language was vitally important to the people’s culture, instead they focused on land and ceremony. It should be noted that participant F3 recently relocated to a southern city for an extended period of time (however has since returned to Moose Factory), this may attribute to the lack of importance of language. Participant M7 was the youngest of my participants. It was found through the raw data during the interview process that the majority of the youth and young adults in the community do not know their language. It can be concluded that because these two participants do not speak their Cree language that they would not hold higher importance to the connection to language and culture.

It was noted that the faith in the community of Moose Factory is divided, *“I remember going through a spiritual crisis and I got up each morning wondering who I should I pray to...especially living in this community you know they are condemning each other...this is the wrong way this is the right way”* (M2). It was discovered that more people are beginning to follow a more spiritual path. Indigenous cultural ceremonies and spirituality are not being condemned as harshly as it once was in the past. If you walk around the community you can see

teepees and sweat lodges in people's back yards. It is more visual and maybe this is a reason for more acceptance. It is not hidden any longer.

During the initial interview process by way of the snowball method I was given a few names to people who worked in law enforcement (NAPS), I was refused an interview by three police officers due to the fact that they did not want to answer any questions pertaining to religion or spirituality. I was informed that because they are public servants, police officers are supposed to stay neutral in regards to faith in the community. An interview with a police officer would have been beneficial to my study on the basis that they have direction correlation with youth and crime.

One of the main concerns concerning **intergenerational impacts** is substance abuse as stated by Mushquash, Comeau, and Stewart, (2010).

Among the social problems indicated by First Nations people as a concern in their community is substance abuse, Moreover, alcohol and other drugs have been identified as leading causes of adolescent morbidity and mortality consequent of motor vehicle accidents, suicidal behaviour, violence, falls, drowning, and unprotected sex. As such, youth alcohol and other substance abuse in First Nations communities is an important community and public health concern and can be readily understood in part as the direct consequences of broad social factors i.e., dislocations and disruption of traditional subsistence patterns and connection to the land. (p. 297)

During the interview process it was discovered that Moose Cree First Nation is no different. The loss of the family dynamic, role with the environment, dysfunctional learned behaviour, youth not being supported, lack of identity, no aspirations due to economic

disadvantage, poverty have all compiled to lead some in the population in Moose Factory to develop substance abuse issues. These participants have indicated that poor economy, idleness, high cost of living and isolation are all associated with the substance abuse in the community.

“Perhaps most importantly...the influence of economic and social factors (such as unemployment, poverty, welfare dependence and poor education outcomes) on Indigenous contact with the criminal justice system. As these factors may well be correlated with alcohol abuse it is possible that alcohol abuse was simply acting as a proxy for economic and social disadvantage” (Weatherburn, Snowball & Hunter, 2008, p. 309).

Participants voiced that when youth in Moose Factory commit crimes, substances are almost always involved. It can be determined that if preventative methods were put in place to decrease the amount social inequalities in Moose Factory that the crime rate would decrease.

It was stressed by participants during the interview process that programming is the number one priority for **protective measure** for the youth. It was mentioned that there is currently programming however there needs to be adjustments made. The Youth Centre is still fairly new to the community so it can be expected that changes will have to be made. Hours of operation were seen as a major concern, especially for participants who are parents. They believe that 9 o'clock pm is not late enough and that the youth in the community have nowhere to go afterwards and this leads them to mischief. Time and age restrictions for certain programs were criticized, often they have slot times ages 8-12 from 4-6 pm and ages 13-16, 6-8 pm. Allowing children/youth to stay for the duration of the time could be beneficial. If they have no where to go the program is only taking up one hour of their day where they could be somewhere safe

enjoying the company of other community members and obtaining a new skill. Awareness and promotion of programming was seen as substandard and there could be more effort applied to engaging the youth in the community.

Creating programs that are indigenous based that include the land, teachings, values, arts, and a healthy way of life were expressed as a need in the community. Community involvement is:

“In many cases where Indigenous community justice initiatives have flourished, there have been successes in reducing levels of arrests and detention, as well as improvements in the maintenance of social harmony. The success of these programs has been acknowledged as deriving from active Aboriginal community involvement in identifying problems and developing solutions” (Cunneen, 2011, p. 324).

The participants in the research study made many important contributions to what they consider would be better suited activities to assist the youth in Moose Factory. There was more persistence on programming in general to ensure the youth are not idle, there was a consensus that cultural programming would benefit the youth.

The peoples of Moose Factory are resilient. This can clearly be seen in the attempts to bring Indigenous spirituality back to the island. The people of Moose Cree have overcome diversity and hardship and there continues to be people in the community that value culture and the future of the youth in Moose Factory.

## Chapter 5

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were generated by the participants in Moose Cree First Nation through the interview process. Development and/or improvement in these areas were viewed as a strategy to ensure safety of the youth and community members as a whole. Unity between organizations in the community was discussed as a starting point for change. The meeting of community members and organizations in Moose Factory is imperative in determining what programs could be organized to facilitate the needs of the youth in the community. It was vocalized that there are similar programs running at the same time. If organizations worked together they would have a full calendar and save funding dollars to put towards other programs. “Community involvement also avoids the perception that the program is another government imposition on communities and this increases the acceptability of a program. Community involvement should go beyond consultation, and move towards community ownership and control, thus contributing to empowerment and self-determination” (Richards, Rosevear & Gilbert, 2011, p. 5). The community should develop programs they anticipate would work best for the youth.

Cultural land based programming would be beneficial or youth in the community. It would instill cultural teachings that would promote good values and morals. This could also lead to enhanced cultural identity, knowing who they are as Indigenous peoples.

There is a demand for family programming, promotion of healthy family dynamics. Family programming would provide healing for parents and children, teach proper parenting skills, build family connectivity. There was also discussion of family programming on the land,

where family units go away together to learn cultural teachings and land based activities. This would be ideal for those families who do not have an adequate income. It gives the family a chance to get away and build up their relationship together.

Loss of language was seen as a critical component that needs to be addressed. More programs enhancing the use of the Cree language in the community was mentioned. The development of language programs would be beneficial for the youth to better understand the culture of Moose Cree people. It was discovered through the interview process that much of the culture is seen in the language, as stated in previous chapters.

## **Conclusion**

The incarceration of Indigenous peoples in correctional facilities is a growing concern for all Indigenous peoples in North America and as seen in the literature around the globe as well. The Mushkegowuk people of Moose Factory are concerned for the safety and well being of their future generations. They are accepting of new ideas and change that most occur to prevent the procurement of intergenerational impacts that marginalize the youth in the community. The people in the community who are living balanced healthy lives are passionate that the youth can sustain comprehensive lives. All participants were optimistic that change can be accomplished and they have attested that change is slowly occurring in the community. “There is a lack of high-quality evidence about what works to prevent offending by Indigenous juveniles” (Richards, Rosevear & Gilbert, 2011, p. 5). This is an indicator that more research dedicated to Indigenous youth are needed. The peoples of Moose Cree First Nation have voiced that more diverse programming is needed to meet the needs of all youth in the community. Culture based programming would provide values and a sense of identity however it should not stop there.

It is evident that culture is returning to Moose Factory and from the findings it is supporting the needs of the youth and community members that are engaged in it. The continuation of culture can be vigorous and it seems it is on track, now is the time to push forward and create more awareness.

I close my thesis with the words of a research participant speaking of culture and ceremony:

*“(W)e didn’t loose it, it kind of went to sleep and when you go to those types of ceremony that is when you really feel alive you feel that presence and you feel that love you feel that energy that was there, that is what god gave us...the Cree people you know and, and that’s priceless...that’s culture now you know what I mean that’s how I see it I think really that we are on a verge...like kind of taken it all in again...like taking a big breath again...that’s what we lost because there was so much that was lost in terms of traditional culture. And now today our culture is picking it up and it has a way of sucking it in because once you start going there you can’t stop...it has energy it has a charismatic energetic feel, your relatives would be like we are going to ceremony now, so yeah, that is the way I would describe it, its really on the verge of re-lighting, reawakening again and its going to be beautiful, you know the future to me looks bright for our people, that’s what I always say and tell people” (F8).*

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Letter of Invitation**

I (Natalie Lacasse/ Nimkii Benishii) am interested in conducting research on solutions for the over-representation of Indigenous Peoples within correctional facilities by way of traditional culture and values. The over-representation of Indigenous Peoples within correctional facilities is a growing concern in Canada. There has been extensive research compiled on restorative justice and traditional healing lodges as a rehabilitation method within correctional facilities as a solution to over-representation. This form of treatment is helping to resolve issues faced by Indigenous Peoples who are already incarcerated by introducing culturally based programs as a healing method. Facilitating culturally based programs once the Indigenous person has already been detained in prison is not a solution for decreasing Indigenous over-representation within correctional facilities because the Indigenous person must be imprisoned before they are introduced to traditional culture. This research project is community-based and aims to develop solutions for prevention methods for youth in the case of over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in correctional facilities. The proposed research for this study will be conducted in Moose Cree First Nation, which is at the basin of James Bay in Northern Ontario. This research study will be conducted in the fall of 2015 with 8-12 consenting Indigenous adults (18 years or older) from Moose Cree First Nation by way of semi-structured interviews. My research will involve acquiring community perspectives of traditional culture and whether or not it is a possible intervention strategy for youth in the hope that it will enhance the outcome of healthier lifestyle choices that could address the over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in correctional facilities. Participant interviews will be confidential and interviews will be securely stored on a password protected computer, and any paper materials will be stored in a locked cabinet and only

I will have access to research files. Participants will have the right to leave the study at any time and there will be no consequences if they do this. If participants find it stressful to talk about some of their experiences, they can refuse to answer a question, take a break or end the interview. If applicable, I can refer participants to a community resource person who has agreed to be contacted to provide help. When the study has been completed, I will email or mail you (whichever they prefer) a copy of the study results. Results of this research may be presented at academic conferences or published in academic journals. No personal information will be shared that could identify you. It is expected this research will be a helpful addition to the existing literature and lead to the development of Indigenous youth programming geared towards traditional culture.

## APPENDIX B



### CONSENT FORM

**Study Title: Indigenous Culture as a Strategy to deter Mushkegowuk Youth from Criminal Behaviour in the Remote Northern Reserve of Moose Cree First Nation**

**Researcher: Nimkii Benishii (Thunderbird)/ Natalie Lacasse**

**Supervisors : Darrel Manitowabi and Cheryle Partridge**

**Program: Master of Indigenous Relations, Laurentian University**

Waachay Hello,

I am interested in conducting research on the over-representation of Indigenous peoples within correctional facilities and why Moose Cree First Nation youth engage in undesirable behaviour that leads to criminal activity. My research will involve acquiring community perspectives of traditional culture and whether or not it is a possible intervention strategy for youth in the hope that it will enhance the outcome of healthier lifestyle choices that could address the over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in correctional facilities. I would like to invite you to participate in this study and am requesting your consent.

This research will contribute to community awareness of social issues that lead to unhealthy lifestyles and how traditional culture can be used to develop programs and resources in our community for youth. In addition, this study may help to contribute towards an intervention strategy that would increase cultural awareness for the people of Moose Cree First Nation and elsewhere.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your role is to discuss your experiences as related to causes of undesirable behavior in youth and aspects of traditional culture through the use of in

interviews that will roughly last an hour in length and will be recorded for accuracy. This research will consist of a voluntary semi-structured interview and you will be invited to a feast at the end of October 2015 to discuss results and recommendations.

Your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected during the individual interviews.

Interviews will be securely stored on a password protected computer, and any paper materials will be stored in a locked cabinet and only I will have access to research files.

You have the right to leave the study at any time and there will be no consequences if you do this and audio and transcriptions of interview will be destroyed. If you find it stressful to talk about some of your experiences, you can refuse to answer a question, take a break or end the interview. If applicable, I can refer you to a community resource person who has agreed to be contacted to provide help.

When the study has been completed, I will email or mail you (whichever you prefer) a copy of the study results. Results of this research may be presented at academic conferences or published in academic journals. No personal information will be shared that could identify you.

**If you have any questions about this research you may contact my supervisors:**

**Darrel Manitowabi: 1-800-461-4030 (EXT) 5063 [dmanitowabi@laurentian.ca](mailto:dmanitowabi@laurentian.ca)**

**Cheryle Partridge: 1-800-461-4030 (EXT) 5061 [cpartridge@laurentian.ca](mailto:cpartridge@laurentian.ca)**

**If you have any questions about the ethical conduct of this research study, you may also contact the Research Ethics Office at Laurentian University, Sudbury, Canada at 1-800-461-4030 EXT 2436 or email: [ethics@laurentian.ca](mailto:ethics@laurentian.ca)**

**I agree to participate in this study and I have read and received a copy of the Consent Form.**

Participant's

---

**Signature Date**

**I consent to my interview being audio-recorded.**

---

**Participant's Signature Date**

**\_\_\_ I would like to receive a copy of the Summary of research finding. Address (email or regular mail) so I can notify you that it is ready.**

APPENDIX C

**MOOSE CREE FIRST NATION**

*P.O. Box 190*

*Moose Factory, ON*

*P0L 1W0*



*Tel: (705) 658-4619*

*Fax: (705) 658-4734*

August 24, 2015

Natalie Lacasse  
Sudbury ON

[natalie.lacasse@hotmail.com](mailto:natalie.lacasse@hotmail.com)

Dear Natalie,

We have reviewed your request to conduct research within the Moose Cree First Nation community on solutions for the over-representation of Indigenous Peoples within correctional facilities. This is not only a concern for our First Nation but for First Nations across Canada and we welcome the opportunity to participate in research that would begin addressing this problem, particularly when this research study will be led by a Moose Cree First Nation member such as yourself.

While we welcome this important research we want to ensure we are kept informed on the process and what will be done with the data, once compiled. Upon completion of the study, I ask that you make yourself available to present your findings and results to Chief & Council prior to them being released or published. We thank you for your commitment to providing us a copy of the results and we would further request that Moose Cree First Nation be informed whenever this information is to be shared at an academic conference or journals as you have indicated may be a possibility.

We grant permission for this study to be conducted within Moose Cree First Nation and we look forward to this important work being done as it will become an important tool as we continue our effort to address our social issues.

Meegewetch,

End Case

1.

## APPENDIX D

### Interview Questions

- 1) Who are the Moose Cree First Nation people?
  - How would you describe Moose Cree First Nation to those who have not heard of you?
  - What term do the local generally use to identify?  
i.e. First Nation, Aboriginal, Mushkegowuk, Native
  - And how would you identify yourself as a Native person?
  
- 2) What types of opportunities are available for youth in Moose Factory?
  - i.e. employment, social activities, groups,
  - To your knowledge are there currently programs or initiatives geared towards developing a healthy self-esteem for youth to help with personal growth?
  - If so do the youth in the community utilize them?
  
- 3) What would you consider traditional culture to be in Moose Factory?
  - i.e. Living off the land, ceremony, language, gatherings, other?
  - To what extent is Traditional culture practiced within the community?
  - To your knowledge has traditional culture changed from generation to generation?
- 4) In terms of the general public, what types of crimes are most common within the community?
  - What types of crimes do youth typically engage in?
  
  - Approximately what age do youth begin to engage in criminal activity?
  
- 5) Is substance abuse a concern for youth in Moose Factory?
  - What are the main concerns for youth abusing substances?  
  
i.e. addiction, incompleteness of high school, disease, accidentally death, suicide, jail, lost opportunities, other
  
  - What types of substance are most commonly used in the community?
  
- 6) Beside substance abuse what are some of the challenges that youth face in Moose Factory?
  
- 7) Do you think that Traditional Culture can benefit youth in Moose Factory?
  - Why or why not?

-Do you think youth that have experienced traditional culture are more likely to stay away from substances and criminal behaviour?

-Besides traditional culture, what else could benefit the youth in the community?

8) What strategies would be best to incorporate traditional culture into the lives of youth in the community?

-more programs, programs based in schools, families experiencing traditional culture together, other

9) Do you have any other comment, stories, or suggestions you would like to share or any questions for me?

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Referral List for Counselling**

#### **Community Wellness Counsellor**

Brittney Biedermann 705-658-4619 (ext) 259

#### **Crisis Worker**

Joanne Cheechoo 705-658-4619 (ext) 283

#### **Moose Cree Healing Center**

Elaine Maybee

Terrance Harvesty 705-658-4674

#### **Weeneebayko Health Authority**

705- 658-4544 (ext) 2605

#### **Cree Gospel Chapel**

Pastor Josh Oestreich 705-658-4457

#### **Anglican Church**

Reverend Norm Wesley 705-658-4706

#### **Moose Factory Pentecostal Church**

705-658-4444