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Christine Nielsen

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APPROVED/APPROUVÉ

Examiners/Examineurs:

Sandra Hoy
(First Reader/Supervisor / Directeur(trice) de thèse/stage spécialisé)

Marcia Manitowabi
(Second Reader/Co-supervisor / Co-directeur(trice) de thèse/stage spécialisé)
(Committee member / Membre du comité)

Approved for the School of Graduate Studies
Approuvé pour l'École des études supérieures
Dr. David Lesbarrères
M. David Lesbarrères
Director, School of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

This report focuses on my advanced practicum experience with Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services. Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services is a child welfare agency that was created and is governed by the seven First Nations along the North Shore in Ontario, Canada. Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services is a multi-service agency that provides child welfare service among many other programs including Child Mental Health, Adult Mental Health, Youth in Transition, and many others that are aimed at addressing the challenges that their communities face. Further, the focus of my advanced practicum was to develop a better understanding of how I, as a non-Indigenous person, could work with Indigenous people in the context of child welfare in a good way. This report discusses what I learned from the literature and from my practicum experience with the Investigation and Assessment Team in Sudbury at Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services.

Abstrait

Ce rapport concentre sur mon expérience de stage avancé avec Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services. Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services est une agence de protection de l'enfance qui a été créée et est régie par 7 peuples autochtones sur la Côte-Nord de l'Ontario, Canada. Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services est une agence qui offre plusieurs services de bien-être à l'enfance qui incluent notamment la santé mentale des enfants, la santé mentale des adultes, les jeunes en transition et bien d'autres, qui visent à relever les défis auxquels leurs communautés sont confrontées. De plus, l'objectif de mon stage avancé était de développer une meilleure compréhension de la façon dont je, en tant que personne non autochtone, pourrais bien travailler avec les peuples autochtones dans le contexte du bien-être de l'enfance. Ce rapport discute de ce que j'ai appris dans la littérature ainsi que lors de mon expérience de stage au sein de l'équipe d'enquête et d'évaluation à Sudbury à Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging that my learning journey has occurred on Robinson-Huron Treaty territory on the traditional land of the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg. Due to colonization in Canada, the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg have endured hundreds of years of cultural genocide, oppression, and racism. However, the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg have remained resilient and continue to fight against colonialism. I, as a settler, have a responsibility to remain mindful and respectful of the rightful habitants of this land and support them in ensuring that children are safe and well cared for in a good way.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude and acknowledge the people that have encouraged and supported me throughout the completion of my advanced practicum. First, I would like to thank my first reader, Dr. Sandra Hoy and my second reader, Marcia Manitowabi. Thank you for being available for me throughout this practicum. I am immensely grateful for your guidance, support, kindness, positivity, and constant encouragement. I would also like to say chi-miigwech to Nokomis Martina Osawamick from Wikwemikong Unceded Territory for providing and translating the title of this report.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the Government of Canada, there are over 630 diverse Indigenous communities throughout Canada (Government of Canada, 2017). These communities are representative of more than 50 Nations and 50 different languages (Government of Canada, 2017). Since Canada's inception, Indigenous people have fought against and resisted colonialism (Simpson, 2011). According to Simpson (2017),

This is the intense love of land, of family, and of our nations that has always been the spine of Indigenous resistance. The fact that I am here today is a miracle, because it means my family, like every Indigenous family, did whatever they could to ensure that I survived the past four hundred years of violence. (p.9)

This resistance and strength will be discussed further throughout this report.

Many Indigenous communities' face significant challenges as a result of colonization such as increased risks of poverty, poor housing, among many other challenges that will be discussed in subsequent sections (Trocmé, et al., 2005). As a result of these challenges as well as structural racism, there is a significant overrepresentation of First Nations children in the care of child welfare agencies (Sinclair, 2016). In order to address this overrepresentation, First Nation communities began to mobilize, resist, and develop their own child welfare agencies (Blackstock, 2011). Culturally-based child welfare services are proving to be helpful in meeting the needs of First Nation families and keeping children safely in their homes (Blackstock, 2003).

Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services is a child welfare agency that has been created as a result of the mobilization and resistance of First Nation communities along the North Shore of Lake Huron in Northern Ontario, Canada. This paper explores my experience

completing my advanced practicum with Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services. My focus throughout this practicum was to build a better understanding of how I, as a non-Indigenous person, can work with Indigenous people in a good way in the context of child welfare. The title of this paper is written in Anishnabemowin and was provided by Nokomis Martina Osawamick from Wikwemikong Unceded Territory. Nokomis Martina Osawamick has shared that Weweni Aasgaabwitaagen Anishinaabe Binoojiin Naagdoowenmin translates to “taking care of (supporting) Indigenous children – taking care of – or looking after in a good way”.

Chapter 1 of this paper begins with an introduction. Within this chapter, I provide a brief overview of the strengths that Indigenous communities possess. It is important for me to begin by discussing Indigenous peoples strengths because I have found that there is often a focus on the challenges that Indigenous people face while mentioning very little in regards to the strengths that Indigenous populations of Turtle Island possess. I believe that when we ignore these strengths in favour of focusing on the challenges that communities are facing, our understanding of Indigenous people and communities become skewed to only focus on the problems that exist within communities. Within this chapter, I highlight different understandings of the world, theories, and practice approaches that are important when working with Indigenous people and communities in a child welfare context. I begin by highlighting worldviews of parenting. Following this, I highlight Indigenous worldviews and knowledge of maintaining the safety of children and caring for families. Following this, I explore anti-colonialism. I begin by defining anti-colonialism, anti-oppressive practice, self-reflexivity, and social location. This chapter ends with a discussion on who I am, and what has brought me to this work.

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review. Within the review, I present information that provides context for the current state of the child welfare system. This chapter begins with an examination of the impact of colonialism and the impacts that residential schools and the Sixties Scoop have had on Indigenous people and communities. Following this, I discuss the current state of child welfare as a result of these historical colonial policies. Chapter 2 also highlights recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the importance of Indigenous communities possessing self-determination in relation to child welfare, and an overview of the different child welfare service models that Indigenous families and communities are exposed to throughout Turtle Island.

Chapter 3 provides contextual information related to my practicum. This chapter begins with general information about Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services. Specifically, I focus on the history of Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services and the communities served by the agency. The agency's vision, mission, programs, code of ethics, and the rights of Anishinaabe children are described. This chapter includes general information about my practicum such as the location where I completed my practicum and the Investigation and Assessment Team. Following this, Chapter 3 explores specific details about my practicum. Within this section of the chapter I discuss my supervisors, my experience of supervision, the support I received to complete my learning goals, as well as the tasks and learning opportunities given to me during my practicum.

The final chapter of this paper describes what I learned about working in a good way with Indigenous people in the context of child welfare as a non-Indigenous person. I begin by discussing some of the components I believe are important in doing this work in a good way. These components include, anti-colonialism, anti-oppressive practice, self-reflexivity,

Indigenous worldviews, self-care, culture, the Seven Grandfather Teachings, possessing a learning mindset, and following the Ally Bill of Responsibilities. This chapter also highlights some of the challenges that exist in doing this work in a good way and the pathways forward. The challenges that I explore in this chapter include the distrust of the child welfare system, the emotional impact that this work has on workers, and structural challenges of this work.

Strengths of Indigenous People and Communities of Turtle Island

Indigenous people of Turtle Island have been resisting colonialism since it first began hundreds of years ago (Simpson, 2011). They have resisted by holding on to their stories, cultural practices, as well as their political systems and by passing this knowledge down to subsequent generations whenever possible (Simpson, 2011). As a result, Indigenous people have continued to occupy and use their land in ways that they always have (Simpson, 2011). Indigenous resistance is not only about larger political mobilization strategies, rather it is also about maintaining cultures, languages, and systems of governance (Simpson, 2011).

However, that does not mean that Indigenous people do not engage in larger mobilization strategies (Simpson, 2011). In fact, Indigenous political movements focus on resisting and contesting the establishment of the Canadian state (Simpson, 2011). Examples of political movements led by Indigenous peoples include the pipeline protests in Wet'suwet'en, as well as the Idle no More movement. Idle no More contests legislation that infringes upon the rights of Indigenous people of Turtle Island and opposes Canada's attempts to weaken environmental laws and silence public discourse surrounding this issue (Friedel, 2015). These are only two examples of many political movements that Indigenous people have brought forth to resist and mobilize against colonialism.

Indigenous people are resilient. Resilience is described as the ability to cope and deal with adversity despite having to endure emotional, mental, and/or physical harm (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003). Indigenous communities have continued to survive colonialism and its effects (Simpson, 2011). The various cultures that exist within Indigenous communities of Turtle Island are also a source of significant resilience (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003).

Holding onto Indigenous worldviews and knowledge are significant strengths for many communities (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003). Although I will provide a more in-depth analysis of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge later in this chapter, I will highlight a few examples here. For example, Indigenous communities who attribute great importance to the Medicine Wheel are thought to be naturally more resilient (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003). The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2003) explained that this is because the Medicine Wheel highlights the importance of maintaining balance in terms of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. This belief encourages parents to promote physical skill, critical thought, morality, and empathy (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003).

A significant sign of strength and resilience is the ways that First Nation communities share the responsibility of ensuring the well-being of children (Haight et al., 2019). Therefore, it has been common practice for community members to aid in caregiving (Haight et al., 2019). Additionally, grandparents often share the responsibility of raising their grandchildren (Fuller-Thomson, 2005). Traditionally, grandparents within First Nations communities often aid parents with raising their children (Fuller-Thomson, 2005). Grandparents raising grandchildren may come with social stigma in Western worldviews, but it should be viewed as a strength because children remain with their families while also remaining safe, loved, and tied to their family (Bahr, 1994). Children learn traditional ways of living from their grandparents if their

grandparents live a traditional life (Bahr, 1994). If this is the case, children would be able to continue to live their lives according to their traditional ways of life (Bahr, 1994). Now that I have highlighted some of the strengths that Indigenous communities possess, the next section will discuss worldviews related to parenting.

Worldviews of Parenting

To begin, it is important to highlight that there is not one particular Indigenous worldview of parenting. Rather worldviews vary throughout Indigenous communities on Turtle Island and around the world. However, there are similarities in the ways that Indigenous people of Turtle Island understand and view parenting. These similarities will be discussed throughout this chapter as well as the differences that exist between Indigenous worldviews of parenting and Western worldviews of parenting. According to Cheah and Chirkov's research, Indigenous parents seek to instill certain values within their children including the importance of the family connection, having respect for Elders, and cultivating cultural values (as cited in Muir & Bohr, 2019, p. 69). Additionally, Indigenous worldviews of parenting highlight the importance of respecting children (Muir & Bohr, 2019). This respect means that parents encourage their children to explore their world in their own ways and make their own decisions (McPherson & Rabb, 2001 as cited in Muir & Bohr, 2019, p. 70). Simard (2019, p. 76) highlights that this non-interference approach to parenting is rooted in an understanding of the "Creator's gift of free will". Ryan highlighted that Indigenous worldviews highlight the importance of having children make their own decisions however, can be perceived as neglect by Western worldview's (as cited in Muir & Bohr, 2019, p. 70).

In contrast to these values, Western worldviews of parenting tend to be shaped by neoliberalism (De Benedictis, 2012). The emphasis is placed on parenting children in a way that

will make them sources of worth under the current neoliberal society (De Benedictis, 2012). That is, they will not become reliant on the state and if they do, this becomes the fault of parents (De Benedictis, 2012). This means that parenting in Western worldviews instill values within their children such as the importance of individualization and self-governance (De Benedictis, 2012). Further, within Western worldviews, we are seeing that the idea of what a “good parent” looks like is becoming narrower (De Benedictis, 2012). Parents who have to rely on the state for financial support or do not fall into what would be categorized as “good parents” are then demonized in Western society and blamed if their children do not conform to the ideals of neoliberalism (De Benedictis, 2012).

Indigenous worldviews of parenting approach parenting as a shared responsibility (Choate, Kohler, Cloete, CrazyBull, Lindstrom, & Tatoulis, 2019). Indigenous worldviews of parenting involve “a multidirectional caring system with multiple intersections that weave together developmental pathways for the child” (Choate et al., 2019, p. 75). This means that children build their own knowledge and understanding of the world from various caregivers, as well as their connection to the land, culture, and spirit (Choate et al., 2019). According to Keller (2016), it is likely that forming this kind of caregiving system around a child increases their sense of security because no one person is expected to hold the responsibility of meeting a child’s physical, spiritual, emotional, and psychological needs on their own. This increases the likelihood of these needs being met (Keller, 2016).

Western worldviews of parenting are much more individualized (De Benedictis, 2012). Within the Western world, there is a focus on attachment theory as a guiding principle to what parenting should look like (Keller, 2016). Attachment theory focuses on the formation of a bond within the first year of an infant’s life is created through their experiences with their primary

caregiver (Keller, 2016). In Western worldviews, this largely means that there is a focus on an infant's bond with their mother as the responsibility of primary caregiver often falls on a mother's shoulders (Keller, 2016). These expectations of women become even more difficult to manage as women are now expected to not only take on most of the responsibility of caring for their children but also to work and play a role in the economy (De Benedictis, 2012).

A brief analysis of approaches to child rearing reveals that the present Western perspective that dominates Canadian child welfare, is in fact unique; and historically and culturally different than more common approaches to child rearing (Keller, 2016). In fact, most children in the world are cared for by multiple caregivers with various kinds or caretaker arrangements (Keller, 2016). For example, as mentioned, Indigenous worldviews highlight the importance of having a communal approach to caring for children therefore a mother may play a significant role in caring for a child as well as aunties, uncles, grandparents, and so on. This kind of communal approach to parenting is historically the most common form of parenting, which is evident as this type of parenting can be found across a variety of cultures throughout the world (Keller, 2016). In fact, it becomes obvious that Westernized forms of attachment theory proposed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1992) and Western worldviews are too narrow to represent an accurate understanding of a child's relationships and attachments within Indigenous communities (Choate et al., 2019).

Indigenous Worldviews

Baskin (2016) suggests that helping professionals, especially those working with Indigenous people, should learn about and seek to embody Indigenous worldviews and values. However, it is important for non-Indigenous people to remember that cultural practices must remain in the control of Indigenous people (Baskin, 2016). According to Baskin (2016), people

possess different understandings of the world and these different understandings are valuable parts of a larger whole. Indigenous knowledge needs to have a place in the circle with all other forms of knowledge and needs to be viewed as equal (Baskin, 2016). Critical theories and approaches to practice such as anti-colonialism and anti-oppressive practice are often critiqued for their lack of applicability to everyday practice (Baskin, 2016). However, Indigenous worldviews go beyond critical theories “to include processes of agency, resistance, and transformation” (Baskin, 2016, p. 95).

It is important to note that First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people have, for thousands of years, held diverse traditional systems, cultural norms, laws, and knowledge focused on maintaining the safety of children and their families (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). Indigenous worldviews of child welfare are based on the fierce love communities have for their children (Simard, 2019). Although differences exist among Indigenous communities, many communities share similar values and views of the world (Baskin, 2016). For example, there is a consensus that children are gifts from the Creator and that the entire community has the responsibility to care for children (Baskin, 2016).

This section highlights Indigenous worldviews of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children. Although it is impossible to discuss all Indigenous worldviews within this section, I will focus on the worldviews that have been most applicable throughout my practicum. First, Indigenous worldviews highlight the importance of viewing people in a holistic manner (Baskin, 2016). According to Indigenous worldviews, people have four components that are connected and impact one another (Baskin, 2016). These components are spiritual, physical, emotional, and psychological (Baskin, 2016). Approaches to healing these four components are different among Indigenous people and communities of Turtle Island (Baskin, 2016). However, learning about all

the ways that these components can be healed is not advised (Baskin, 2016). Instead, it is important to understand that these four aspects exist within everyone and should be considered when working with service users (Baskin, 2016).

According to Indigenous worldviews, it is important to focus on what is in the best interest of communities as a whole, rather than simply focusing on the best interest of the child (Baskin, 2016). This is important because “community” includes not only children but their families and any other person around the child (Baskin, 2016). Children develop their identities by interacting with not only their parents but their extended family and communities (Baskin, 2016). In fact, Anishinaabe families consist of immediate family members, extended family members, their community, their Nationhood (meaning Anishinaabe people as a whole), their clan, and individuals they are connected with through cultural ceremonies (Simard & Blight, 2011). Therefore, their wellbeing is determined by many different connections (Baskin, 2016). According to Baskin (2016), strengthening communities can help take family matters out of court and instead place them in the hands of Indigenous communities.

According to Baskin (2016), Indigenous worldviews of child welfare highlight the importance that resources focus on anything that families and communities need in order to maintain the child’s or children’s connection with them. According to Simard (2019), Indigenous worldviews of child welfare highlight the importance of maintaining a child’s connection to community and family by using Cultural Placement models when children require an outside placement. Simard (2019) highlights a Cultural Placement model used by Weechi-it-te-win Family Services. This model would place children first with immediate family, if this was not possible the child would then be placed with extended family, followed by family within the community, then extended family outside of the community, family members living in

neighbouring communities, an Indigenous family living outside of the community, then a non-Indigenous family, or facility outside of the community (Simard, 2019). It is important that when children are placed outside of their homes that the focus remains on reunifying them with their parents as soon as possible (Simard, 2019).

Indigenous worldviews also highlight the importance of implementing resources that will help families work towards their own growth, healing, and empowerment (Baskin, 2016). Indigenous worldviews highlight that families can grow, heal and become empowered by bringing many individuals into the home to help support families (Baskin, 2016). In fact, Anishinaabe communities have always valued the importance of taking care of one another (Simard, 2019). Anishinaabe communities take their collective responsibilities to care for each other seriously and understand that this responsibility is sacred (Simard, 2019). Indigenous worldviews of helping widen a person's circle of care for not only the child but the family as a whole (Baskin, 2016). Parents are able to see themselves as more than a parent; instead, they see themselves as part of a community (Baskin, 2016). Indigenous worldviews highlight that everyone has skills, strengths, gifts and that they are all part of a larger community (Baskin, 2016). This way of helping is much more hopeful for families because they are able to see that they are much more than the problems that they are experiencing (Baskin, 2016).

Kinship care is a primary example of having a community approach to helping. According to the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (2017), kinship care is described as a process where extended family members share the responsibility of caring for a child when their parents are unable. This means that grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and other community members all have a role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of a child (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). Extended family members often

hold significant roles during a child's upbringing (Muir & Bohr, 2019). As mentioned previously, within many Indigenous communities, family goes beyond those who are biologically related to each other (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). This is very important for non-Indigenous child welfare social workers to remember when working with Indigenous communities (Muir & Bohr, 2019).

In addition to kinship care, family circles are also used as a way of bringing family and community members together in order to make decisions regarding the safety and wellbeing of children (Baskin, 2016). Family circles are meant to empower families and communities as well as reduce the intrusive nature of child welfare practices (Baskin, 2016). According to Indigenous worldviews, family circles allow people to talk and think creatively in order to help families (Baskin, 2016). The purpose of a circle is not to tell parents and caregivers what to do but to develop a plan together (Baskin, 2016).

According to Baskin (2016), Indigenous worldviews highlight that self-reflection is also an important part of helping families. Indigenous worldviews of self-reflection are different from anti-oppressive perspectives. An anti-oppressive approach requires that social workers are responsible for understanding how their social locations impact their work with families (Baskin, 2016). Indigenous worldviews go beyond this, by viewing self-reflection as something that occurs throughout someone's entire lifetime and should encompass the person's physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimensions (Baskin, 2016). According to Green and Thomas, self-reflection also involves developing an understanding of why workers have entered this line of work, how workers define success, and who workers are (as cited in Baskin, 2016, p. 39). Indigenous worldviews also highlight the importance of individuals understanding their own worldviews (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014).

According to Baskin (2016), part of this holistic approach to helping means that social workers must also help themselves. This means that social workers must engage in self-care and a process of self-discovery to ensure the wellbeing of their physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual selves (Baskin, 2016). These dimensions are impacted by the work that social workers engage in and therefore must be cared for (Baskin, 2016). Baskin describes that, “Indigenous teachings tell us that we need to be as healthy as possible in all four aspects of ourselves if we are to truly be of help to others” (Baskin, 2016, p. 43). As Baskin (2016) states, it is not only challenging but also inappropriate for social workers to try and help families if they are not helping themselves simultaneously. That does not mean that agencies do not also have a responsibility to care for their workers (Baskin, 2016). In fact, ensure the wellbeing of social workers is a collective responsibility (Baskin, 2016).

Anti-Colonialism

Anti-colonialism is the political struggle that works against all aspects of colonialism (Hart, 2009). Colonialism does not simply function at an individual level; instead, it occurs at all levels including structural levels (Kempf, 2009a). Indigenous people all over the world are engaging in anti-colonial struggles (Kempf, 2009b). They are working against the erasure, removal, and genocide of Indigenous people (Kempf, 2009b). Anti-colonialism is holistic in that it responds to all systems of power and seeks to challenge all forms of oppression and marginalization whether they are based on class, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic (Kempf, 2009a). According to Kempf (2009a), these concepts may seem abstract but they become concrete when they are used to grant power or to punish individuals. When this occurs, it is known as a colonial moment (Kempf, 2009a).

Colonial moments occur when people behave in ways that are based on their social location (Kempf, 2009a). These moments have real consequences for certain people while simultaneously benefitting those of higher social status (Kempf, 2009a). Thus, privilege is a crucial concept within anti-colonialism as it makes individuals accountable for their behaviours (Kempf, 2009a). By examining their own privilege, people are able to act in ways that counter oppression and unravel colonial relations (Kempf, 2009a). Therefore, anti-colonialism encourages people to be mindful of the privileges that they possess and to evaluate whether they are harming others with their privileges (Kempf, 2009a). Once people have engaged in this critical process, they should make a choice to only enjoy the privileges that do not harm or punish others (Kempf, 2009a). At a more structural level, people should actively work towards dismantling privileges that have negative effects on others (Kempf, 2009a). An important component of dismantling privilege is making it visible because for privilege to function it must be invisible (Kempf, 2009a).

According to Kempf (2009a, p. 14), “where anticolonialism is a tool used to invoke resistance for the colonized, it is a tool used to invoke accountability for the colonizer”. Whether someone is considered to be colonized or the colonizer, anti-colonialism can be used to reveal and challenge all aspects of dominant relations (Kempf, 2009a). People with more dominant roles in society can engage in anti-colonialism by looking at the ways that they oppress people and how these oppressions relate to other forms of oppression (Kempf, 2009a). It is also useful for non-Indigenous people to evaluate where they believe they can create meaningful change (Kempf, 2009a).

An important component of anti-colonialism is recovering and maintaining Indigenous knowledge (Simpson, 2004). It is important that this knowledge is maintained and recovered in

political contexts because they can be used as liberation strategies to dismantle and remove Indigenous people from colonial governments (Simpson, 2004). According to Simpson (2004), the way to protect, recover, and maintain Indigenous knowledge is for everyone to work towards dismantling colonial systems (Simpson, 2004). Allies working towards this cause must again be willing to leave their privileged stature and challenge systems and relationships that encourage colonial power (Simpson, 2004).

Critique of Anti-Colonialism.

Although anti-colonialism seeks to address very real and significant forms of oppression, racism, and marginalization, it is not without its critics. A prominent critique is that anti-colonialism uses resistance as a form of opposition rather than to create transformation within society (Shahjahan, 2011). In other words, anti-colonialism actively discusses what it is opposed to, but it does not discuss the positive steps that can be taken in order to achieve positive changes in society (Shahjahan, 2011). Despite this, I believe anti-colonialism has helped me throughout my advanced practicum with Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services. I will discuss the ways that anti-colonialism has helped me during my practicum in chapter 4 of this report. The following section will discuss anti-oppressive practice as this approach was very useful throughout my practicum.

Anti-Oppressive Practice

Anti-oppressive practice is comprised of different theories including Marxist, feminist, and structural theories (Baines, 2011). This approach centers around the belief that there needs to be a reorganization of social structures in order to effectively work against oppression and marginalization (Baines, 2011). This approach does not simply evaluate social structures

(Baines, 2011). Rather, anti-oppressive practice encourages social workers to highlight service users' strengths, while at the same time being aware that their lives and experiences are shaped by unjust social structures (Baines, 2011).

Child welfare agencies are important contexts where anti-oppressive practice should occur because these environments continue to require shifts in the beliefs and attitudes of agencies and workers (Thomas, 2015). It is vital that child welfare workers are always reevaluating their assessments and conclusions about the families that they are working with (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). It's also important that child welfare workers be aware that although they have received a referral there may not be any protection concerns (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014).

Anti-oppressive practice has implications when working with Indigenous people and communities (Freeman, 2011). If child welfare workers are to work in anti-oppressive ways they must evaluate their power (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Child welfare workers possess significant power and it is important that workers understand this (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). It is also important that workers understand that the power they possess is not meant to be used to control or punish families (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Rather, their power is meant to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and their families (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Their power must be used to help families achieve their goals and improve their situation (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014).

Child welfare agencies and workers must challenge themselves to change previous child welfare approaches to practice (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). For example, it is important that workers understand that First Nation "communities are the key to

improving the lives of their children” (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014, p. 59). This means that agencies need to have policies and practices that restore Indigenous communities’ power and authority (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Agencies must also involve Indigenous communities in decisions made in regard to child welfare (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014).

Anti-oppressive practice within child welfare agencies is complex and uncomfortable because workers must enter service users’ homes and expect their clients to share intimate details of their lives (Thomas, 2015). Workers do this while service users have little to no knowledge about them (Thomas, 2015). Thus, how workers understand service users’ stories can be very important (Thomas, 2015). Social workers have a responsibility to not only respect but honour the stories that service users share while being careful not to cause more damage to the family (Thomas, 2015).

Anti-oppressive social workers must try to focus on the perspective of parents and engage in a process of change with them because this is the best way to ensure the safety of children (Dumbrill, 2011). Focusing on parental perspectives is also an important component of building alliances with them (Dumbrill, 2011). Building alliances is important because it has been found to be one of the most significant tools for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children (Dumbrill, 2011). Alliances represent the bond that has formed between social workers and families which encourages them to work together towards important goals (Dumbrill, 2011).

Building an alliance goes beyond focusing on parents’ perspectives (Dumbrill, 2011). It is also important that workers show services users that they genuinely care for the families they are working with (Dumbrill, 2011). This is what will help create engagement and alliance among the parents or caregivers (Dumbrill, 2011). When building alliances with families, it is also

important that workers thoroughly understand the issues that families are experiencing in order to address them (Dumbrill, 2011). Other ways that child welfare workers can build alliance with families is by following agency protocols, involving themselves in activities within communities, and helping families address larger structural issues such as housing and education (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014).

In addition, workers must work at developing goals that are important to both the workers and the families rather than simply focusing on what they believe the goals should be (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Safety plans must be created with families rather than for families (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). This helps ensure that goals and safety plans are culturally appropriate for families (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Stories are also a crucial component of anti-oppressive practice with Indigenous people because stories affirm connections and provide cultural grounding (Freeman, 2011). This is important because the world we live in has been and continues to be hostile towards Indigenous people (Freeman, 2011). According to Freeman (2011), stories and narrations of life experiences connect the listener and the teller in a way that is more equal and less intrusive for Indigenous people.

Additionally, social workers must have an in-depth understanding of history and the impacts of intergenerational trauma and grief (Freeman, 2011). Without this, workers will be unable to address the underlying causes of many larger problems (Freeman, 2011). These underlying causes include shame, loss of identity, and lack of belonging that exist within Indigenous communities (Freeman, 2011). Moreover, it is important that social workers understand how policies and practice methods have and continue to impact Indigenous people (Thomas, 2015). According to Thomas (2015), anti-oppressive social workers must reflect

critically on the ways that they have acquired knowledge about Indigenous people. It is also important that social workers seek to understand the assumptions that they have made about helping Indigenous people and Indigenous Knowledge (Thomas, 2015).

Critiques of Anti-Oppressive Practice.

Although this approach is applicable to many practice contexts, there are critiques of this approach. First, this approach is much easier to conceptualize than it is to practice especially within child welfare contexts (Dumbrill, 2011). This separation between the conceptualization of anti-oppressive practice and actual practice allows for a continuation of a culture of silence, complacency, and denial in regard to racism and oppression (Sinclair & Albert, 2008). Oppression and racism can occur both in overt actions as well as in more subtle ways (Sinclair & Albert, 2008). Even when a social worker is aware of oppression and racism, they can still choose to do nothing to address these problems (Sinclair & Albert, 2008). Therefore, social workers need to be provided with an education on how to practice in a way that is anti-oppressive in order to be truly helpful in addressing racism and oppression (Sinclair & Albert, 2008).

According to Ying Yee and Wagner (2013), this approach also has a limited capacity in addressing historical forms of oppression and as a result, can accidentally reinforce neo-colonialism. This means that without an understanding of how to address historical forms of oppression such as colonialism, social workers can continue to reproduce and reinforce colonial beliefs, policies, and practices (Ying Yee & Wagner, 2013). Although this approach looks to challenge various forms of oppression, it does not adequately get to the source of the problem (Ying Yee & Wagner, 2013). Therefore, it is important that social workers also engage in anti-

colonial work to address the historical struggles that are often not addressed by anti-oppressive practice (Ying Yee & Wagner, 2013).

Dumbrill (2011) further highlights that parents and child welfare workers have their own emotional issues that they carry with them during their working relationship which can make it difficult to have helpful conversations. Therefore, workers can become overly focused on their own struggles and not end up focusing on addressing the oppression that families are experiencing. Choices can be made to focus on blaming the families that workers are working with as they are not truly focused on understanding the perspectives of families. Despite these challenges, I found anti-oppressive practice to be helpful throughout my practicum. This will be discussed further in chapter four.

Self-Reflexivity

The theories and approaches that I have presented highlight the importance of maintaining self-awareness, especially when working with people who experience oppression and marginalization. Thomas (2015) highlights that for social workers to achieve transformations within society and not further harm people they must engage in self-reflection. It is important that social workers understand how they have been socialized and understand what messages they have internalized (Thomas, 2015). Social workers must not only critically examine their values and beliefs but must also act in ways that align with their beliefs (Thomas, 2015). Moreover, they must believe that they are effective helpers in order to help others (Thomas, 2015).

According to Thomas (2015), the most helpful social workers are the ones who engage in self-reflection and who know themselves. Understanding our own histories and engaging in these

forms of self-reflection is especially important when working with Indigenous people because it allows us to unravel our assumptions (Thomas, 2015). If social workers engage in daily critical self-reflection they will be much more likely to work in anti-oppressive ways (Thomas, 2015).

Kempf (2009a) discussed three important self-reflective questions that should be asked when engaging in anti-oppressive practice and anti-colonialism. First, it is important to be aware of the kind of power that you possess (Kempf, 2009a). Second, it is important to be aware of how you have come to have this power (Kempf, 2009a). Third, it is important to understand how you are using this power (Kempf, 2009a). According to the BC Association of Social Workers (2016), social workers should also be aware of their family history, how their family came to live in this country and how or if their family was impacted by colonialism. These are only some of the important questions that social workers must engage in to be effective helpers.

Critique of Self-Reflexivity.

Although self-reflection is a very important component of social work practice, that does not mean it is without challenges. One of the most prominent challenges attributed to self-reflection is that social workers are often members of more privileged groups in society (Rosen, McCall, & Goodkind, 2017). Therefore, it can be difficult for social workers to properly identify instances of oppression (Rosen, et al., 2017). Thus, making it difficult to engage in reflection that is helpful (Rosen, et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important that social workers remain mindful of their power and how they use their power (Kempf, 2009a).

Social Location

As mentioned in the previous section, a critical component of social work is engaging in self-reflection (Thomas, 2015). This self-reflection is helpful when social workers try to

understand their own social locations. It is important that social workers have an in-depth understanding of their own social location because it helps them recognize and oppose harmful power relations not only in society but also at an interpersonal level (BC Association of Social Workers, 2016). Social location is defined as the place that a person holds in society due to various factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religious beliefs, or any other characteristic that a person may hold (Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Habibov, 2016). Social location is how someone understands themselves to exist in the world (Al-Krenawi, et al., 2016).

Who I am and what has led me to this work?

As Baskin mentioned in her chapter called “The Self is Always First in the Circle” Indigenous worldviews highlight the importance of locating ourselves within our collective identity (Baskin, 2016). This location of self includes understanding the values that people live by (Baskin, 2016). In this section, I will discuss who I am including where I am from, my ancestry, my values, and different aspects of myself that impact my social location and my work with families. According to Baskin (2016), it is important that we as helpers understand how our social location impacts the families and people we work with. As mentioned in the literature review, social location is based on various factors including race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religious beliefs, or any other characteristic that a person may hold (Al-Krenawi et al., 2016). In addition to this introduction to who I am, I will also discuss what has led me to this work and why I want to do this work.

To begin, my full name is Christine Vibeke Nielsen. My family origins are a mixture of Danish, French, and Irish ancestry. Both my parents were born in Canada as were my maternal grandparents. However, my paternal grandparents were both born in Copenhagen, Denmark. I am from Sudbury, Ontario and have lived in this city my entire life. I speak both French and

English. I am the youngest of three children; I have an older brother and an older sister. I am privileged because I have a close relationship with my immediate family (parents and siblings) as well as many members of my extended family (aunts, uncles, and cousins). My upbringing has a significant impact on the way that I view and understand the world. Throughout my practicum, I tried to remain cognizant of this and tried to always challenge my own thoughts and opinions.

Many of my values have a significant impact on the work that I engage in with families. Some of these values include family, humility, empathy, respect, honesty, advocacy, and responsibility. Each of these values have a significant impact on the work that I do with families and communities. For example, I value family because my family is very important for me. Therefore, when I work with families, I really value their connection to each other and the importance of their connection. However, this also means that I view families in terms of my own experiences and upbringing. If I'm not careful, I can make assumptions about how a family functions based on my own perspectives which can hinder my work families.

Additionally, I am someone who values empathy. This is a very important aspect of the work that I do with families because it helps me connect with them and really try to understand where they are coming from. However, my empathetic nature can also be challenging to navigate because many of the families that I work with have experienced significant trauma. When I am not careful, I can sometimes take in the pain that families are feeling which can be very draining. What is helpful for me in these situations is supervision and self-care which will be discussed further on in this chapter. As I have demonstrated, these values help me in my work with families, but they can also present challenges for my work with families. Therefore, it is important that I understand how they can create challenges and how to address those challenges.

Factors that impact my social location include that I am a white woman, heterosexual, from the working class, able-bodied, bilingual, and 24 years old. I was raised in a Roman Catholic family, but I do not ascribe to any religion. I have the privilege of accessing a graduate-level education. These factors contribute to the way that I understand the world around me and how I work with families and communities. I am a white woman and therefore I possess white privilege.

Throughout my practicum, I always tried to remain mindful that my ancestors actively took part in colonialism and that I am complicit in colonization. I have done so by reminding myself consistently that my family has benefited from colonization by gaining employment and living on Indigenous land while Indigenous people were segregated and sent to live on reserve. I also remind myself that I have benefited from colonization and am complicit in colonization because I am living on Indigenous land. Additionally, I also understand that I benefit from social structures that place me at an advantage while placing Indigenous people at a disadvantage.

I am also not a parent which means that I have a limited understanding of what it means to be a parent and the stresses and joys that are associated with parenting. This means that when I engage with parents and assess protection concerns, I need to interrogate my own beliefs regarding what I believe a “good parent” looks like. Throughout my practicum, it was challenging, but very important to remain mindful of this to prevent my biases from impacting my work with families.

There are many factors that have brought me to social work. The biggest factor being that when I was in middle school, I received a lot of support from a school social worker. As for most children, middle school was a very difficult time in my life for many different reasons but the

support from the school social worker made a huge difference in my life. Our work together is ultimately what led me to want to become a social worker.

Until university, I had learned very little about Indigenous people. In high school, I learned about colonialism from the perspective of white Francophone teachers who clearly did not understand the harm that colonialism has caused Indigenous people. Colonialism was looked at as somewhat of a victory. Knowing what I know now, my heart aches that I had been so misinformed by a system that was supposed to teach me accurate information. I did not learn anything about residential schools or the sixties scoop. I did not understand that I was born and raised on land that had been stolen from Indigenous people. This is problematic because it perpetuated negative stereotypes and a lack of understanding towards Indigenous people. I did not understand why Indigenous people and communities struggled with various issues such as poverty and addictions. Instead, I was taught to be proud that the Canadian government stole land and placed Indigenous people at a disadvantage. I was never taught about systemic racism which in itself contributes to the reinforcement of systemic racism.

In my first year of university, I learned about the residential school system and the sixties scoop. This was my introduction to the reality of colonialism and the impact that colonialism has on Indigenous people and communities. Throughout my Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and my Master of Social Work (MSW) my knowledge on colonialism and its implications has grown. I will never pretend that I truly understand the harm that colonialism has caused and continues to cause Indigenous people as I am not an Indigenous person and I will never truly understand that harm firsthand. However, I can certainly say that I do understand much better today. As I learned more and more about the harm that settlers have caused Indigenous communities, I became more and more passionate about helping to undo those harms.

In my fourth year of my BSW, I completed a placement with the Children's Aid Society in Sudbury. Through this placement, I became passionate about understanding child welfare and trying to find ways to help families. I really enjoyed working with families, but I was very concerned with getting into the field out of fear of further harming families in the way that social workers have in the past. I went into my MSW thinking that I wanted to complete my practicum with the Children's Aid Society again and build a better understanding of how I could work in child welfare and not cause further harm to families. However, something kept bringing back to child welfare within Indigenous communities. I knew the history and I knew that the current child welfare system continued to cause harm in Indigenous communities. I wanted to help stop that. Not out of guilt, but rather out of an understanding that because I benefit from the colonial system that had been imposed on Indigenous people and their lands. From this understanding, I felt that I had a responsibility to try and help repair the harm that has been brought to communities.

At the beginning of my MSW, I started to learn more and more about Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services and I thought that it would be an excellent place to learn how I could do this work in a good way because of the unique way that this agency helps families and communities. I am immensely grateful that I did in fact have the opportunity to work with and learn from the work done by this agency.

This introduction highlighted various topics that are all connected and affect the provision of child welfare services within Indigenous communities. These topics help provide a more in depth understanding of some of the important components involved when trying to work with Indigenous people in good ways. The following chapter will present literature that will

provide a better understanding of the current state of child welfare services that Indigenous families are exposed to throughout Turtle Island.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There is an abundance of literature that focuses on the provision of child welfare services within Indigenous communities. The purpose of this literature review is to provide a more in depth understanding of the current state of child welfare services within Indigenous communities. This literature review will highlight several different topics that intersect and affect communities and the provision of child welfare services. I will discuss both historical and current factors that affect the provision of child welfare services within Indigenous communities of Turtle Island.

First, I will provide a brief overview of the impacts of colonialism within Indigenous communities. I will begin this section by defining colonialism and by discussing colonial policies such as the Indian Act. I will then discuss the ways that Europeans have attempted to force their way of life onto Indigenous people. For example, I will discuss residential schools and the sixties scoop. Once I have provided some historical context, I will explore the current state of child welfare within Indigenous communities of Turtle Island. This section will focus on the overrepresentation of Indigenous children within the child welfare system as well as the current and historical factors involved in this overrepresentation.

Following this, I will discuss the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and discuss the calls to action that this commission have established in order to achieve reconciliation and address the current concerns with the child welfare system. I will then discuss self-determination in relation to child welfare within Indigenous communities. I will discuss the importance of self-determination and the steps that Indigenous communities have made in regard

to achieving self-determination. Specific elements that will be discussed include Indigenous communities developing their own child welfare agencies and working to change laws in order to gain more power over the provision of child welfare services. Once I have discussed self-determination, I will focus on First Nation child welfare service delivery models. Specifically, I will discuss mainstream agencies, partially delegated models, fully delegated models, and self-governance models. This section will also provide a brief description of Bill-C92 and the potential implications of this bill.

Colonialism in Canada

Colonization is defined as a process that involves systematic marginalization and domination of certain groups through various policies (Blackstock, 2003). Colonialism is founded in the exploitation of Indigenous people and their land (Bourgeault, 1983). This exploitation originates from the first contact between Indigenous people of Turtle Island and Europeans. Europeans were motivated to obtain foreign goods and therefore, established relationships that exploited Indigenous people (Bourgeault, 1983). Pre-contact, Indigenous societies were egalitarian (Bourgeault, 1983). That is, Indigenous people would produce items from the land and distribute, exchange, and consume it in a way that was mutually agreed on (Bourgeault, 1983). Land was understood to exist for everyone and to produce what was needed for everyone (Bourgeault, 1983). Both men and women held power to make decisions regarding what they were responsible for producing (Bourgeault, 1983).

Post-contact, Europeans shifted the focus of distributing, producing, and exchanging from communal to individual use (Bourgeault, 1983). Once individual trading began, European men introduced their own goods and tools of labour which shifted power within Indigenous communities to men (Bourgeault, 1983). Following this, Europeans created a division between

themselves and Indigenous people (Bourgeault, 1983). This division sought to maintain Indigenous people as peasants that relied on the colonizers (Bourgeault, 1983). For example, Indigenous people were forbidden from accessing jobs that would allow them to earn wages (Bourgeault, 1983).

Colonizers justified and continue to justify this exploitation of Indigenous people and their land with racist ideologies (Bourgeault, 1983). According to Skott-Myhre, the concept of whiteness developed when Europeans first made contact with African and Indigenous people (as cited in Saraceno, 2012, p. 253). Whiteness is an ever-changing boundary that separates people who are designated certain privileges from individuals who are vulnerable and exploited based on them not being white (Kivel, 2002). Colonial policies protect and ensure that white, heterosexual men advance while women, Indigenous people, black people, among many others are exploited and oppressed (Kivel, 2002).

“Canada’s” economy and society depends on “the subjugation and relocation of exchange in Indigenous societies, which sustain a system of chronic poverty, social exclusion, and political and cultural disenfranchisement” (de Finney, Dean, Loiselle, & Saraceno, 2011, p. 363). The Indian Act is an example of a colonial policy that enforces systemic racism (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, 2013). The Indian Act of 1867 imposed “a White, capitalist, patriarchal governance structure on Indigenous communities” (Baskin, 2016, p. 8). To this day, this act continues to affect Indigenous people and communities (Baskin, 2016). The Indian Act is the reason for the development of the reserve system and has disrupted Indigenous peoples right to self-governance (Baskin, 2016). The Indian Act is only one example of the many colonial policies that have greatly disrupted Indigenous communities of Turtle Island. In the

following sections, I will discuss some colonial policies that have impacted Indigenous communities including the policies that led to residential schools and the sixties scoop.

Residential Schools

Residential schools were developed by Christian churches and the Government of Canada as a way of trying to assimilate Indigenous youth into European norms (Miller, 2018). Residential and Indian Day schools were developed in the late 1800s and existed until 1996 (Miller, 2018; Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004). When children attended these schools, they were removed from their families and communities and were not allowed to speak their languages (Miller, 2018). They did not allow children to engage in any type of cultural or traditional practices from their home communities (Miller, 2018). For example, children were forced to get haircuts, were not allowed to wear traditional clothing, were often identified by numbers, and/or given different names (Miller, 2018). In addition, children experienced physical and sexual abuse within many residential schools (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013).

Additionally, nutrition experts conducted studies on Indigenous children within certain residential schools (Mosby, 2013). These studies focused on malnutrition within residential schools however, did very little to resolve the structural circumstances that led to the malnutrition in the first place (Mosby, 2013). Instead, these studies allowed “experts” to evaluate nutrition interventions as well as observe the effects of not intervening (Mosby, 2013). Rather than attempting to ensure children within residential schools were properly healthy and nourished these studies simply collected data and therefore allowing children to continue to suffer (Mosby, 2013).

Residential schools have harmed survivors in lasting ways (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Children were taken from their homes, communities, and families and were never shown affection or respect (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Children grew up with a fragmented attachment to their families, communities, and culture (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Children's sense of self-worth and culture were stripped from them (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b).

When children grew into adults, many felt immense pain and fell into depression (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Many of these adults turned to substances such as alcohol or drugs in order to cope with their traumatic experiences (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Many survivors who were abused during their time at residential schools went on to abuse others around them (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b).

Survivors of the residential schools have been profoundly impacted by the trauma they experience as well as their children, partners, extended family, grandchildren, and communities as a whole. (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Alma Scott of Winnipeg shared her experience of the ways that she was profoundly impacted by residential schools stating "a direct result of those residential schools, I was a dysfunctional mother.... I spent years of my life stuck in a bottle, in an addiction where I didn't want to feel any emotions, and so I numbed out with drugs and with alcohol.... That's how I raised my children, that's what my children saw, and that's what I saw" (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b, p. 104).

Legislative changes in the 1950s led the federal government to slowly phase out the residential school system (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013). These changes gave provincial governments the ability to provide social services within First Nation communities which led to the Sixties Scoop (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013). After this legislative change, the schools that did remain open were largely meant for child welfare placements (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). The effects of this legislative change will be discussed in the following sections.

As stated by The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015b), reconciliation requires much more than apologies for the actions of those in the past. Rather, reconciliation requires everyone to understand and recognize how residential schools have harmed Indigenous people, families and communities (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Reconciliation requires Canada to leave behind policies and practices that continue to harm Indigenous people by prolonging the hurtful legacy of residential schools (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Furthermore, in order for true reconciliation to be achieved, there needs to be productive steps taken that address the legacy of colonialism (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b).

The Sixties Scoop

The Sixties Scoop refers to a time when a substantial number of Indigenous children were removed from their families and communities and placed with settler families (Blackstock, 2003). The Sixties Scoop started in the 1950s and intensified throughout the 1960s and 1970s (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). Between 1960 and 1990 more than 11,132 First Nation children were removed from their homes (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004).

There are several factors that led to the Sixties Scoop. As mentioned previously, legislative changes allowed provincial social services to be provided within First Nation communities (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013). This led to the involvement of child welfare agencies which determined that Indigenous children were at a higher risk of harm than other children (Blackstock, 2003). This determination was based on the socio-economic conditions that existed within communities as a result of colonization as well as incorrect interpretations of Indigenous peoples culture and knowledge which perpetuated racist ideologies and practices (Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, 2008).

Despite this determination, child welfare agencies provided few if any services to communities to reduce those risks (Blackstock, 2003; Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, 2008). Instead, they chose to apprehend children from their homes, families, and communities (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Families felt immense pain and grief after their children were removed from their care which worsened families struggles with violence and/or addictions (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014).

Furthermore, they based their determinations on European values that did not fit with First Nation caregiving values (Blackstock, 2003). According to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (2014), child welfare workers often interpreted strengths as weaknesses because of their own perceptions. For example, when a worker observed children living with extended family, parents were judged and thought of as ambivalent (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). It is often said that child welfare workers did not understand that Indigenous people value community and that everyone within the community shared the responsibility of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). However, these judgements were most often caused by child welfare

workers holding racist ideologies and biases towards Indigenous people and culture (Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, 2008).

As with residential schools, children were once again torn away from their families, communities, and culture and placed with settler families (Blackstock, 2003). Not only were they placed outside of their communities and families but they were sent to other provinces and occasionally to other countries (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004). Children were further victimized as many of them experienced abuse during their placements away from home (Blackstock, 2003). The devastating legacies of these assimilation policies continue to impact Indigenous people and communities of Turtle Island (Blackstock, 2003).

Current State of Child Welfare

As mentioned in the previous section, the impact of residential schools and the Sixties Scoop continue to affect Indigenous communities all over Canada (Blackstock, 2003). As Colonialism is not something of the past, it is very much alive in today's society which is apparent when looking at present statistics of the number of Indigenous children in the care of child welfare agencies (Hart, 2009; Blackstock, 2003). According to Statistics Canada (2013), Indigenous children represent 7% of Canada's child population. However, they represent 48% of the children living in foster care (Statistics Canada, 2013). As stated by The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015b, p. 105), "the child welfare system is the residential school system of our day". The child welfare system is referred to in this manner because it continues to separate children from their parents, families, and communities and instead places them in the care of government agencies (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b).

There are several factors involved in the overrepresentation of Indigenous children within the foster care system (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004). Child welfare systems continuously fail to meet the needs of many Indigenous families and communities (Libesman, 2014). Child welfare systems also fail to address various factors that have a role in the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care (Libesman, 2014). These factors include violence, child abuse (Libesman, 2014), poor housing conditions, substance misuse, dependence on social assistance, parents who themselves have experienced maltreatment as children (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004), and neglect (Trocmé, et al., 2005). These factors are all influenced by historical colonial policies such as the residential schools and the Sixties Scoop as well as current structural inequalities that exist (Trocmé, et al, 2005; Sinclair, 2016). Similar to the Sixties Scoop, many provincial governments set out what is considered to be in the best interest of the child (Sinclair, 2016). However, these legislative frameworks often fail to take into account cultural differences thus again repeating the cycle of removing children (Sinclair, 2016).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has provided several calls to action in order to address the harmful effects of colonialism and the harmful practices of the child welfare system. According to The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015a), the federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments must first commit to diminishing the number of Indigenous children in the care of the child welfare systems that exist. This commitment would require governments to monitor and assess neglect investigations carried out by child welfare agencies (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a).

Additionally, governments have to provide sufficient resources that allow Indigenous communities and Indigenous run child welfare agencies to address the struggles that families face in order to keep children with their families as well as ensure that children are able to live in environments that are culturally appropriate (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). Child welfare workers working with Indigenous people and communities must also be educated about the likelihood that Indigenous people and communities are able to provide solutions that are healing for families (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). Child welfare workers must also make decisions while being mindful of the effects of residential schools and the sixties scoop (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a).

According to The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015a, p. 1), reconciliation also requires “the federal government to enact Aboriginal child-welfare legislation that establishes national standards for Aboriginal child apprehension and custody cases and includes” certain principles. These principles include affirming the rights of Indigenous communities to create and control their own child welfare practices and agencies and ensuring that culturally appropriate placements for children are made to be a true priority. (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). Additionally, all levels of government must work towards developing parenting programs that are culturally safe and appropriate for Indigenous families (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a).

Self-Determination in Relation to Child Welfare

Since the mid-1970s, people have become more willing to recognize the existence of the overrepresentation of Indigenous children within the child welfare system (Mandell, Carlson, Fine, & Blackstock, 2003). As a result of this, there have been many discussions of the

importance of providing culturally appropriate services as a way of addressing this problem (Blackstock, 2003). According to McKenzie (1997), services that are culturally appropriate are those that surface from Indigenous communities and accurately reflect Indigenous people's cultures. Indigenous people have the right to self-determination, particularly when looking at child welfare (Mandell, et al., 2003). Although, it should be made clear that self-determination of Indigenous people goes beyond child welfare (Mandell, et al., 2003). Self-determination is not only seen as an important component of decreasing the overrepresentation of children in care but is also very important for socio-economic development for Indigenous people and communities (Mandell, et al., 2003).

Gradual progress towards ensuring Indigenous people have the right to self-determination has resulted in varying types of Indigenous child welfare models (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). One way that Indigenous communities are working towards ensuring their right to self-determination is by developing their own child welfare agencies (Mandell, et al., 2003). Indigenous communities are also fighting for their agencies to gain jurisdiction over providing services for their communities (Mandell, et al., 2003). Within Ontario, there have been significant steps towards ensuring the self-determination of Indigenous people (Mandell, et al., 2003).

In 1981, Band Chiefs from Ontario and Manitoba banned the removal of Indigenous children from Indigenous communities and further ordered the return of children who had been taken previously (Mandell, et al., 2003). In 1984, the Child and Family Service Act was enacted which recognized not only the rights of Indigenous people but also the right to create their own child welfare agencies (Mandell, et al., 2003). As of 2008, partial child welfare services have

been provided to 442 Indigenous communities out of 662 (Auditor General, 2008). The following section will discuss service delivery models within First Nation agencies.

First Nations Child Welfare Service Models

Within a Canadian context, child welfare service delivery is provided for Indigenous people in varying ways depending on the community (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). The most common types of models for child welfare service delivery for Indigenous people are mainstream services and Indigenous-run models that are either partially delegated or fully delegated (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009).

There continues to be a large number of Indigenous children who are serviced by mainstream agencies (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). Mainstream services are those that the provinces legislate, mandate, fund, and regulate (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). Provincial governments hold authority over these agencies (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). Indigenous-run partially delegated agencies are only granted certain powers in regards to what services the agency is allowed to provide for families (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). The services more commonly provided by these agencies are prevention and guardianship services (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009).

Fully delegated Indigenous agencies hold full responsibility of providing child welfare services to families (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). These services include prevention, familial support, child protection, and guardianship (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). These delegated models are often thought of as initial steps

toward full self-governance of child welfare services (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). Many agencies that are delegated models struggle as a result of underfunding (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). In fact, many of these models receive 22% less funding than mainstream models despite having higher community needs (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009).

Self-government models are not only responsible for service delivery but have full authority over policies and funding (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). As a result of the cultural differences that exist among Indigenous peoples' cultures there are significant variations in service delivery among self-government models (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). Although this model is the goal, there are very few child welfare agencies that have achieved this self-governance model (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009). This is the result of various complex factors including funding models and other governmental policies that make it difficult for Indigenous communities to develop their own laws and policies regarding the provision of child welfare services (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009).

However, in the coming years there may be changes to the way that child welfare services are delivered to Indigenous people and communities. This is the result of Bill C-92. This bill aims to affirm Indigenous peoples and communities' right to provide child welfare services to their own communities and thus their right to self-determination (Yellowhead Institute, 2019). Bill C-92 asserts that Indigenous people and communities have the right to develop their own policies and laws that are grounded in their own unique histories, cultures, and environment (Indigenous Services Canada, 2019).

This legislation is very new; it has not been fully implemented within communities. Therefore, we still do not know the implications of this bill. Bill C-92 is not without its critics. According to Indigenous leaders, there are problems that exist with this bill. Indigenous leaders state that although Indigenous communities will gain more jurisdiction over child welfare, funding will continue to be funneled through the provinces (Bernard, 2019). Therefore, the provinces will likely continue to have an influence on agency policies and practices. This influence is problematic for many reasons. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Indigenous ways of parents are different from that of Western ways of parenting. Therefore, this influence will likely result in a continuation of policies and practices that lack understanding or are incongruent with more collective and holistic ways of parenting. This lack of understanding and discrepancies can thus reproduce the harms that the child welfare system has caused to Indigenous communities. Although this bill is a step in the right direction, it is not a permanent solution and will likely not lead to complete self-determination.

The goal of this chapter was to provide contextual information that is necessary to better understand Indigenous communities and the delivery of child welfare services within these communities. This chapter provides information that has enabled a better understanding of the child welfare system as it pertains to Indigenous people across Turtle Island. The following chapter will discuss specific information related to my practicum environment within an Indigenous child welfare agency.

Chapter 3 – Placement Description and Learning Goals

Now that I have explored the theoretical frameworks and literature relevant to my practicum, this chapter will discuss the details of my practicum. First, I will begin by discussing the history of Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services. That is, how they began, have

grown and where they are now. I will also highlight which communities and community members are supported by Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services. Following this, I will discuss the agency's vision, mission, programs, and code of ethics. I also discuss how Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services focus on maintaining the rights of Anishnawbek children.

Following this, I discuss where I completed my practicum. This section also focuses on the Investigation and Assessment Team as this was the team, I completed my practicum with. I discuss some general information about this team such as what its purpose is and what positions exist within this team. Following this, I discuss the details of my practicum including a focus on my supervisors, my experience of supervision as well as how the agency and my supervisors supported the completion of my learning goals. I will then explore some of the tasks and learning opportunities that I had throughout my practicum.

Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services

Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services is a multiservice agency that provides various programs and services aimed at helping Anishinaabe families and communities of the North Shore (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2019). Since its inception, Nogdawindamin has grown exponentially. In 1987, the North Shore Tribal Council assembled their communities to create Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services (Nogdawindamin, 2018). Since 1987, Nogdawindamin has grown and expanded the services that they provide to communities along the North Shore. In 1992, Nogdawindamin employed 24 individuals (Nogdawindamin, 2018). These employees provided preventative services, community and family support, counselling, and culturally appropriate services (Nogdawindamin, 2018). Following this, the Ministry licensed Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services to

provide Alternative Care Services for families and communities in 2004 (Nogdawindamin, 2018). In 2009, Nogdawindamin began to officially take steps towards reclaiming jurisdiction over the provision of child welfare services through designation (Nogdawindamin, 2018). On April 1st, 2017 Nogdawindamin was officially given designation to provide child welfare services to First Nations communities along the North Shore (Nogdawindamin, 2018).

The communities along the North Shore serviced by Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services include Batchewana First Nation, Garden River First Nation, Thessalon First Nation, Mississauga First Nation, Serpent River First Nation, Sagamok Anishnawbek, and Atikameksheng Anishnawbek (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2019). Nogdawindamin provides services to both individuals living within these communities as well as community members living outside of these communities (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2019). Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services' vision is "healthy Anishnawbek families and communities protecting, nurturing and guiding our children" (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2019, p. 21). This agency's mission is to "assist the communities in their responsibility to strengthen families and communities for the safety and well-being of children by providing community-based services grounded in Anishnawbek values" (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2019). Nogdawindamin offers several services including Cultural Services, Child Mental Health, Jordan's Principle Service Coordination, Youth in Transition, Youth Justice, Neonatal Caring Services, Family Well-Being, and Child Welfare (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2019).

The services provided by Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services are grounded in Anishinaabe values and culture (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). For example, the code of ethics that

employees follow in their work derive directly from Anishinaabe teachings. More specifically, the code of ethics is based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). These teachings include Nibwaakaawin (Wisdom), Zaagi'idiwin (Love), Minaadendamowin (Respect), Aakode-ewin (Bravery), Gwayakwaadiziwin (Honesty), Dabaadendiziwin (Humility), and Debwewin (Truth) (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). These teachings are important components of the agency's practices and governs the ways that workers engage with families and communities (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). I will discuss the importance of these teachings further in chapter 3 of this report.

Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services also works in a way that recognizes the 13 rights of Anishinawbek children. These rights were adapted by Larry Jourdain and include the child's right to their name, their clan, to be with their parents, to be with family, to their cultural and ceremonial practices, to their identity and lifestyle, to their language, to a purposeful and zestful life, to their ancestral land, to the lifestyle of the Anishinaabe, to a good education, to protection within that child, and to membership (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2015). These rights are posted throughout the agency and are often discussed and focused on when engaging with families and children.

I completed my advanced practicum within the Sudbury area. Therefore, I spent much of my time within the Sudbury offices as well as the offices located in Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. The communities and community members that I interacted with the most were from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and Sagamok Anishnawbek. I also occasionally interacted with community members and representatives from Serpent River First Nation. The following section will discuss the specific team that I completed my advanced practicum with.

Investigation and Assessment Team

As mentioned in previous sections, I completed my advanced practicum with the Investigation and Assessment Team. This team conducts investigations based on referrals received by the agency and assesses if the child or children are in need of protection (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2015). Specifically, this team works to determine the seriousness of the information, assess families child protection histories, as well as build relationships that are both protective and helpful for families and communities (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2015).

During my practicum, there were four workers plus myself on the Investigation and Assessment team for Sudbury. This team included my supervisor, Rachel Pattison and three workers who were a mix of Investigation and Assessment Workers and Child Welfare Workers. Investigation and Assessment Workers conduct initial investigations and following this determine whether the family's file can close or if they require ongoing services (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2015). Child Welfare Workers provide ongoing services for families once initial investigations have been conducted (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2015). Although, there were times that Investigation and Assessment Workers would hold ongoing files and Child Welfare Workers would conduct investigations. However, for the most part, these duties were separated as much as possible.

Practicum details

Throughout my practicum, I was supported by two supervisors within Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services. Rachel Pattison is the supervisor for the Investigation and Assessment team in Sudbury. Rachel provided day-to-day supervision to me. That is, Rachel provided me with tasks to complete, assigned cases for me to follow, connected me with other programs within the agency, provided support for me, discussed the cases I was following and

provided insight into child welfare services for families, and helped plan for the completion of my learning goals. Sandra Southwind is a Protection Resource Manager at Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services. Sandra provided clinical supervision for me throughout my practicum. Sandra and I met once every two to three weeks during my practicum. Specifically, Sandra and I would discuss the cases I was following, the work I was doing, my learning goals, some of the challenges I was noticing, and my perspectives and feelings surrounding the work that I was following. Sandra also provided ongoing support for me throughout my practicum.

My experience of supervision was very positive throughout my practicum. Through conversations with both Sandra and Rachel, I was able to discuss reactions that I had regarding the situations that families were dealing with and the ways that Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services responded to those situations and families. Through supervision, I was better able to understand my own initial reactions to situations and explore why I had those reactions. Supervision also allowed me to address any biases that I recognized throughout my work and understand where these biases were coming from. This process allowed me to challenge my biases and become more aware of my thoughts and actions when interacting with families and communities. My supervisors were very supportive throughout my practicum in that I knew if I was struggling with something, I had people that I could speak with.

In addition to acknowledging my biases and providing support, supervision also provided me with many conversations that were integral to my overall learning. Supervision allowed me to have conversations that helped me learn more about the communities I was working with as well as Anishnaabe people's way of life. Through many conversations with my supervisors, I began to understand that Anishnaabe people's culture is much more than ceremonies and cultural practices. Rather, I came to understand that it is a way of life. Throughout our conversations, I

heard about my supervisors' experiences working with the communities and families serviced by the agency which were also important pieces of my learning. Their stories helped me conceptualize how workers can engage with families in meaningful and helpful ways which will be discussed in chapter 4 of this report.

The environment that Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services and my supervisors provided was very helpful in the achievement of my learning goals. Rachel and Sandra were always checking in with me about my learning goals and asking how they could support me in achieving my learning goals. For example, Rachel often reached out to other workers and programs such as the cultural program to help support my learning goals. Sandra would also provide me with the names of individuals to reach out to and would invite me to various learning opportunities. The agency itself was also helpful because they offer many different programs that are aimed at helping families. I was often able to engage with other programs and learn about how they help families.

My advanced practicum provided me with several learning opportunities that allowed me to achieve my learning goals. First, as I was on the Investigation and Assessment team, I was able to follow many investigations throughout my practicum. Through these investigations I was able to engage with community representatives and families. I was able to observe how Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services workers conduct investigations and support families and communities.

I was also able to observe the many ways that Nogdawindamin workers provide ongoing support for families. I was able to observe monthly visits with families and weekly baby visits where workers were checking in with families and seeking to address any concerns that families and community representatives would highlight during visits. For example, if a family indicated

that they were struggling to afford food, workers would attempt to address this by providing purchase orders and asking various questions such as whether they are receiving the Child Tax Benefit or accessing any funding such as Ontario Works. If families were not receiving any assistance workers would often refer them to the Family Wellbeing program in order to help the family access funding.

Throughout my placement, I was often tasked with completing various recordings such as case notes, strengths and needs assessment, risk assessments, and safety assessments. These tools are standardized throughout Ontario and are used by various child welfare agencies. I completed these tasks under the supervision of workers and my supervisor. In addition, I was at times asked to go through files and complete family genograms as well as write out case activities. These tasks allowed me to better understand the structure of different families as well as see the intergenerational effects of trauma and child welfare involvement.

Another part of my practicum involved attending case reviews which occur approximately every six weeks. During my practicum, I attended case reviews in Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and Sagamok Anishnawbek. During case reviews, Investigation and Assessment Workers, Child Welfare Workers, and Supervisors update the First Nation band representatives of the cases involving their community members. During these case reviews, band representatives would provide feedback on the various cases and engage in dialogue with workers and supervisors regarding how they would like to proceed with the cases. These case reviews were important in order to ensure that the First Nation Communities were updated and part of decision making.

Although I spent much of my time with the Investigation and Assessment Team, I did have the opportunity to learn about the other programs offered by Nogdawindamin. For example,

I would also often shadow workers from the Child Mental Health Team. With this team, I was able to observe sessions between Child and Youth Clinicians and the children they were working with. I observed various play therapy tools used in order to engage with children such as sandbox trays and self-esteem Jenga.

My practicum also allowed me to learn more about The Family Wellbeing Program. Although I did not specifically shadow workers from this program, Child Welfare and Investigation and Assessment workers often worked with Family Wellbeing Workers. During many of the visits I would attend, workers would often recommend the Family Wellbeing Program to help families with various goals that they had. Therefore, if the family wanted to participate in this program, workers would bring Family Wellbeing Workers with them to their next visit in order to introduce the families to their assigned worker. Through this process, I was able to learn more about the program as Family Wellbeing Workers would often explain the program and indicate how they would be working with the family.

In addition to shadowing workers, I also was able to spend some time learning with the Cultural Team in various capacities. Nogdawindamin provides many opportunities for staff to learn about Anishinaabe values and culture in order to develop a better understanding of the communities and families that are served by this agency. First, during orientation, an Elder from the cultural department sat with us and spoke with us about the ways that Nogdawindamin is founded in Anishinaabe culture and values. We also discussed Nogdawindamin's Code of Ethics and the importance of following The Seven Grandfather Teachings in the work we would be part of with Nogdawindamin. In addition, I also had the opportunity to attend Nogdawindamin's Fall Gathering. This gathering brought all staff together and provided them with a teaching on Powwow etiquette. I also had the opportunity to sit down with a Traditional Knowledge Keeper

Lisa Pitawanakwat and speak about the different roles men and women have according to Anishinaabe culture. I also gained some information regarding the parenting norms that Anishinaabe people traditionally have.

My practicum also offered many opportunities to learn both from the agency itself as well as the communities Nogdawindamin works with. First, I was able to attend part of the creation story that was held by Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. The Creation Story was told by Jim Dumont and was an incredible and insightful experience. Both of my supervisors were very supportive and encouraging in regard to me attending this event. Nogdawindamin also provided various opportunities where I was able to receive training on various topics including Cultural Sensitivity Training, Serious Occurrence Training, and Voluntary Youth Service Agreements (VYSA). I was also able to gain some mental health training such as Play Therapy Training and Mental Health Training specifically focused on psychosis.

Learning Goals

Prior to my practicum, I developed six learning goals that I wanted to focus on in order to help me better understand how I could work with Indigenous people within the context of child welfare in good ways. Although what I have learned about working in good ways with Indigenous people goes beyond these six learning goals, they were important pieces throughout my practicum. This section will focus on the learning goals that I developed and the ways that I met these goals during my practicum.

My first learning goal was closely related to the overall focus of my practicum. This goal was to increase my understanding of how non-Indigenous social workers can work with Indigenous people, as allies, to help provide better services for First Nation families in the

context of child welfare. In my practicum proposal, I indicated that this goal would be achieved by reading literature, observing practice approaches, and by speaking with staff. Throughout my practicum, I did engage with literature that discussed this which was helpful in better understanding my role in being an ally and working in good ways with Indigenous people. However, I believe that I learned the most from observing practice approaches and by speaking with staff. Through observing the practices of Nogdawindamin workers, I was able to see how non-Indigenous workers engaged with families and communities in meaningful ways. When I would speak with workers and my supervisors about non-Indigenous workers providing better services for families, they were able to give me concrete examples of the ways that this could be done as well as the challenges that they may face. This goal will be discussed in depth throughout the next chapter of this report.

My second learning goal focused on gaining a clearer and more practical understanding of how culturally appropriate services can help First Nations communities in keeping children, families, and communities together. I stated that I would complete this goal by being up to date on new literature and by observing and understanding the services provided to families. Throughout my practicum, I remained engaged with the literature. I also observed the ways that culturally appropriate services helped support families in ways that they felt comfortable with. I was also able to speak with my supervisors about the importance of having child welfare services that are based on Anishinaabe values. I was able to complete this goal as the result of remaining immersed in the literature, working with families, and speaking with workers and my supervisors.

The third goal that I wanted to focus on during my practicum involved increasing my understanding of Anishinaabe culture and Indigenous worldviews. This goal was important as I

hoped it would allow me to work in a more helpful and impactful manner. I indicated that I would complete this goal by speaking with Elders, speaking with staff, reading literature by Indigenous scholars, and when appropriate participating in cultural practices. As mentioned above, Nogdawindamin offered many opportunities for me to learn more about Anishinaabe culture and Indigenous worldviews. Throughout my practicum, I was given the opportunity to participate in cultural practices, attend cultural events, and speak with a Traditional Knowledge Keeper. These aspects were very important as was having conversations with my supervisors who were able to talk about their understanding of Anishinaabe culture and worldviews. These experiences were immensely helpful in building a better understanding of Anishinaabe culture.

The fourth goal I wanted to focus on throughout my practicum involved increasing my understanding of my cultural biases and my ability to engage in self-reflective practice. This was significantly important throughout my practicum. I stated that this goal would be achieved through journaling and by engaging in supervision. This goal was achieved through journaling on almost a daily basis and by having supervision to discuss my biases and self-reflexivity. Another important part of achieving this goal was remaining mindful when working with families and communities about what I was thinking and where my thoughts stemmed from.

My fifth goal was to learn to engage in anti-colonial and anti-oppressive social work practice. In my practicum proposal, I indicated that this goal would be achieved by reading articles that discuss anti-colonial and anti-oppressive practice and by observing workers utilize these practices. I also highlighted that I would ensure that my interactions with service users continually reflected the principles of anti-oppressive and anti-colonial practice. Throughout my practicum, I engaged with literature on these practice methods and remained very mindful of maintaining the practices within anti-colonial and anti-oppressive approaches.

The final goal that I established was to gain a better understanding of various models of parenting and a more in depth understanding of the challenges associated with being a parent. I stated that I would achieve this goal by reading literature that discusses various parenting models and through my work with parents. I did engage with some literature on various parenting models. However, the most valuable learning for me was speaking with parents and my supervisors about the challenges that many of the parents are facing. I was also able to meet with a Traditional Knowledge Keeper Lisa Pitawanakwat where I was able to learn about Anishinaabe parenting traditions. These were very valuable opportunities to learn about the different ways people parent their children and the challenges that they face in parenting their children.

These six learning goals were a significant and crucial part of learning to work in good ways with Indigenous people in the context of child welfare. The first goal provided a general focus on what it means to work in a good way in child welfare which allowed me to read literature and ask questions that would inform my main focus. The second goal helped me better understand how culturally appropriate services are helpful for families and communities. The third goals helped me focus more on learning about Anishinaabe culture and Indigenous worldviews as a whole. This helped inform my practice in order to provide better more relevant services for families as well as have a better understanding for the ways that families and communities view and understand the world. The fourth goal helped me understand my own biases and build self-reflectivity in order to work in a way that is more purposeful and helpful. The fifth goal which focuses on engaging in anti-oppressive and anti-colonial practices was also helpful as these were important as they help social workers better understand the structural impacts that many Indigenous people and communities face. Thus, better understanding what can be done to help address those challenges. The final learning goal focused on understanding

different models of parenting. This was important because I am not a parent therefore have very little understanding of the challenges that the parents I work with possess.

These learning goals were achieved under the supervision of my first and second reader as well as my agency supervisors at Nogdawindamin. Having access to supervision throughout my practicum was immensely important for me in order to achieve my learning goals. Supervision was immensely important for attaining all of my learning goals but most significantly for my goal of becoming more self-aware and self-reflective. Beyond my learning goals, supervision was also a very useful tool in maximizing my experiences throughout this practicum. That is, I often asked my supervisors if there were particular things that they believed were important for me to take part in in order to better understand how this work can be done in a good way. Both Sandra and Rachel often suggested various learning experiences to me that were very helpful in building a better understanding of how I could do this work in a good way.

Journaling was also a significant component of my learning process throughout my practicum. Journaling was an important tool that I used on almost a daily basis to engage in self-reflection. Journaling helped me reflect on my experiences, questions, struggles, biases, critiques, and my approaches to practice throughout my practicum. This journaling process was especially important for my future social work practice because it documented my findings throughout the placement and allowed me to reflect on how I can do this work in a good way.

This chapter helped provide important contextual information regarding my practicum experience. Throughout this chapter, I presented general information about Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services which allows readers to better understand the agency I worked with and how they work with Anishinaabe families. Additionally, this chapter highlighted the six

learning goals that I developed prior to the commencement of my practicum, how I intended to complete them, and how I actually completed them. These goals were important discussion points as they provided direction for myself and my supervisors throughout my practicum. My supervisors and I were often checking in with my learning goals when selecting tasks for me to complete or cases for me to follow in order to meet my goals. These goals were important components that helped me better understand how I could work in child welfare with Indigenous people in a good way.

My experience with Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services was overall very positive. I could tell by speaking with supervisors and workers that there was a very genuine desire to help families and communities. My team was tasked with investigating and assessing child protection concerns. They were tasked with ensuring that children were safe in their homes and helping families ensure the safety of children living in their homes. Every day, I watched as workers and supervisors tried to think of different ways of helping families address the challenges that they were experiencing. Through this, I began to see how unique Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services is compared to other child welfare agencies. Nogdawindamin provides many teachings for staff on Anishinaabe ways of living and protecting children.

That is not to say that this practicum was not challenging. The referrals received by my team involved very difficult, complex, and heartbreaking situations for families. I often watched workers and supervisors try everything they could to keep children safe and families together. Child welfare is not an easy environment to be in. I was often frustrated by the situations that families found themselves in due to systemic oppression. I watched workers try their best to combat these systemic oppressions. Through this practicum, I was able to see the effects that

colonialism has had on families and communities. However, I was also lucky in that I was able to see firsthand how strong, diverse, and resilient First Nation Communities are. The next section will explore my practicum experience and what I learned about doing this work in a good way.

Chapter 4 - Working in Child Welfare in a Good Way

As mentioned throughout this paper, the primary focus of my advanced practicum was to learn how I, as a non-Indigenous social worker, can work with Indigenous people in a good way within the context of child welfare. In addition, I was trying to develop a better understanding of how anti-colonial and anti-oppressive social work practice could be useful in child welfare contexts with Indigenous people. I was also focused on building an understanding of the pathways forward and the challenges of doing this work in a good way. The previous chapters helped provide context for this final chapter. This chapter will focus on my learning journey throughout this placement. I want to begin by highlighting that this paper is simply meant to discuss what I have learned throughout my practicum. This is not meant to be a guide for other non-Indigenous social workers looking to work within the context of child welfare. Rather, this is a reflection on what I have learned throughout my practicum. I am still learning what it means to work in child welfare with Indigenous people in a good way and will continue to learn throughout the rest of my career.

I begin this chapter by exploring what I have learned about doing this work in a good way. The components that are discussed in this chapter include, anti-colonialism, anti-oppressive practice, self-reflexivity, Indigenous worldviews, self-care, culture, The Seven Grandfather Teachings, having a learning mindset, and the Ally Bill of Responsibilities. Following these sections, I discuss some of the challenges I observed to doing this work in a good way. Specifically, this section discusses challenges such as the distrust of the child welfare system, the

emotional impact that this work has on workers, as well as the structural factors that can make it difficult to truly address the challenges that children and their families experience. Within this section, I also suggest different pathways forward in order to address some of these challenges.

Working in a good way

Anti-Colonialism

At the beginning of my practicum, I was focused on trying to understand how anti-colonialism and anti-oppressive practice would be helpful in working with Indigenous people in the context of child welfare in a good way. This section will focus on anti-colonialism. Initially, I spent a lot of my time observing workers engaging with families and speaking with my supervisors about anti-colonialism. In the beginning, I was very focused on the literature of anti-colonialism which made it difficult to really understand how anti-colonialism would help me engage in this work in a good way. However, with time, I began to see examples of anti-colonialism in the work that was being done by the agency and workers and started to see the importance of this theory in my work with Indigenous families and communities.

As mentioned in the literature review, anti-colonialism is holistic in its response to oppression and seeks to address oppression at all levels (Kempf, 2009a). This includes at the individual and community level which means the work that I did with families and communities are part of engaging in anti-colonialism. A big part of engaging in anti-colonialism throughout my work with children and families involved being mindful of colonial moments and my privilege (Kempf, 2009a).

For example, whenever I walked into a home or engaged with families and community representatives, I tried to remain mindful of my behaviour. This is important because I can

potentially behave in a way that is influenced by my social location and privilege which may then inadvertently cause harm to families (Kempf, 2009a). This was certainly something I observed throughout my practicum. For example, it was important that I understand that I was walking into families' homes in a privileged position that held a lot of power due to my own social location as well as representing Nogdawindamin. Although I was not the worker, I was still entering the home as part of a child welfare agency that holds power and is able to make decisions that have significant implications for families. Beyond this, I needed to be mindful that many of the families did not trust me. I knew that history had a lot to do with this. I was a white social worker coming into an Indigenous home and assessing protection concerns. This action can be very intimidating and fear provoking. Therefore, I understood that it was important to be mindful of my behaviour and of the language that I used with families and worked slowly to build trust with families. If not, I knew I could retraumatize families and cause significant harm.

As mentioned in the literature review, another important part of anti-colonialism is recovering and maintaining Indigenous knowledge (Simpson, 2004). Although Simpson (2004) speaks of this in a more political context, throughout my practicum, I observed the importance of this at an individual and community level. The work that is done by Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services is founded in Anishinaabe values. Although the agency continues to have to follow provincial standards, the practices are very unique to the agency. For example, as mentioned previously, Nogdawindamin's Code of Ethics is founded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings (Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, 2015).

Nogdawindamin also holds staff gatherings that are grounded in culture and help solidify the connection between culture and the work being done on an everyday basis. For example, I attended a staff gathering in the Fall that taught us about Powwows and Powwow protocols

which was very beneficial. Although I will not discuss the teachings that we received during this gathering as these teachings are not mine to share, I want to highlight the importance of this learning especially for those of us who are not Indigenous. It helps us understand communities and ceremonies better and really develop a proper awareness of the importance of ceremonies and Indigenous knowledge.

Anti-Oppressive Practice

As mentioned previously, I was also interested in understanding if and how anti-oppressive practice would be useful in working with Indigenous people in a good way. When I would observe workers with families or would speak with my supervisor, I immediately started to see the importance of anti-oppressive practice. Like anti-colonial theory, anti-oppressive practice involves constant self-reflection. From the very beginning, I noticed that I was often reflecting on my own beliefs and attitudes when working with families (The Ontario Children's Aid Society, 2014).

Although they never used the terms anti-oppressive practice, it was apparent that this practice method was used by everyone on my team. As I mentioned in the literature review, anti-oppressive practice involves highlighting strengths that families possess while simultaneously understanding of how their lives are impacted by unjust social structures (Baines, 2011). Throughout my practicum, the workers and my supervisor consistently highlighted the strengths that families had and tried to build on those strengths. In addition to this, my supervisors and the workers discussed the ways that the families were affected by colonialism and intergenerational trauma. I would often have discussions with Rachel and Sandra about how communities and families were still struggling to cope with the impacts of colonialism. During these discussions, we often focused on the ways that community members were directly affected by residential

schools and the sixties scoop. We discussed the ways that community members tried to cope with the trauma they faced and how this led Nogdawindamin to become involved in their lives.

As Freeman (2011) mentioned, many Indigenous people struggle with shame, grief, loss of identity, and a lack of belonging. This was very apparent throughout my practicum. I often worked with families who were trying to cope with at least one of these struggles. From what I observed, possessing an understanding of structural oppression, history, and intergenerational trauma was immensely helpful in doing this work in a good way. It truly helps workers target interventions and services to address these problems (Freeman, 2011). For example, if workers could refer families to the Child Mental Health, Adult Mental Health, and/or cultural department to help families heal.

From what I have seen throughout my practicum, this understanding is immensely important in order to work with families and children in good ways. I do not believe that I, as a non-Indigenous person, can work in good ways with families unless I have somewhat of an understanding of what they are experiencing. I will never fully understand the implications of colonialism because I have not been the one to suffer as a result of colonialism. In fact, my ancestors and I have benefited from colonialism. However, having a good understanding of how families are oppressed as the result of colonialism is important to understand how we as allies can help their families and communities.

Additionally, without these understandings we can become frustrated with the families we are working with because we would not have a holistic understanding for their behaviours which can at times be self-destructive. For example, it is very easy to be frustrated with someone who the worker believes is not consistently meeting their child's needs whether this be by placing children in situations that are potentially dangerous or using substances while caring for

their children. Workers must understand the ways that colonial policies have traumatized people and led individuals to this path. Workers need to have an understanding that residential schools and the sixties scoop have not only led many people to unhealthy coping mechanisms but has also caused many Indigenous people to struggle with parenting skills due to their parenting role models being taken from them. When we grasp how systemic oppression is impacting the families, we can remove that frustration off of the people we are working with and place it on our unjust colonial systems. This allows workers to move forward with families by getting to the root of many of the problems that families face.

Like anti-colonialism, anti-oppressive practice is also helpful in that it encourages workers to examine their power (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). As I mentioned previously, child welfare workers have immense power (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Their decisions have significant implications for children, families, and communities and therefore, workers need to understand their power and use it appropriately (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). This was obvious throughout my practicum. Throughout my practicum, I observed the workers on my team and my supervisors examining their decisions and trying to act in ways that were the least intrusive for families. It became very apparent throughout my practicum that working with families in ways that reduce power imbalances were much more beneficial for families. For example, if a family refused to allow workers into their home, workers would not immediately contact police to force the family to allow workers in. The only time this would ever occur is if a child was in immediate danger and there was no other option. Rather, we would continue to make efforts to communicate with the family and try to build rapport with the family. Workers would also

acknowledge that they understood the fears that families were experiencing which helped them remain patient with families.

I often observed workers using their power to help families with their goals and improve the circumstances surrounding the family's involvement (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). For example, workers would often attend appointments or contact other service providers to advocate for families. For me, this was where I observed many of the workers using their power to try and help families address various injustices that they were facing. I do not believe that the power child welfare workers possess is necessarily a bad thing if they use their power responsibly and in a way that does not further harm Indigenous families and communities. Throughout my placement, I was able to see very positive results for families when their workers would use their power in a way that helped address the oppression and trauma they were experiencing.

Throughout my practicum, I also observed workers respect and honour the stories that families would share with them (Thomas, 2015). I remember working with a family where they spoke about many of their struggles and experiences that have impacted them. I remember sitting and listening to this family along with the worker and feeling immense sadness for this family while also feeling amazed at their strength and resilience. We had respect for them and their willingness to share with us. It helped us better understand what was happening for that family and gave us a better understanding of what led to their involvement with the agency. We did not enter the home just wanting to complete an investigation and get out of the home. Rather, we wanted to truly help this family by sitting and listening to their story. This also helped us better target our interventions for this family.

I often observed workers engaging with parents and making efforts to develop a better

understanding of their perspective (Thomas, 2015). Rachel would often encourage workers to explore the perspective of parents, which I found very beneficial for families. This allowed workers to build alliances with families and help them tackle the child protection concerns together (Dumbrill, 2011). As Dumbrill (2011) mentioned, building alliances with families truly is the most effective way to help families. I did notice that it is very difficult to build alliances with families especially because they may fear child welfare workers and are likely trying to cope with their own traumatic experiences. However, from what I observed, when workers did build alliances with families their work was certainly more productive and helpful.

As Dumbrill (2011) mentions, workers need to genuinely care about the families and communities they are working with in order to work in good ways with them. I observed families' initial apprehensions dissipate the moment they began to realize that workers genuinely cared about them and their success. I recall a parent who was immensely resistant to working with us until they realized we cared and wanted what was best for them and their children. From the moment that the worker confirmed how much she cared for this parent the real work began and we were able to make significant strides with this family. This was accomplished with patience and understanding on the part of the worker. Rather than forcing her way into the home with a court order, she focused on listening and reassuring the family that all she really wanted was to help support the family.

One thing that became apparent throughout my work with families was creating goals with families that are relevant to both parents and workers (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). This is an important part of anti-oppressive practice and was highlighted several times throughout my practicum. Both of my supervisors were vocal about the importance of creating goals and plans with families rather than for families. It helps not only equalize

power but also makes families want to work towards these goals and follow through with these plans. For example, part of investigations involves developing safety plans for any protection concerns that arise during that investigation. I often observed workers explore different options for safety plans with families. After the development of this plan, workers would often check in and ask families if they believe this plan would work for them. If parents expressed any concerns the workers would immediately explore alternative options for the family.

As I mentioned throughout this section, anti-oppressive practice is a significant part of working with Indigenous people in child welfare in a good way. I believe that without this practice approach our work would continue to harm families and communities. Although the workers and my supervisors rarely explicitly talked about anti-oppressive practice, it became apparent that the tenants of this approach is a big part of the important work that they engage in.

Self-Reflexivity

The two previous sections highlighted the importance of self-reflexivity, however, in this section I wanted to highlight my perception of self-reflexivity. Self-reflection was a significant part of my practicum. From the beginning, I wanted to develop a better ability to engage in self-reflection. I had an awareness of the importance of self-reflection and I knew without this skill I would likely harm the families and communities I was working with (Thomas, 2015).

Through this practice, I learned many things. First, I learned that self-reflection is difficult but also very worth learning. Self-reflection was difficult for me because it often brought out feelings of shame and frustration within myself. I would often become very angry and frustrated with myself when I would catch myself thinking or writing something that was harmful for families. However, I also learned very quickly how unproductive shame is in

addressing these unhelpful and unproductive thoughts. As Brené Brown said “shame corrodes the very part of us that believes we are capable of change” (Brown, 2007, p. 154). It is important that we do not get caught up in our own shame because we need to believe that we are effective helpers in order to truly help families (Thomas, 2015).

I realized it was better to acknowledge these thoughts and really examine where they stemmed from rather than feel shame about thoughts that I was socialized to think. That does not mean I excused my unhelpful thoughts, but it does mean that I did not tell myself that I was an awful person for thinking something unhelpful. Rather, I explored the thought, where it came from and how my own experiences and history has led me to this thought (Thomas, 2015). This process was very helpful in unravelling my thought processes and creating space to challenge those unhelpful thoughts (Thomas, 2015). For example, I remember feeling very frustrated with many of the parents that I worked with because some of them would smoke marijuana while also caring for their child or children. I remember being very frustrated with parents because they did not believe that using marijuana around their child was a valid protection concern. However, when I stepped back and thought about it, I realized that being frustrated was not going to be helpful in my work with these families. I really tried to unravel what was making me uncomfortable about parents using marijuana around their children. I realized that I was never knowingly around anyone who used marijuana when I was a child. I did not consider parents using marijuana as normal based on my own personal experiences. Once I understood this, I was able to step back and it made me want to learn more about these parents' thoughts around marijuana and made me much less frustrated with them.

There were many strategies that helped me engage in self-reflection. Journaling was a big help in facilitating self-reflection regarding my thoughts, my behaviours, and where these

thoughts and behaviours came from. Through journaling I was able to be very open and honest with myself about my thoughts and really call out thoughts that were unhelpful. Supervision was also very helpful because my supervisors were very understanding, compassionate, and helpful in addressing my biases. They helped me see things from a different perspective and challenge my biases. I felt comfortable enough with them to talk about where many of my biases and thoughts stemmed from. Although I no longer journal as often, I often find myself either taking time to journal when I am struggling with a thought process that is unhelpful or I call my supervisors and can debrief and challenge my thoughts with someone else. This was important in developing my ability to engage in self-reflection. I believe that in order to continue doing this work in a good way it is important that I remain conscious of my thoughts and behaviours and maintain the ability to challenge these thoughts and behaviours to make way for more productive ones.

Indigenous worldviews

I believe that the aspect I was most nervous and excited to learn about during my practicum was learning how Nogdawindamin incorporated and embodied Indigenous worldviews. Prior to starting my practicum, I knew in a general sense that it was important for me to learn about and seek to embody Indigenous knowledge and worldviews (Baskin, 2016). However, I did not understand what that really looked like for non-Indigenous social workers. I also did not know how I would build that knowledge. Upon my arrival at Nogdawindamin, I was able to see many different examples of the agency and its workers embodying Indigenous knowledge and worldviews.

First, one worldview I found to be important in order to do this work in a good way is having a community focus. As mentioned, it is important that we as workers, focus on not only

the best interest of the children and families we work with but also the communities (Baskin, 2016). From my perspective, part of this means working in partnership with communities as well as taking the lead from these communities. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (2014) highlights that it is important First Nation representatives be part of our work with families and help in the development of plans with families. Throughout my practicum, this was certainly a significant focus. Nogdawindamin has developed protocols with each of the seven First Nation communities it serves to ensure that workers are constantly collaborating and consulting with the communities. Each protocol is different as each community has their own unique needs and ways of working with families. However, throughout each of the seven First Nations served by Nogdawindamin, band representatives, family support workers and/or family preservation workers are part of all meetings with families and all decisions made regarding families.

I believe that this collaboration between child welfare workers, band representatives, family support workers and/or family preservation workers is the most crucial aspect of doing this work in a good way as a non-Indigenous social worker. There are many reasons for this. First, these representatives often know the families that we are working with and can therefore, give very helpful and important insights into what is occurring within that family. That is, they help provide contextual information that helps workers in their assessments. Therefore, if a worker is struggling with making any decisions community representatives can help steer workers in the right direction (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014).

Additionally, band representatives, family support workers and/or family preservation workers advocate for their families. As mentioned, these advocates know the families they are working with and they can advocate for families when Nogdawindamin workers develop a plan

that they do not believe is beneficial for their families. Similarly, community representatives are also very helpful in encouraging families to work with the child protection staff and engage in services which often help families address the challenges they are experiencing. Community representatives are also helpful in that they can often ease many of the fears that families experience when they become involved with Nogdawindamin. I found that families were often more comfortable when there was a representative from their community present for investigations of ongoing protection services. In addition, families were also often more receptive to suggestions made by community representatives which helped families address various challenges they were experiencing.

These are only some of the ways that collaborating with band representatives, family support workers and/or family preservation workers can be helpful for workers as well as communities. From my perspective, I believe we need to involve band representatives in the work we do with families to also prevent workers from repeating the patterns of the sixties scoop. In my experience, it can be very easy to get wrapped up in focusing on risk and failing to recognize the strengths that families possess. It can also be very easy to misuse your power in the role of child protection. Having community representatives with us helps us ensure that we are not acting in a way that is harmful for families and communities.

In addition to possessing a community focus, Indigenous worldviews highlight the importance of understanding the world in a holistic manner by accounting for a person's spiritual, physical, emotional, and psychological aspects (Baskin, 2016). Throughout my practicum, I noticed that workers were focused on more than simply the physical wellbeing of children. This is different from what I experienced during my fourth year BSW placement within

the mainstream child welfare system where I found much of the focus was on physical wellbeing.

However, Nogdawindamin workers were focused on the wellbeing of children as a whole. Workers would often have conversations with families about children's overall wellbeing and if there were any concerns regarding any aspect of the child then workers would develop plans with families to address those concerns. I often observed workers assessing the spiritual and psychological wellbeing of children. Children and families were often referred to Nogdawindamin's cultural department when they were struggling with their psychological and spiritual wellbeing. Children and families were also often referred to Nogdawindamin's adult and child mental health programs in order to address their emotional and psychological wellbeing.

From my perspective, an important part of doing this work in a good way with Indigenous people is looking at families holistically. I, as a non-Indigenous person, need to keep this worldview at the forefront of my mind when working with families because I have seen the positive implications that this has for families. I often heard families speak about the difference that addressing their spiritual or psychological wellbeing had on improving their ability to care for their children. I was able to see the changes in families when they were able to address every aspect of their wellbeing. I truly believe that this worldview has immense implications for social work with Indigenous people and people in general.

Another Indigenous worldview that I found to be particularly important in doing this work in a good way is understanding that families can heal and flourish when many individuals are brought together to support the family (Baskin, 2016). This worldview highlights the importance of widening a family's circle of care in order to help them function in a healthier

manner (Baskin, 2016) This worldview was very prominent throughout my practicum and I was able to observe many instances where this was proven to be true. Oftentimes, workers would bring in various support services, community representatives, and extended family members to help support families. Often, I was able to observe the ways that this helped families not only address the challenges they were facing but also become more empowered. I believe this is a crucial part of doing this work in a good way. Families often need to be wrapped in services and given the opportunity to work at creating healthier environment for themselves and their children.

Self-care

Now that I have presented the importance of Indigenous worldviews, the next section will discuss the importance of self-care. As Baskin (2016) states, helpers need to be healthy in their physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological selves in order to truly be of help to others. Throughout my practicum, I learned how true this statement is. During the final week of my practicum, I began to burn out. I was not caring for myself as I was busy going to practicum four days per week while also working. Throughout much of my practicum, I engaged in self-care and was able to juggle work and my practicum. However, I stopped caring for myself about two to three weeks before my placement ended because I was focused on attending every single investigation, home visit, meeting, and any other learning opportunity I could. This meant that I was staying at practicum late almost every day. I rationalized this as trying to take part in every learning opportunity that I could. I was not forced to do this, rather I loved what I was learning and was not ready for the practicum to end. However, in hindsight, I see that this was not healthy. Not caring for myself was beginning to take its toll on my physical, spiritual, psychological, and emotional wellbeing. During my last week of placement, I became sick with a

cold. I also felt exhausted and was irritable with my friends and family. I also became very emotional and felt overwhelmed by things that would normally not phase me.

I believe that this happened to teach me something. This experience taught me that I need to prioritize caring for myself. If I do not, I will not be able to work with families in helpful and meaningful ways because I will be preoccupied with my own needs. There were many ways that I cared for every aspect of myself throughout my practicum. Practices that I engaged in to care for my physical well-being include walking, eating nutritious foods, going to the gym, doing yoga, drinking enough water, and prioritizing sleep. To care for my psychological well-being I journaled, spoke with my supervisors, drew in colouring books, knitted, and gave myself time to myself. As an introvert, I require time to myself. Therefore, I was very mindful of my time and energy and tried to be aware of when I required this time. When I did require time to myself, I took it without judging myself.

In order to care for my emotional well-being, I made sure to practice self-compassion, laugh with my coworkers, spend time with my dogs, watch movies and television shows that I enjoyed, and spend time with my friends and family. For my spiritual self-care I would do yoga, spend time outdoors, and meditate. These practices were a significant part of ensuring that I was well enough to do this work in a good way. These are practices that I continue to follow as much as possible. One part of self-care that I believe is important is being mindful of what you need. It can be overwhelming to try and eat right, exercise, get enough sleep, drink enough water, do yoga, and spend time with friends and family daily. For me, some self-care practices are required daily including ensuring I have had enough sleep and engaging in something that I enjoy. However, I become overwhelmed by having to complete a self-care practice for each aspect of myself on a daily basis. Therefore, I try to ask myself what I need most and I try to follow what

my intuition is telling me. This ensures that I am well enough to prioritize and focus on helping families address their concerns and needs.

Nogdawindamin takes many steps in order to try and encourage self-care for workers. The agency sends out monthly challenges that encourage workers to engage in self-care in a holistic manner. Workers would be incentivized to complete activities that they enjoy and share those activities in order to have a chance to win money or gift cards. From my experience, Rachel and Sandra were also advocating for workers to take time to care for themselves. I often observed Rachel checking in with workers to see how much over time they have been working and encourage them to take time away from work. Nogdawindamin also offers cultural services to staff and encourages workers to reach out when they need support.

Culture

For many of the families that were involved with Nogdawindamin, cultural teachings and ceremonies were part of their healing and growth. My practicum highlighted the important role culture has for many Anishinaabe people in their healing journey. It is important to note that there are cultural differences among each Anishinaabe community (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). It was important for me to learn as much as I could about Anishinaabe cultures and the ways that culture helps families heal.

As a non-Indigenous person, I would not take specific Anishinaabe practices and try to use them when working with Indigenous families. As I mentioned in the literature review, it is important that non-Indigenous social workers make space for Indigenous worldviews, but specific cultural practices must remain in the hands of Indigenous people (Baskin, 2016). Within Nogdawindamin, workers were able to refer families to the cultural department in order to ensure

that families were healing while also ensuring that cultural practices remain in the hands of Indigenous people.

One thing that I learned and was reminded of throughout my practicum was that culture refers to much more than ceremonies and practices. Rather, Anishinaabe culture is the unique way that Anishinaabe people live. My supervisor, Rachel, often highlighted that culture for many Anishinaabe people goes beyond ceremony. I spent a great deal of my time learning about Anishinaabe cultures by attending ceremonies, gatherings, sitting with a Traditional Knowledge Keeper, speaking with cultural staff, and speaking with supervisors. Through all of this, I was able to learn about the power that Anishinaabe culture holds and the importance of culture within communities. Many of the families that I worked with spoke of the importance of culture in their lives and in their healing. I believe that it is very important for non-Indigenous social workers to learn as much as possible about the culture of the community or communities they are working within. This is an important part of doing this work in a good way because as I mentioned, culture refers to the way that Indigenous people live. Therefore, the more non-Indigenous social workers understand about the culture of the communities they are working with, the better they can understand and help families.

An important component of including Anishnaabe culture in service provision is also meeting families where they are at. Throughout this report, I have discussed the far-reaching implications that colonization has had on Indigenous communities of Turtle Island. As mentioned in the literature, Europeans forced their way of life on Indigenous people which resulted in cultural genocide (Blackstock, 2003). Therefore, many Indigenous families are not connected to their culture. From my experience, Nogdawindamin focused on meeting families where they were at regarding culture. This means that if a family did not feel a connection or

want a connection to their culture, families were not forced to participate in cultural practices. If a family did not have a connection to their culture but wanted to build one Nogdawindamin staff would assist with this. Additionally, if families felt a connection to their culture and wanted their services to incorporate culture, this would occur. Nogdawindamin services always sought to ensure that families were met where they are at.

Seven Grandfather Teachings

Through my practicum, I also learned that a significant part of doing this work in a good way within the seven First Nation communities served by Nogdawindamin included practicing in a way that was congruent with the Seven Grandfather Teachings. For me, these teachings are a very important part of doing this work in a good way. I believe that these teachings are important to follow not only when working with Indigenous families and communities but also non-Indigenous people. I have already briefly discussed these teachings, but I want to discuss how I worked to follow these teachings and the ways I believe following these teachings have helped my work with families.

The first teaching I want to highlight is Nibwaakaawin (Wisdom). Wisdom is a crucial part of doing this work in a good way. It is important in child welfare to cherish knowledge and understand that everyone is given knowledge (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). We need to have wisdom and knowledge to know how to help families and to have a better understanding of the problems that families are facing. We also need to seek out knowledge from families and community representatives because they often have a better understanding of the situation than we do as non-Indigenous helpers. From my experience throughout my practicum, I saw the importance of sharing knowledge with each other. I observed workers listen and learn from families and community representatives and because they did this, they were more effective and helpful. If

workers went into homes and did not listen to families or community representatives, they likely would have an inaccurate understanding of the family's situation and would likely suggest solutions that did not work for families. Workers who do not try to learn from families are thus often unhelpful and create more harm. Similarly, I observed many families sit and listen to our perspective as child welfare workers and learn our point of view which often helped us plan together and find solutions and steps to move forward together.

Zaagi'idiwin (Love) is also a crucial element of doing this work in a good way. Through my practicum, I heard countless times that a significant part of love is showing kindness towards people. I have always held the belief that people deserve to be loved unconditionally and when people are hurting, they need to feel loved (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). This is especially applicable for the families and children I worked with during my practicum. The families we worked with were hurting and many of them were fearful of us coming into their homes. I observed that the most helpful workers were those who were kind, compassionate, and genuinely cared for the families that they were working with. Families felt more comfortable opening up and working with helpers who showed that love. Even families who were initially very angry and fearful of workers were better able to work with us when they felt that kindness.

Another crucial part of doing this work in a good way is Minaadendamowin (Respect). Every part of creation deserves respect and those who wish to be respected must give respect (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). Families and communities must be respected. Non-Indigenous helpers must respect the families and communities they are working with. They must also respect Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and cultures in order to do this work in a good way. Without this respect, families and communities will be harmed and will not engage with workers. Like families and communities needing to feel love and kindness they also need to feel respected.

Although I never witnessed Nogdawindamin workers being disrespectful with families and communities, I have seen and heard about other service providers outside of the agency disrespecting families. When families would talk about these situations it was apparent that there was no way for them to move forward with this service to address the struggles they were facing. This is a significant barrier and highlights the importance of having respect for everything and everyone.

Aakode-ewin (Bravery) is also a significant part of doing this work in a good way. Bravery means doing “what is right even when the consequences are unpleasant” (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). When working in child welfare there are many instances where workers have to have difficult conversations with families. These difficult conversations must always be respectful and kind but regardless of this, families may not always immediately understand the workers perspective. Families may react out of fear and anger. I have seen this occur many times throughout my practicum. Despite this, these conversations must occur, and workers must not try to hide away from these conversations just because they are uncomfortable. These conversations help families understand the concerns that workers have and help families realize the importance of addressing these concerns for the wellbeing of the family as a whole.

Gwayakwaadiziwin (Honesty) is also a crucial part of doing this work in a good way. This teaching encourages people to be honest not only with their words but also their actions (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). From my understanding, this means acting in a way that is honest and true to your values and beliefs. I have always believed that helpers need to be authentic and genuine with the families they are working with. Additionally, it is important to do what you say you are going to do when working with families. This was something I often observed throughout my practicum. For example, if a family was struggling with housing and a worker

said they were going to support them and advocate with them they appreciated when workers would stay true to their word and support them. This helped families trust the workers and build alliances with them.

I believe that Dabaadendiziwin (Humility) is one of the most significant teachings for child welfare workers. Although it is important to follow all the teachings, humility is crucial to do this work in a good way. Humility is understanding that we are all equal and no one is more valued than another (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). As mentioned previously, child welfare helpers have a great deal of power in their roles. This power can be very blinding and can easily make people think they are better than others. It is crucial that child welfare helpers understand that they are not better than the families they are working with and that our minds often hold colonial and racist ideologies due to the way we have been socialized. I often heard families express that they felt inferior to workers. Workers were always very quick to discuss this with families and remind them that they had their own strengths and gifts. I also observed workers own up to making mistakes when they would forget to do something that a family had asked them to do for them. I often heard workers say to families that they made a mistake and would apologize. The best workers I interacted with were the ones that also acknowledged that they did not know everything. They knew their gifts and their strengths, and they sought out the support and guidance of those who had different strengths and gifts. From my perspective, this was the best way of supporting families.

The final teaching is Debwewin (Truth). This teaching encourages people to speak their truth (Nogdawindamin, n.d.). When working with families it is important to speak your truth in a brave, kind, respectful, and honest manner. This is important in many ways for those wishing to work in child welfare in a good way. Not only is it important for working with families for them

to understand the concerns that we have but also when working with other professionals. It is important because we need to be able to advocate for the families we work with when they are being treated poorly by others. There were many instances where workers would have to speak their truth to teachers, principals, and people working in housing. I remember one of the workers having a very difficult conversation with another professional because they were taking advantage of a family we were working with. During these situations we must voice our objections in order to help families move forward and address concerns they are facing.

Learning Mindset

Throughout my practicum, I found that a crucial part of doing this work in a good way involves maintaining a learning mindset. I believe this is important when engaging in any kind of social work practice. However, for me, it was especially important as a non-Indigenous social worker working with Indigenous communities. There are many reasons that maintaining a learning mindset is essential to doing this work in a good way. First, this mindset is important because non-Indigenous social workers will never fully understand the oppression and challenges that Indigenous people experience. Therefore, they need to maintain a learning mindset and not assume that they know or understand the experiences of the children and families they work with. I have also found that having a learning mindset has allowed me to be open and learn from communities, families, and workers. I have learned and grown immensely throughout this practicum because I was open to learning. I believe child welfare workers can learn and grow when they are open to learning.

Second, I have found that I was less likely to be judgmental when I held a learning mindset. This is especially important in child welfare. Child welfare social workers walk into homes normally with the intention of completing an investigation. The entire reason for the

investigation is that we have received information about a family, and we believe a child or children may be at risk of harm. Therefore, if workers do not have a learning mindset, they may be at risk of making assumptions regarding the situation and family before they even speak with the family. However, if workers enter homes with a learning mindset and seek to understand what is occurring, their assessments will be much more accurate and representative of what is happening. Thus, the support that workers put in place will be much more helpful and workers will be much less likely to harm families.

Third, I believe everyone should possess a learning mindset because it helps them evolve and shift throughout their lives as things change. From my experience, this is very important in social work especially in child welfare. During my practicum, every day was different, and workers were constantly presented with new challenges that they had to adapt to and work to solve with families. Unless workers possess a learning mindset, they will not be able to learn from their mistakes or challenges that they were faced with. I also believe having a learning mindset helps workers be more compassionate with themselves. When I was completing my practicum, there were many instances where I felt I had no idea what I was doing. However, having a learning mindset helped me understand that these moments of uncertainty were allowing me to grow and learn. This was very helpful in allowing myself to be new at something and allow myself to be unsure.

Ally Bill of Responsibilities

During my practicum, I was given a very insightful guide outlining the responsibilities that allies have developed by Lynn Gehl. This section will highlight some of the more prominent and applicable responsibilities that I observed throughout my practicum. The first responsibility allies have is to act towards ending oppression in a genuine and authentic manner rather than out

of guilt (Gehl, n.d.). I believe this is crucial because if we are acting out of guilt then we are more focused on ourselves than trying to make changes to move families forward. Allies must also ensure that their needs come second to the needs of Indigenous people they work with and serve (Gehl, n.d.). This is important because workers can easily become focused on the stress they are experiencing in their own personal and professional lives instead of focusing on helping the family they are working with.

Additionally, allies need to be grounded in their own traditions, customs, and heritage to prevent themselves from falling into the trap of “wannabe syndrome” (Gehl, n.d., p. 1). This was something I found to be particularly important. As a result of knowing myself and my own traditions I was able to make space for Indigenous knowledge and culture without trying to take it from the hands of Indigenous people. Following this responsibility, Gehl (n.d.) highlights that allies must have an in-depth understanding of their privilege and acknowledge those privileges. The importance of possessing this understanding has been highlighted throughout this report. Allies must also be aware of their ignorance regarding understanding the oppression that Indigenous people face and keep this ignorance in mind (Gehl, n.d.). It is important that allies understand that they will never be fully knowledgeable about the oppression that Indigenous people face because without this understanding, they may ignorantly act in ways that are harmful and oppressive.

Another responsibility involves ensuring that allies gain knowledge and wisdom from those who have critical thinking skills rather than just anyone (Gehl, n.d.). This I believe is very critical to ensure that allies are not following the instructions of people who could cause further harm to Indigenous communities. Allies must also ensure that there is an agreement within the

community of what their role is as an ally (Gehl, n.d.). This is important to ensure that allies are not acting in ways that are harmful and that contradict the actions of the community.

The twelfth responsibility is to ensure that the movement that they are supported is truly serving the people in which the movement exists for. This is important as it is easy for allies to support a movement they believe is helping while the movement is causing more struggle and harm to communities. An additional responsibility is that allies must not take up time at community events and meetings; rather, allies should be listening and observing more than speaking (Gehl, n.d.). This was something I ensured to follow during ceremonies and teachings. I tried to absorb as much information as possible, but I was cognizant that these spaces were not for me; rather, they were for the communities and people that the agency served. The final responsibility listed by Gehl (n.d.) is for allies to take responsibility for educating themselves about how they can be a more helpful ally. I believe this is crucial because we cannot expect Indigenous people to constantly educate allies about the oppression they are facing. Not only is this exhausting for Indigenous people but it also takes time away from their work towards change.

These responsibilities are constantly in my mind when I work with Indigenous people and families. Many of these responsibilities have been addressed at various points in my report. These responsibilities are important when working with Indigenous people in the context of child welfare. They are important because it is easy to make mistakes and unknowingly harm families and communities. Therefore, by following this bill of responsibility and being cognizant of the problems brought forward by Gehl, we are less likely to cause harm.

Challenges and Pathways forward

Distrust of the child welfare system

Now that I have discussed what I have learned about doing this work in a good way, I am going to highlight some of the challenges associated with doing this work in a good way. One of the first challenges that I noticed during my practicum is that there remains an immense amount of distrust between Indigenous people and child welfare workers. Many of the families made various comments about child welfare workers being non-Indigenous. Even Indigenous child welfare workers have difficulty engaging with families. From what I have seen, this distrust is directed not at workers but at the system. From my perspective, this distrust is only natural given the history of colonialism and specifically the sixties scoop. I worked with many families who had been impacted by the sixties scoop and heard many families discuss the ways that the sixties scoop harmed their family.

It is understandable that Indigenous people and communities do not trust the child welfare system. However, this distrust can create barriers for workers trying to assess the safety of children and in trying to support families. I have observed many instances where workers became more intrusive through the court system in order to assess and ensure that children are safe. Although this is rare because workers only involve the court system when they absolutely must, it does occur. These situations are not the fault of families. Rather, they are the direct result of the injustices that Indigenous people have faced at the hands of the Canadian government. However, it does at times make working with families in good ways difficult.

Therefore, the question remains, what are some of the pathways forward regarding this? From what I have seen throughout my practicum, one of the pathways forwards is to engage with families and try to build a relationship with them. This means trying to talk with families, acknowledge the family's distrust and have compassion and empathy for them. It also means

meeting families where they are at and trying to understand their perspectives. Although I have already discussed the importance of engaging with families in these ways, I believe they are particularly relevant when working with a family that does not trust the child welfare system. I have personally witnessed families begin to trust workers and accept the support of Nogdawindamin when workers engage with families in these ways. That does not mean that families and communities will trust workers. However, from what I have seen it does increase the likelihood that families will work with workers to address concerns. In order for individuals to trust in the child welfare system, child welfare agencies must act in ways that build trust.

That is, being transparent and developing programs, policies, and practices that aim at helping families address protection concerns while keeping families together. I also believe that it is important that child welfare agencies discuss the ways that they have been responsible for the harm that Indigenous people and communities have experienced. This understanding also helps agencies understand the ways that child welfare should not be conducted and instead inform the ways that the agencies should operate.

Emotional impact on workers

Another challenge that I noticed exists when trying to do this work in a good way, is that working in child welfare is exhausting and can be emotionally draining. Child welfare workers hear very heart wrenching stories and try to help families cope with immense pains that dates back several decades and even centuries. This pain is very real for families and it is difficult not to be impacted by the pain that families experience. Although many of the workers are very good at allowing themselves to feel for families without becoming overwhelmed by those feelings, this can be difficult especially when workers are not caring for themselves or have high caseloads and are constantly trying to address different crises.

There are many pathways forward regarding this. First, it is important that workers engage in self-care in order to ensure that they are well enough to help families. For me, part of this is also reminding yourself that the pain you are experiencing does not belong to you and is not yours to carry. I believe it is important to have empathy for families but not to take on their pain. For me it helps to remind myself that I am there to help families cope with their pain and provide services that support them not to bear their pain for them. Another pathway forward is ensuring that workers feel supported by their workplaces and supervisors. Throughout my practicum, if I was having difficulty with something, I knew I could always speak with one of my supervisors for support. This is very important in order to ensure that workers are not carrying around what does not belong to them.

Structural implications

As I mentioned in the literature review, the consequences of colonialism are far reaching and have significant impact on Indigenous people and communities (Blackstock, 2003). Communities unfortunately struggle trying to address violence (Libesman, 2014), poor housing, substance misuse, intergenerational trauma (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004), and neglect (Trocmé, et al., 2005). The communities along the North Shore that Nogdawindamin services are not an exception to this. Unfortunately, child welfare agencies are not equipped to solve the problems that communities are facing (Libesman, 2014). However, from my experience, there is often an expectation that they solve these complex problems. I have been part of many conversations where individuals believe child welfare agencies have not done enough to address issues such as poverty and partner violence. That is not to say that agencies do not have a role in solving these key issues, because they do. However, they cannot take on this responsibility alone. I often observed supervisors and workers try to solve large structural issues without having the

proper resources to do this. I observed workers feel defeated and those working outside of child welfare become very frustrated with the agency that more cannot be done.

In this regard there are many pathways forward. First, I believe it is important that child welfare social workers educate other professionals, students, and society as a whole and help them understand that child welfare agencies cannot hold the responsibility of ensuring the safety of children and addressing structural issues alone. Although the child welfare system has its flaws and there are workers in the child welfare system that harm families there needs to be a shift in the way that we think about the child welfare system. Rather than focusing on blaming individual agencies, I believe frustrations should be directed at governments that are allowing communities to struggle with these complex problems and not doing more to address these issues. That is not to say that we should ignore the harm that some agencies and workers have caused but we need to focus on a solution to these problems. From my perspective, one of the main solutions to this problem is to look at larger structural solutions such as basic income programs and other preventative programs aimed at addressing problems such as poverty, violence, and addictions.

Governments need to implement large structural interventions in order to reduce child neglect within Indigenous communities (Blackstock, Brown, & Bennett, 2007). This is something Indigenous communities have been fighting for and advocating for because they understand that this is a real solution to significantly reducing child neglect within their communities (Blackstock et al., 2007). If we want to see real improvements in regard to the safety and wellbeing of children and their families we must all advocate to provincial and federal governments to provide primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention intervention strategies aimed at eliminating structural factors that contribute to child maltreatment (Blackstock et al., 2007).

An additional challenge to doing this work in a good way involves agencies having to follow standards and legislative frameworks that are often incongruent with Indigenous people and communities' ways of ensuring the safety of children and the wellbeing of families (Sinclair, 2016). As Sinclair (2016) states, provincial governments have developed standards and legislations that child welfare agencies must follow. This is also not an exception for Nogdawindamin. As a mandated child welfare agency, Nogdawindamin must meet the standards and legislation set out by the Ontario government. From what I observed, these standards and legislative frameworks did not always mesh well with Indigenous ways of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and families.

I believe Nogdawindamin has moved forward in this regard in many ways. For example, Nogdawindamin has taken control of the provision of child welfare services from mainstream child welfare agencies for First Nation communities along the North Shore. Nogdawindamin continues to move forward by trying to work within the standards while also working in ways that are more culturally relevant. Although I cannot discuss specific examples in order to ensure confidentiality, there are many instances where workers and supervisors are successfully able to “massage the standards” as my supervisor Sandra would say. For example, if a worker has to bring a child to a place of safety, they will often find various creative ways to ensure that the child is able to stay with family even if the family does not necessarily meet provincial standards. I believe that this is certainly a pathway forward for all Indigenous child welfare agencies. Although this is certainly a pathway forward, I do not believe this is the end goal.

I believe the most crucial pathway forward is ensuring that Indigenous people truly have the right to self-determination and control over the provision of child welfare services (Blackstock et al., 2007). For me, this means that First Nation communities adhere to their own

standards and laws for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and their families rather than having to adhere to guidelines set out by provincial and federal governments (Blackstock et al., 2007). In the literature review, I have outlined the many ways that Indigenous people are moving forward in relation to self-determination. I do not believe it is my place to tell Indigenous people how they should move towards self-determination. However, as a non-Indigenous person, I do believe it is my responsibility to support Indigenous people in their right to self-determination. I believe non-Indigenous social workers have a crucial role to play in this. We need to support Indigenous people in their right to self-determination by listening to communities and following direction from Indigenous people (Gehl, n.d.).

Conclusion

Throughout my practicum, I was able to increase my understanding of what it means to work with Indigenous people in the context of child welfare in a good way. This paper has highlighted my learning journey throughout my advanced practicum with Nogdawindamin Family and Community services. The first chapter provided an introduction which highlighted the strengths of Indigenous communities, various worldviews of parenting, Indigenous worldviews and knowledge as well as theories and practices approaches that were important throughout my practicum. These approaches and theories include anti-colonialism, anti-oppressive practice, self-reflexivity, and social location. The second chapter of this report consisted of a literature review that aimed at providing some general information that has allowed me to better understand the current state of the child welfare system. The third chapter provided further contextual information that described the agency I completed my practicum with as well as specific details around my practicum experience. The fourth chapter focused specifically on what I learned about doing this work in a good way as well as the challenges that

exist when trying to work with Indigenous people in the context of child welfare in a good way and the pathways forward.

From my perspective, doing this work in a good way means engaging in anti-colonialism. That is, responding to oppression in a holistic manner, being mindful of privilege and colonial moments (Kempf, 2009a), as well as recovering and maintaining Indigenous knowledge (Simpson, 2004). Doing this work in a good way also includes practicing anti-oppressively. Components of anti-oppressive practice that I found important include self-reflection, highlighting strengths while at the same time understanding the hardships and challenges families face due to unjust social systems (Baines, 2011), possessing an understanding the history of colonialism (Freeman, 2011), examining you power, using your power appropriately to help families, as well as creating goals that are important for both the family and protection workers (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Additional components that are important include respecting and honouring the stories that families have decided to share with workers, understanding the perspective of parents (Thomas, 2015), building alliances with families, and workers genuinely caring about the families that they are working with (Dumbril, 2011).

Self-reflexivity is also an important component of doing this work in a good way (Thomas, 2015). Specifically, I found it important to be honest while reflecting, not allowing myself to get caught up in my own shame when reflecting, examining where my thoughts were coming from, and journaling (Thomas, 2015). Making space for Indigenous worldviews was a crucial part of working with Indigenous people in the context of child welfare in a good way. Some of these worldviews include focusing on the best interest of the community, viewing everything in a holistic manner, bringing in many different individuals to support families

(Baskin, 2016), and ensuring that community representatives are part of our work with families (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014). Additionally, we also need to ensure that we are making self-care a priority and that we are caring for ourselves in a holistic manner (Baskin, 2016).

Additionally, a key component of this work is having an understanding that for many people, culture is a significant part of healing. As a non-Indigenous person, I learned the importance of guiding families to speak with Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers when they wanted culture to be part of their healing. I also learned that culture is more than specific ceremonies and traditional practices; rather, culture refers to a way of life. Another important part of this is meeting people and families where they are at and allowing them to make their own decisions regarding the involvement of culture in their healing. Another crucial component of doing this work in a good way with Anishinaabe people involves working with families in a way that follows the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Throughout my practicum, I learned the importance of having Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth when working with families (Nogdawindamin, n.d.).

Doing this work in a good way also means having a learning mindset throughout my work with children, families, and communities. That is, understanding that I will never know everything, that I will always be learning, and being open to this learning in order to understand how we can continue to move forward and do this work in a good way. Finally, I learned to apply the Ally Bill of Responsibilities developed by Lynn Gehl to my work and the importance of following this bill in order to do this work in a good way.

Despite all that I have learned throughout my practicum, I believe that it is important to note that I am still learning what it means to do this work in a good way. The knowledge I have

developed from this four-month practicum cannot possibly reflect all the learning I will continue to do throughout my work with Indigenous families and communities. However, this report does reflect the growth that I have experienced throughout my practicum. My focus as I move forward from this experience is to continue to be vulnerable, to learn from families and communities, and to help families and communities continue to move towards self-governance and self-determination.

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