

Grief, Trauma & Healing

by

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Abstract

How do we understand non-physical trauma and experiences of grief in our society? And, how do we heal from a traumatic experience and move past our grief? Does Western medicine heal, or does it numb our symptoms to a point where we think we are healed? This research is an autoethnography that investigates the author's experience with loss. This research compares Western medicine's focus on healing the mind/body and Indigenous methods focused on healing the Spirit. The first uses a combination of prescriptions and counselling and the second draws upon ceremonies and traditional medicines. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge that will be useful to others struggling with the complexity of trauma and the methods that are used in healing.

Keywords

Ceremony, Indigenous healing, Western medicine, healing, Spirit, offerings, land, Mother Earth.

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

1.1 Locating Self

Boozhoo ninduwaymahgunnidoog, Memingwaans indijshinikaas Migizi ndodem, Ojibway Anishinaabe Midekwe indow. That translates to: “Hello all my relatives, my name is butterfly, and my clan is migizi. I am a Mide woman of the Ojibway Nation from this part of the Earth, they call Turtle Island.” My home communities are Wikwemikong and Dokis First Nations. I grew up in a traditional family, learning about my culture and who I am as an Anishinaabe Kwe. Learning the ways of my ancestors and carrying on those teachings for future generations. The following paragraphs present the experience that prompted this research on grief, trauma, and healing.

When I was thinking about what I wanted to do after graduating from my B.A. I didn't know what I wanted. It was my little brother Spencer, who suggested that I continue my education to investigate master's degrees that could help me zero in on what I wanted to do for my future. He encouraged me to apply. When I got accepted into the program, he was the first one I called to tell him the news. He was so excited for me that he brought me out for breakfast to celebrate. My original intention for my thesis topic was to look at education regarding Indigenous Youth. On August 22, 2018, my little brother took his last breath and started his journey back to the Spirit World, a couple weeks before I was going to start my first class.

My connection to this topic has been the life I've been living since August 22, 2018. I had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder from the trauma that I experienced when seeing my little brother and the events that took place. Figure 1.0 is how I remember my brother. We always loved being outdoors when we were kids and as we grew older.

Figure 1.1.0 Spencer, my dad and I on a ski trip



Note. This photo is part of my journey in healing from grief and is also a critical part of Indigenous methodology.

1.2 Setting the Context

On August 22, 2018, I was out visiting with my Dad and we were talking about getting together with Spencer for dinner in the next couple of days. I drove back home and was having a bite. I received a phone call from my mom who told me that I needed to come because my

brother wasn't breathing. I immediately ran out of the house and jumped into my car. My heart was racing, I didn't know what I was walking into or what had happened at all. I was just told I needed to be there with him as soon as I could. I met my dad where Spencer was, and someone let us into the building to go and see him. We walked into the apartment and Spence was laying on the floor in the living room. The paramedics had stopped working on him by the time we got there. They weren't sure how long he had stopped breathing.

I remember collapsing next to him, feeling sadness and pain in every millimeter of my body. I kept repeating "this is my brother; this is my brother." Touching his face, holding his hand, and hugging his body that was still warm, but I could feel he wasn't there anymore. Paramedics, firefighters, and police officers were standing in a circle behind him, watching my dad and I with Spence. It was the first and only time that I had felt absolutely lost and nothing made sense to me. I felt the grief overtake my body.

We had a saying 'best friends before siblings. We were each other's protectors, and I didn't know what to do without him. A life continued without my best friend seemed impossible. It was at that moment that my little brother came to me. He came in confident, strong and with the most amount of love and said "You're staying here Ash, you have your work to do here. You are not walking alone, I am here. Continue moving forward. When you feel like you can't walk anymore, I'll be here to push you to keep walking. I will guide you. You are strong. One foot in front of the other." My brother always had unconditional encouragement and love for me. In that moment in time, there was work that I needed to do. That was to make sure that Spence was taken care of in the most beautiful way possible, to get him ready for his journey back home.

Figure 1.1 is a picture of Spencer and I on a family trip to the west coast of Canada. We were inseparable ever since we were kids. We were always goofy together and laughing with each other.

Figure 1.1 Spencer and I as kids



Note. This photo is a part of my healing journey, showing the connection between my little brother and me.

I stayed with Spencer's vessel for the four-day Midewiwin traditional funeral that we had done for him. We held his funeral in the Midewiwin lodge where family and friends were invited. The teachings and the understanding that I had gained from the traditional funeral was truly a gift, to me the most beautiful way to start the healing journey for the people that my little brother had touched throughout his short life.

For the first couple of months after Spencer had passed away, I had a lot of triggers that would put me into a state of panic and anxiety from the trauma that I had experienced. I had to learn how to recognize those triggers and learn how to move through them as best I could. I became overly sensitive and aware of my environment when I was outside of my comfort zone, which was my house. Attending university and going to classes were internal challenges for me. Learning how to be okay in a setting I wasn't comfortable in during that time.

Healing was the only solution that I had to learn how to be comfortable in uncomfortable situations. My Dad brought me to see a Traditional Medicine Man to help me work through the PTSD that I was experiencing. He told me that I needed to work through it by accepting the events that took place - working on them one piece at a time and accepting them for what they were. I also had to accept that it was Spencer's time to go home because he was called back by the Creator.

As a Midewiwin woman, we have teachings about blood memory and how our blood can carry the memories of our ancestors. This can mean that trauma is passed down through the blood lines of our ancestors before us. And we can have triggers that bring us down without even realizing it.

I was raised to be aware of the impact on our spirit that the physical traumas we may endure throughout our life. We carry that trauma until we gain the tools to start releasing it in a healthy way. If we were to compare trauma on a physical level, we may think about the biggest scars on our body. Mine is on my knee. When I look at that scar, I can remember that day. I was running up the down escalator as a child with Spencer during a family trip at the Mall of America in Minneapolis. My parents told us to stop what we were doing because it was

dangerous, and we could get hurt. I continued to have my fun and I fell and pierced my knee on the edge of the escalator stair. When I look at that scar, I can remember the pain I was in, the scared faces of my brothers and parents when they realized what I had done. They brought me to the mall medic who patched me up. There was a lesson to be learned from that experience, and most of the experiences when we get hurt. Trauma is the same. Although trauma isn't a physical scar, we can go back to that scar on our Spirit, and we can remember everything. But we need to treat it while it is a wound and take care of it.

I understand the differences between Western medicine and Indigenous healing. Western medicine focuses on your cognitive mind (the body) and how we trick those thoughts and brain behaviors to forget about the trauma, while using pharmaceutical drugs to change our brain behavior. With these pharmaceuticals, there are a ton of side effects. Some family and friends have been on antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications, and they have talked about some of the side effects. They've shared how these medications helped them to feel numb and able to do normal things within society, but not facing or dealing with any of the pain that they are feeling.

Indigenous healing focuses on the balance between mind, body, and spirit. Trauma and grief can create an imbalance. Focusing on the mind thinking too much, may cause us to neglect our body and Spirit. Being able to heal our Spirit happens through our ceremonies, our traditional medicines and facing those memories in a healthy way. The healing journey is a process that can be difficult to navigate as we must look within ourselves and find those wounds. We must understand what they are to learn how to treat them in a good way.

1.3 Statement of the Issue and Research Objectives

This research is a very personal undertaking and is meant to inform others about the complexity of trauma, grief and healing and the methods that are utilized (Indigenous and Western). It is with these thoughts that these research objectives guide my journey:

- to examine Indigenous ways of healing regarding trauma and grief; this will be addressed by looking at the different ceremonies, practices, and community involvement in this very difficult journey.
- to investigate Western ways of dealing with healing regarding trauma and grief. This will be approached through looking at the use of prescriptions, counselling, doctors, and health community support.; and,
- to situate these two approaches in my own story of grief, trauma, and healing.

I have been situating myself in my research to have a better understanding and knowledge of how I am going to conduct and present it. There have been a variety of articles and books that I have been looking at regarding autoethnography, healing, grief, and trauma. These sources have helped me in arriving at an approach that I will be taking in my work. Because this topic is near and dear to me, I want to have my own reflections and knowledge present. This is essential to Indigenous methodology.

I am going through my own grief, trauma and healing with traditional medicines and ceremonies. This has had a huge impact on my healing process. In comparison to others in my family and friends' groups who have been using Western medicine. I have been advised about the knowledge that has been shared and gifted to me regarding my own healing journey and been

told that it is not only for me. Healing is not just for one person. It is for my family, my friends, and people who I have not yet met. An Elder told me that I will be helping others who have gone through similar experiences with a traumatic loss on their healing journey as well, once I have healed myself.

Spencer had a four-day traditional funeral. He was brought into our sacred Midewiwin lodge while he was still close to his vessel. We spent these four days doing things that he loved to do. Playing cards, telling stories, staying up and laughing, eating his favourite foods. When we were little and we were scared during the night, we would sneak into our parents' room and sleep on their floor at the end of their bed. We would bring our own pillows and blankets. During Spencer's four-day funeral in our lodge, I slept on the ground beside his vessel every night. I stayed beside him as much as I could before we had to say goodbye to his vessel. To most people, this means that they are saying goodbye forever. For Anishinaabe, it is "I will see you again."

The initial year of a loved one's passing requires you to experience a lot of firsts. Those are the tough ones. The first birthday without your loved one. Family traditions, holidays and daily conversations aren't going to be the same.

In Spencer's first year of passing (August 22, 2019) we fed his Spirit, acknowledging him on his journey to the Spirit World. Shared stories and teachings advised that we are not to hold onto any of Spencer's personal possessions or say his name during this time. This is because the Spirit will also go through their own grieving process. They are still close to the Earth and their relatives here. We are to encourage them to keep walking and not to call them back to us here. It

is at the first anniversary when our loved ones have arrived in the Spirit World. That we are allowed to call our loved ones back for help and we can start to use their names again.

The research that I am conducting is not about how to get over your grief and trauma. It is about sharing my knowledge of the healing journey that I have been on since my little brother's passing. The teachings, ceremonies, knowledge, books, articles, and stories that continue to be shared with me have helped me grow and learn how to accept events that have happened. I have learned how to speak my own truth that I carry, without being ashamed of it.

I had a dream a couple of weeks after Spencer had passed. I had been having a hard time walking my journey without him and he came to share his love and encouragement. In the following poem, I write about the dream in which my brother urges me to continue doing my work here on this Earth. To keep my feet grounded on this Earth.

His strong hands on my shoulders,

Tears are running down my face.

My heels are digging into the ground,

Pushing back as hard as I can.

His voice; strong, confident, concern and love

“Walk Ash.”

Tears running like a river,

“I don't want to.”

“Walk, one foot in front of the other”

My feet start going one in front of the other

“Keep going, you got this.”

“You have work to do here”

My body is moving forward

“I will be here to guide you”

“To push you, when you don’t feel like walking anymore”

One foot in front of the other.

Since August 22, 2018.

Gawaabmin Miinawaa Lil Bro

My understanding of this healing journey that I am on will last my entire life. There are days when I carry more sadness than others. There are days when I can’t stop laughing and feeling happy. We do not grieve something that is lost and never to be seen again. We grieve the physical memories that we have. The Spirit of our loved ones continues. We are just relearning how to build on a relationship of Spirit. We carry the lessons, love and memories that were shared with us, with our loved ones. That is the foundation of the new relationship that is being built, with none of the physical presence that we are accustomed to. It is a beautiful walk and the teachings that come from Spencer are recognized and acknowledged - especially in this piece of work.

My research is about my story. Stories to help to build relationships with others through my experiences. Maybe some will be able to relate and will find something in my journey to help them continue with theirs. My work will contain a lot of emotion. This is a way for me to speak my truth for others to hear. I want to share my journey because I know that there are so many more out there who experience grief and trauma. Hopefully my journey can assist others, create conversation, and develop resources for future generations. This is my story.

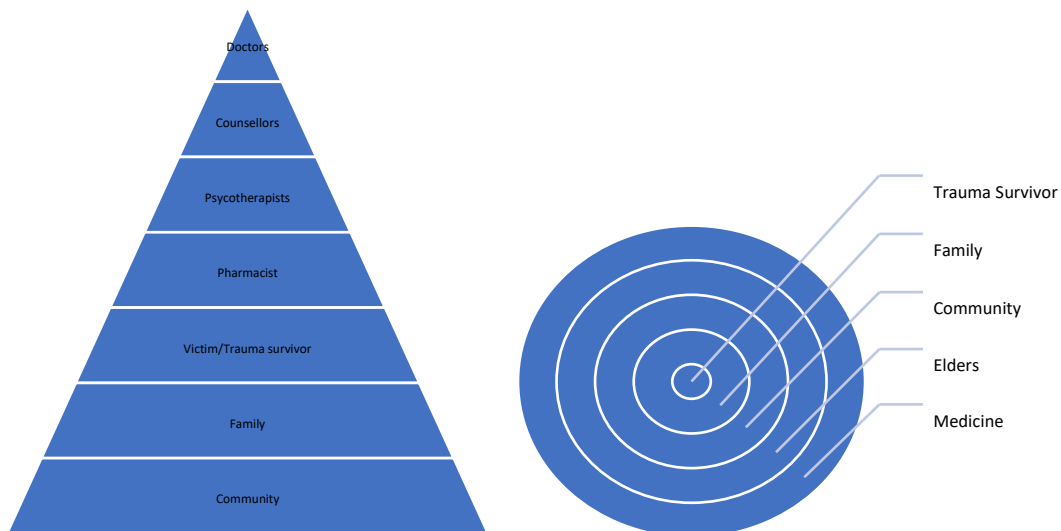
Chapter 2

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Healing is a complex journey that every individual will embark on at some point in the life of the two-legged. My own experience with healing has been in both Indigenous and Western approaches. The figure below documents my current understanding of Indigenous and Western approaches to healing practices. There are limitations that are evident to me within the Western way of dealing with grief. Indigenous ways (in my view) are inclusive and surrounded by community and helpers who are there to help the trauma survivor, family, and community.

Figure 2.1 Personal Model of Differences between Western Healing and Indigenous Healing



Note. This figure represents my personal and academic understanding of healing to date.

2.2 Literature on Grief, Trauma and Healing

The different literature on healing is complex and varied. Finding different articles and books on Indigenous practices when it comes to the healing journey are diverse. However, there is a gap and lack of acknowledgement about the Spiritual aspect of us as humans when it comes to healing through Western medicine. I have also started to expand my research using autoethnography as my method of investigation. This means learning about situating self into the research and being able to convey the message of your own trauma and connecting my own personal experiences to others and the scholarly literature around the topic. It facilitates part of my healing journey by helping to find the purpose and meaning of what has happened.

Indigenous Healing by Rupert Ross (Ross, 2017) talks about the entire healing process. Ross talks about his experiences on what he has learned through various Elders and ceremonies. How attending and speaking with these Elders has given him insights on some of the processes of healing. He acknowledges that the trauma, pain and suffering that Indigenous people are going through, in any situation, stems from colonization. The way that Indigenous people hurt themselves, or hurt others results from the oppression and abuse that we have been through as a People.

Having an understanding that we suffer as an entire people, he goes on to explain that we also heal as a people. When something happens to one of us, it affects the rest of us. It always

hits close to home when we hear about something that has happened to another Indigenous person. Even if we don't know them. We can make those connections because we see that intergenerational trauma is in all of us and our families. Even when we are urban Indians, or we think that we have moved past those pains. We are still in the process of trying to break that cycle and it will be a lifelong journey for many of us. We still see our loved ones leaving before we are ready.

Ross talks about the lack of awareness and concern when it comes to spiritualism. How in Indigenous traditional ways of healing, we pay attention to all four dimensions of our being. Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. He then goes on to explain how Western medicine tends to focus on three of the four dimensions of our being: physical, mental, and emotional.

“... constant attention be paid to their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Non-aboriginal medical specialists seem to agree that there are complex connections between our physical, mental and even emotional dimensions, but I have seldom seen any real discussion among western practitioners of the role of our spiritual dimension” (Ross, 2017, p. 227).

There is a holistic approach when it comes to Indigenous healing. That is the interconnectedness that Indigenous people believe in. There is no separation between anything, as everything is connected in some way. Also, regarding trauma, grief and healing, there should be an understanding that it does not just affect a singular person, there is a family, community and Nation that feels all those effects.

In *Ways of Knowing: An Introduction to Native Studies in Canada* (Belanger, 2018), Belanger talks about how there needs to be a balance between Indigenous and Western

knowledge. Throughout the school systems that we go through, there is a hidden curriculum of a colonized way of thinking. Through Indigenous perspectives it is important to keep a balanced life. Belanger found the following:

“No matter how well educated an Indian may become, he wrote, “he or she always suspects that Western culture is not an adequate representation of reality. Life therefore becomes a schizophrenic balancing act where in one holds the creation, migration and ceremonial stories of the tribe are true and that the Western European view of the world is also true” (Belanger, 2018, p. 4).

Although with the advancement in acknowledging that Indigenous perspectives and ways of teaching are being brought in, there is still a hierarchy way of learning and that is the Western way.

Belanger furthers this discussion by talking about the imbalance that Indigenous people are living in right now. When it comes to grief there is an imbalance in our Western health care system approaches. The lack of connecting the relationship between mind, body and spirit has left a very unbalanced way of healing or possibly no healing can be done. The imbalance that I am talking about (grief and trauma) is we tend to be stuck in that space. It took me months of healing and acceptance to try and get out of that space and to heal from it. In those months I wasn't taking care of my physical body, I wasn't eating properly, sleeping properly, or doing healthy activities to re-balance myself. I am not saying that the process we go through is wrong because our body goes into survival mode. We are trying our best to cope with what we are going through. But individuals who are working through grief and trauma, need to find that balance again. The challenge is to recognize that our equilibrium is off so that we can start

including healthy habits again. Figure 2.1 is the medicine wheel. This is a perfect way of showing the balance that we need to have. When we find ourselves focusing more on our physical being, our spiritual, emotional, and mental dimensions will not have as much energy put into them. That's when we can see ourselves struggling.

Figure 2.2 The Medicine Wheel – showing the balance that we need



Note. The medicine wheel can be used in showing many different elements that we need to be balanced in. Such as the four seasons or the four sacred medicines. But specifically for this diagram, it shows the balance that we need for our four dimensions of being. [photograph] by, (2019). Sherwoodheights. photograph. Retrieved February 12, 2021, from <https://www.sherwoodheights.org/home/news/post/finding-balance-with-indigenous-teachings>.

In *Writing and Righting Trauma: Troubling the Autoethnographic Voice* Sophie Tamas (Tamas 2009) talks about the battle that happens with someone who has experienced trauma and is trying to tell it in a way that can create change. There is controversy that we fight within ourselves on whether we are being too dramatic about our trauma and pain. We are our own biggest critics. For example, those internal thoughts that are within yourself about whether you are talking about it too much, or too little; sharing too much and worrying whether people are feeling sorry for you, or whether they understand what you're going through.

Self-reflection in a traumatic situation is hard. Especially when you start to write or talk about it. Having the right kind of voice and perspective on your topic is hard as well. The real trauma that you lived has been relayed in a voice where people can understand and get a lesson out of it. Almost like you need to remove yourself from that situation to have a more effective way in relaying your message to people.

Writing and Righting Trauma will help me in my research for understanding of some of the battles that I will face. Being so connected to the research that I am doing and the voice I have on the topic will be a difficult thing to do. It is a difficult subject for those who have experienced trauma in their lives. The power in writing about your trauma is that it gives voice to the truth that you have been through. What I have found through going through the autoethnography process and writing about my trauma, is that it has brought up other traumatic experiences that I have been through that have been repressed. There is power in fighting your trauma and having other events come up. I have been able to heal from past traumas that have been hidden for several years.

The Hidden Messages in Water by Dr. Masaru Emoto (Emoto, 2004) talks extensively about how water is a living being. It can carry emotions just like any one of us. Dr. Emoto goes on to prove that the traditional ways of healing the water are in fact correct. The impact that words have on the water and how their molecular structure changes as we speak to it in a positive way, give a basis when we talk to those medicines before we pick them. We ask the medicines with the aseema for their life to help heal us. We talk to them and tell them what they are going to be used for.

I will be able to use this book to help and prove the power of prayer, the power of ceremony and the power of traditional medicines. We all have a connection to people, plants, animals, and every living being through the water. This resource is important to my research, especially for being a Mide woman. My connection and relationship to the water is something that I have grown up understanding. When going through grief and trauma, it is said that our Spirit will leave our body to try and protect itself. This means that there are ceremonies and protocols that we can use to take care of that and begin the healing process.

Water is a medicine, especially when it is used in ceremony. To pray for the water and then to gift that water to the Earth and to our loved ones who have passed on before us, we can use this water that has been filled with beautiful and sacred prayers to re-energize and heal the pain, hurt, grief and trauma that we may carry. Figure 2.2 is a picture of Grandmother Josephine Mandamin. She was a Water Walker. She was also an Auntie to me, who taught me about medicines, shared knowledge with me, taught me about the water and created a relationship with Spirit.

Figure 2.2 - Grandmother Josephine-Baa



Water is Life!

Reciprocity, Responsibilities, Hope

"We've known for a long time that water is alive. Water can hear you. Water can sense what you are saying and what you are feeling. There's been a place where I put tobacco in the water, where the water is so still. It was dead. I prayed for it. I put my tobacco in the water and my tobacco started floating around. So the water came alive. It heard my prayers. It heard the song. So I know it listens, and it can come alive if you pay attention to it. Give it respect and it can come alive. Like anything. Like a person who is sick... if you give them love, take care of them, they'll come alive. They'll feel better. It's the same with our mother, the earth, and the water. Give it love."

***Elder Josephine Mandamin,
Ojibway, Lake Superior, Ontario***

Note. This image is meant to show the importance of creating a Spiritual relationship. Learning how to give thanks to creation, as well as knowing when your Spirit may need help. [photograph] by (2019). Waterdocs. photograph. Retrieved February 12, 2021, from <https://www.waterdocs.ca/news/2019/2/22/she-walked-the-talk-farewell-to-water-warrior-grandmother-josephine-mandamin>.

Wanda McCaslin (McCaslin, 2005) has many different perspectives on healing through an Indigenous way. Her sections on Healing Worldviews and Community Peacemaking talk about creation stories and other stories that are meant to help through the healing process. Specifically, how we are affected as an entire people means that we need to heal as an entire people. There is no individual aspect regarding our healing. I will use this book for examples of storytelling as a way of healing. To have that full understanding of who we are as Anishinaabe is an important attribute to have. Without knowing who we are, we have no basis on healing. Our prophecies, stories and histories are where we can find ourselves.

2.3 Literature on Storytelling and Worldviews

Stories are a fundamental way for Indigenous people to communicate, carry and share teachings and ceremonies. Stories are powerful in the way that they can convey emotion and the journeys that we go through. They are also a way in which other individuals can learn from experiences of another. Talking and writing about my own grief and trauma has helped me move through the stage of acceptance. It has allowed me to talk more openly about the experiences that I have been through and continue to go through without feeling like a victim. It has allowed me to feel empowered about the journey that I have gone through, and to know that this is now a part of my journey that I am ready to share with others.

The article: Indigenous Autoethnography: Exploring, Engaging, and Experiencing ‘Self’ as a Native Method of Inquiry by Paul Whitinui (Whitinui, 2013) talks about the importance of Indigenous traditional knowledge systems. Being able to use Indigenous traditional storytelling as a legitimate way of knowing and gaining knowledge is key. There is a lack of understanding from Western society that our knowledge is truth and holds the same standard of academic knowledge as theirs. Our knowledge is equivalent to any other knowledge. Our stories and

knowledge are carried through oral tradition, which would be the same as in textbooks that talk about history, science, math, health, etc. We carry all that knowledge within our beings, passed on from generation to generation. Our stories carry those living teachings.

Whitinui talks about how having a sense of self regarding autoethnography research is important. It is important in the way that we can look at a situation while having ourselves fully immersed in it. The way that we look at the outside world from the position that we have been put in. Also, what our background is and how that has an impact on the way that we see the world. Having this understanding of the importance of our own voice is powerful, in a way that we can acknowledge our own truths to be relevant. Our knowledge is something that we carry through our experiences, who we are and how we look at the world. An outsider looking in, or the eyes that are looking out into the world from our space.

The power of carrying your story and sharing it, shows that you have an understanding on why specific events have happened. By analyzing and accepting traumatic events and moving through a healing journey, you have the space to go and look back on those events. Understand why they happened and the lessons, blessings, and the importance of it. Every decision that we have made in our lives has led us to the place we are at this very second. When we look at life like this, we can understand that everything happens for a reason. We must investigate those reasons and understand that we are where we are meant to be. Autoethnography gives this opportunity to share these experiences with others to help them in finding the reasoning behind another's journey.

An American Indian Model of the Universe: (Chapter 8) In Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy by Benjamin Whorf is a very good depiction on what time

is to Indigenous people, specifically to the Hopi people. Whorf talks about how the Hopi people don't have any measure of time, that in their language there is no word that would describe time. Nor do they have a word that describes the past, present or the future. There is an understanding from the Hopi people that the Earth moves at its own pace and that everything is meant to be where it is meant to be. Things go by the Earth and never by any concept of time that has been developed - "In this Hopi view, time disappears, and space is altered, so that it is no longer the homogeneous and instantaneous timeless space of our supposed intuition or of classical Newtonian mechanics" (p. 121). Although the Hopi do not have a word that describes time, this article does a job at explaining the Hopi ideologies of time; or rather, their metaphysics.

In connection to my topic of trauma, grief and healing, this article supports Indigenous beliefs that we have a forever life. There is no concept of time because in our way of life the Spirits live on forever. We are moving from this physical world into the spiritual world. What is talked about in our stories about moving on from the Spirit World and coming to the physical world, is that there is a line-up of Spirits who are waiting to come to Mother Earth. This is because Mother Earth is talked about being this magical and powerful place to be. We have physical connections here, which is not the case in the Spirit world.

Having an understanding that we do not control time is a very powerful message regarding the grieving process. For example, when we say *Gawaabmin Miinawaa* to our loved ones it means I WILL see you again. It is talked about in our teachings that we have no control over the amount of time that we spend on this Earth. We are to go back home to the Spirit World when Creator has called us back. Us, who are still left on Earth must learn to accept in time that we will say see you later to our loved ones and that one day we will be reunited with them in the

Spirit world. Going on to the Spirit World means that their journey and work here on Mother Earth has come to end and they continue their journey in the Spirit world.

A Cree Healer and His Medicine Bundle: Revelations of Indigenous Wisdom by David Young, Robert Rogers & Russell Willier (Young, 2015) who is a medicine man who works with traditional medicines. In his book, he talks about some of the common medicines that he uses, with cautioning of the way that they are used. With using common medicines, he is only talking about some of the common problems that people are dealing with. Although not specifically stating that these medicines can be used for traumatic or grieving situations, I can use his knowledge in supporting the effectiveness of traditional medicines in comparison to prescription drugs and other Western forms of healing.

The medicines that Russell Willier talks about in his book are more to do with the physical medical issues that can be healed with traditional medicines. He talks about his connection to Spirit and his ancestors and how they come to him with different medicines on how to help treat people. I will be able to utilize the knowledge of Willier to show the strong relationship that Indigenous medicine people carry with the Spirit. This is critical to their ways of knowing what medicines they need to help certain people with different conditions. I know these stories to be true. I have met Medicine people in my life who have told me about how their ancestors have come to show them what medicines to pick and how to use them. They have gone on to create relationships with those medicines to learn more about them as well.

There are many medicines and ceremonies that can be conducted for those who are going through grief and trauma. Some of the medicines that I have used have been to loosen up the grief and trauma that I carried in me, so that it would be easier for me to let those parts go. We

tend to hold onto the events very closely because we care a lot about what has happened. Being able to let that trauma go is hard to do. In Figure 2.3, it is a picture of a smudge bowl, filled with medicine. The medicines that I use in my smudge bowl, are cedar and sage mostly. These are to help me let go of some of the emotions I am carrying and need to let go of. It also helps me to feel lighter and healthier. Smudging helps to balance all four dimensions of my being. When I carry stress or I haven't let go of things in my past, I can feel them tighten my upper back up. So, I will smudge there to help and loosen that trauma and grief and let go of it.

Figure 2.3 Medicine in a smudge bowl to help cleanse the spirit



Note. Smudging is a sacred ceremony to help and cleanse our Spirits. [photograph] (2017). Gaia. photograph. Retrieved February 12, 2021, from <https://www.gaia.com/article/smudging-ceremony>.

Aboriginal Epistemology by Barman. J and Battiste. M. (Barman and Battiste 1995) was also able to show the differences between the two worldviews in which we regard knowledge. With

respect to Indigenous knowledge, there has always been the concept that we can look within ourselves to understand what is out in the world. As there is a connection between oneself and the environment that we are surrounded with and even with outer space. We have creation stories that link us to the stars, and we are told that if we look within ourselves that we can gain that knowledge, without physically being there.

The teachings that relate to the stars are about being able to acknowledge how complex our inner beings are, how complex our Spirits are. We gaze at the stars, and we don't even know where to begin to look. But once we stare at them and start to understand where they are located, how they connect with each other, how we connect to the stars, we start to understand a little bit more.

That is the complex relationship that could be found when we look inwards to our own Spirits. It may appear like a lot for us to make an understanding of. But once we start making the connections and becoming more comfortable with it, it becomes more familiar. Creating a relationship with yourself and trying to come to an understanding of everything that is in you, is a lot more difficult than doing something that is not a part of you. Western pedagogy has categorized knowledge to fit in the context of this society. Examples: math, science, English, ect. Indigenous pedagogy looks a holistic approach, not separating the knowledge that is shared within the environment that we are surrounded in. There is a seclusion that is involved with that.

“The medicine wheel can be used as a mirror by any sincere person. The medicine wheel not only shows us who we are now, it can also show what we could be if we developed the gifts the Creator has placed in us... Many of these hidden gifts might never be developed if we do not somehow discover and nurture them. The

great spiritual teachers have taught that all the gifts a person has are like the fruits hidden within a tree.” (Barman and Battiste (1995) p. 107)

This teaching in this article will be helpful in having an understanding that all the research that is done for grief, trauma & healing will be interconnected. There is no separation from myself and the research that I am doing. I carry myself and the knowledge I gain in the same place. My stories will be a perspective and eyes to what I write about.

When we also look at the nature that surrounds us, we can learn a lot about how we need to let go of certain things. For example, when we look at the four seasons. In the fall, we watch as the leaves change into beautiful colours and then we watch as those leaves fall onto the ground and decompose to be a part of the soil that is under the tree. This is a season where it is good to be able to let go of the things that we may carry that tend to be heavy.

In the winter, we watch as animals go into hibernation, and they sleep as a blanket of snow covers the rest of the Earth. This time can be hard for someone who is going through grief and trauma. It is a time when I spend a lot of time thinking, writing, reading, and healing through my own experiences.

When spring comes, this is where we see all that new life that is beginning to sprout. After a long winter of hibernating, we see the leaves that are starting to sprout and animals who are giving birth to new babies who are ready to explore and come out of their dens. During this time the smell of spring and longer days help us to rejuvenate.

Summer is renewal. We can see all the life that is out of hibernation and renewing that energy that was resting during the winter months. We can smell life in the air through the plants, feel the summer breeze and the sun on our skin.

Feasting has been a way of feeding our Spirits through food that is prepared and prayed over to help with rejuvenating ourselves, giving strength to the Spirits and to all living beings. This article helps to support a part of my grieving journey by rejuvenating my Spirit, feeding my relatives that have passed on. Giveaway for the Gods: An Interview with Arthur Amiotte by Arthur Amiotte (Amiotte, 1990) This article talks about the importance of feasting and giveaways and how it is a connected and fundamental practice by Indigenous people. “So one might say that the distribution of food is a means of connectedness between sacred principles and what we are as human beings. It is a reciprocal kind of activity in which we are reminded of sacred principles.” (Amiotte, 1990, p. 39) There is a connection and a respect that is given to our Creator, and we always feed him first before we ever feed ourselves. We give thanks to the animals and the Mother Earth where we got our food from as well.

When we are coming out of a ceremony of any kind, we are always to give to the community first before we give to ourselves. Amiotte talks about some specific ceremonies and the protocols that are in place for giveaways with good and feasting - “For the giver, the greatest part of the transformation is sacrifice, to give away these wonderful things, as opposed to hoarding them” (Amiotte, 1990, p. 40). This article shows some of the mentality that is still carried by many Indigenous people today. It shows that there is time and thought that is put into something that is given away. The preparation to go and make the gifts that were made and given away to those people, shows that they care a lot. Amiotte goes on to talk about how giveaways and feasts are

not a rare occasion, but they happen all the time. It is a sign of respect to the Spirit World, to the Creator and to the people who have been gathering and participating in the ceremonies.

Giveaway for the Gods: An Interview with Arthur Amiotte (Amiotte, 1990) shows the importance of a fundamental practice of healing regarding Trauma and Grief, showing the sacrifice that we make to feed our ancestors and Mother Earth before we even eat. When our loved ones pass to the next journey into the Spirit world, we conduct a ceremony to feed their Spirits. This is meant to give them the strength to continue their work. Just like our human bodies need food to continue going, so does our Spirit. During the traditional funeral that my little brother went through, we feasted with him every night. This was to feed our hurt and broken Spirits. To regain the strength that we may have drained during the difficult time we were going through. It was also to give strength to my little brother for the journey he was getting ready for.

At Spencer's one year of passing, we had a ceremony to acknowledge that his journey was finished, with him being settled in and safe in the Spirit World. At this ceremony, we could take his belongings that we had kept in cedar for the year and gift those belongings to family and friends. This is for us to help and let go and celebrate his life. In Figure 2.4 below, is a piece of beadwork that I worked on while I was praying for my family, before Spencer's passing.

Figure 2.4 – Unfinished Beading of a Butterfly



Note. A beaded piece I worked on in Winter of 2017. The winter before Spencer's passing.

The figure is a picture of an unfinished beading project I was working on. I wanted to create something that represented myself and my close relationships. My name is Memingwaans which translates into butterfly. The silver line that comes off the butterfly wings to the flowers that surround it, is a representation of the Spiritual connection that I share with each of my immediate family members. Each of the flowers represent each of my family members. The gold flowers on each side of the butterfly represent changes that my family and I have had to go through and the changes that are yet to come.

I beaded this piece in Ceremony. Each bead was placed onto this leather in prayer. I prayed for my brothers, my mother, and my father during the months that I worked on it. I thought about happy memories that we had with each other and some of the hardships that we have gone through and prayed for those to be let go through this process.

I kept this piece, knowing that I wanted to finish it and make it into a bag and gift it to someone who needed it. I had a hard time figuring out who it was for, so I left it untouched for a

while. When Spencer had passed away, I was told that he needed a feast and fire bundle for his journey. I remembered this piece and I grabbed it. The women that were helping finished my beading and made it into a beautiful bag. This bag went with Spencer on his journey.

Figure 2.5 – Beaded Moccasins made for Spencer’s send off



Note. These are moccasins that were beaded for Spencer’s send off by Sage Petahtegoose.

Spencer needed a brand-new pair of moccasins for his journey. Sage Petahtegoose is a family friend who is also Midewiwin. She and her beautiful family had helped tremendously with Spencer's funeral. We used their property for the entire funeral, and they opened their home to the community, family, and friends of Spencer’s. Sage made these up for Spencer in a couple days. They carry the story of my parents on each side. My mother’s name is translated into Strong-hearted woman and my father’s name translated means little half-moon. You can see

them beaded on each side of the moccasins. They were beaded in the most loving way. When it was time to put these moccasins on Spencer's feet, it was my mother and I who had to put them on to get him ready to start his journey. This is on the fourth day of his passing.

2.4 Theoretical Framework – The Lodge, The Teachings, and Healing

It is important that a respectful theoretical framework be utilized in this work about grief, trauma, and healing. The theoretical and Indigenous framework that centres this research is an Indigenous healing model based on Midewiwin teachings, specifically the spiritual presence of the lodge. The lodge is a sacred space where we are supported by our ancestors and traditional healing methods are practiced (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6 – Midewiwin Lodge – The Good-Hearted Society



Note. This replica of the lodge comes from the art of White Bear. It honours the teachings of the Midewiwin lodge.

I am Midewiwin kwe and the lodge is a time immemorial and spiritual space that honours all of Creation. The lodge represents the whole and each part represents a critical part of my healing journey. The drum represents the heartbeat. The colours represent the four colours of the two-legged, the four directions and our sacred medicines. The lodge and all its complexities are the foundation. The fire in our lodge represents the sun, the center of the universe. The first fire was made by the Creator before there was a measurement of time, before there was movement in the universe, before the Earth; according to the Midewiwin creation story.

I have grown up in the Midewiwin lodge. It is a spiritual space that honours all of Creation in the most beautiful way. It is also known as a healing lodge. The teachings that the Midewiwin people are entrusted with are very sacred and carry on our ancestors' knowledge. I grew up with the traditions. I was given my Spirit name when I was a baby. I got my first degree when I was 7 years old. It is the foundation of my knowledge that has guided me to many different places.

We are often told to think seven generations ahead. The power behind that is beautiful and an important position that puts every one of us in. It is important to acknowledge the grief and trauma that we have been through. This is a way of decolonizing, learning how to heal in our traditional ways. Thinking about the 7 generations before us. When we start breaking those cycles, like our ancestors before us, we continue to heal and learn as a people. So that seven generations from now, they have the tools and knowledge to move forward in a good way. Amazing to think that seven generations before us, our ancestors were thinking of us. Making sure that we had the knowledge to find our way back to our original instructions. They thought of us in the most beautiful way.

The Midewiwin teachings that I have been brought up with have encouraged me to grow a healthy relationship with myself, Spirit, and all of our relations. It has taught me that all the knowledge I want to seek, is within myself. The blood memory of my ancestors runs through my veins and the knowledge that they carried is within me. This has been a way of learning how to heal through the grief and trauma that I have been through. I have the assistance of our beautiful medicines and ceremonies. The knowledge and healing that we seek is within each one of us.

Indigenous people have been put through traumatic experiences for years and we were told to forget our ways of healing. Regaining the knowledge and hearing the stories of the medicine people in our communities talk about how the ancestors come back to tell them about the medicines that are needed for the people. The ancestors and the medicines are there to help assist in the most beautiful way that they can.

I believe that everything happens for a reason. Through the healing process over the loss of Spencer, I have learned that there is no erasing the grief or trauma. Healing is reshaping and creating an understanding about what it is that happened. Learning from the experience and being able to carry that forward with you.

We are always told about the importance of our names. My name is Memingwaans which means butterfly. There is a lot that I have learnt about butterflies and how they relate to me. Butterflies are beautiful, with different colours and patterns that cover their delicate wings. Wings that are so fragile that if we were to touch them, they would become damaged. But those same wings are the ones that help them migrate thousands of miles.

I know how to use medicines to help me when I am feeling down, upset, heavy, and need assistance in getting back into a healthy mindset. I know when I need to ask for assistance, help

or guidance when my Spirit is feeling heavy, and I need to go through a ceremony and to pray. I have also been shown on how to feed my Spirit and the Spirits of my ancestors who have passed on before me. This is important in creating a Spiritual relationship with my ancestors.

Growing up immersed in tradition has also helped me create relationships with many reputable people who also practice traditional ceremonies and healing methods. Through the literature review that I have concluded, I found a lot of different sources that were able to explain some of the realistic outcomes of traditional healing regarding grief and trauma. While going through grief and trauma, it is important to recreate balance in your life, to give yourself the time to reconnect with your Spirit, use traditional medicines, talk to elders, or people that you trust.

My theoretical framework has become stronger with these sources. I am approaching this topic in a very careful and respectable way. It is important to have a healthy mind when you are writing and talking about grief and trauma, so I make sure that I use my medicines when things are feeling heavy, and I am getting emotional.

The lodge is a physical vessel in the same way the people have a physical vessel. It is created in the physical in the same way we are created in the physical, however it is the vessel that houses the Mide Spirit. We gather trees, we put holes in the Earth, we do the layout. However, all of this is done in ceremony. And the life of all the things that are being taken and inserted into the Earth, is being spoken to as a being. All of that is done in the context of life and love. The love for healing for our people, becomes the manifestation of the vessel of the lodge to house the Spirit for the healing of the people. The love and life of the trees and the Earth was given by the Creator in ceremony itself in the beginning. This becomes the healing vessel for the people. When that part of us needs to be healed. Our way is rooted in Spirit and even though we

are using our minds and our physical being to construct the lodge. The intent of it is for a Spiritual experience. This spiritual experience in the human life is one that has been misplaced. Even constructing the lodge becomes a reflection of what truly bring purpose and healing to our humanness. The spiritual part of our lives are the driving force and the motherboard of our existence. The good life that is received in Spirit, helps to heal, and reintegrate, brings understanding to the life concepts to the mind and the mind becomes healed from the spirit. As the mind becomes healed it helps us to understand that our vessel is sacred. And the Sacredness of our vessel we can start to look at our physical parts of our being in our health and wellness, they become one.

Chapter 3

3 Methodology

3.1 Methodology Introduction

My research approach honours the sacred and is meant to explore the complexity of grief, trauma, and healing (Indigenous and Western approaches). The qualitative methods I will be utilizing emerge from the teachings in my Theoretical Framework and their grounding in Indigenous Methodologies; as these ensure “That research on Indigenous issues can be carried out in a more respectful, ethical, correct, sympathetic, useful and beneficial fashion, seen from the point of view of Indigenous peoples.” (Porsanger, 2004, p. 104) Therefore, this chapter on methodology will be structured and presented in this way:

- Indigenous Protocols First
- Autoethnography as Methodology
 - Journaling (my experiences, teachings, and story)
 - Photovoice (my memories of my brother and others)
- Interviews with Elders (storytelling and the conversational method)
- Document Analysis (reviewing diverse resources and learning about healing/grief/trauma)
- Data Analysis
- Assumptions and Limitations
- Conclusion

3.2 Indigenous Protocols First

As an Anishinaabe Kwe, I carry the oral teachings, history, and bloodlines of my ancestors. I was taught to carry all of this in a sacred way, with respect and acknowledgement to where my teachings come from. They are passed down through dreams, oral teachings, ceremonies, elders, and sacred articles. The way that I carry myself and talk about the research that I am conducting, is in the most respectful way in memory and in current time about the ancestors that still stand with us.

My way of approaching the research is in a sacred and safe way, for myself and for my participants. I smudge before I start writing to make sure that I am in a good place to write about the trauma that I have experienced. Also, with the interviews I will be conducting for my research, I will be smudging before and after each one. This is to ensure that I am taking care of my Spirit, to make sure I am safe, and to be open to receiving what is going to be passed on to me. The knowledge that is going to be shared with me, I take seriously.

This is also a process I try to use on a regular basis. I try to smudge daily to reduce the toll that everyday life can take on me. To start your day off with a smudge and just feel the good energy first thing in the morning is a beautiful way to start the day. I try to be conscious of when I need the traditional medicines and what I am going through.

3.3 Autoethnography – My experiences, teachings, and story

When I first was starting my healing journey, my dad brought me down to Michigan to see a medicine man. There was tobacco that was given to him for his Spiritual healing. The methodology that he uses when he is collecting medicine is by using your name, your clan and the spiritual, emotional, mind and body struggles that you are facing. He acknowledges the

medicine as being a living being, not an inanimate object that is used for mass production. With that he picks the medicine to be used, to assist in your healing journey.

In the Midewiwin lodge we have Sand Scroll teachings. With those sand scroll teachings, we have that understanding that they are a sacred living being. So, when we get those teachings, we may be looking at the same sand scroll 20 times in our life. Each time we go and sit with those sacred teachings, we are hearing and seeing something different. As we move through our lives and have different experiences, we are receiving the knowledge that is needed during that time. In our changes that we make in our lives, it is Spirit that recognizes those changes.

The traditional healing methods and the medicines he used for me were to help with the grief and trauma I was experiencing, to reduce that weight and pain that I was carrying and allow me to let it go and keep going. I was cautioned that it would take me several months to get over the PTSD caused by the experience with my little brother. But he had gifted me the medicine to assist in the times where I felt it was too much. To be able to loosen up and to let go.

Another methodology that I have used through my research and personal journey through my grief and trauma is ceremony. Ceremony as a methodology is looking at your surroundings with the natural world and within yourself to find the strength and guidance to move through your hardships. It is a way to learn more about yourself and a way to continue building a good and healthy relationship with yourself, as well as all our other relations. Relations in the sense of our Mother Earth, animals, plants, birds, humans, the Spirit World, and all living beings inanimate and animate.

It is when we look at our relations that we can start to make the connections and find the missing pieces to deal with today's troubles that we face as humans or the troubles we have

caused. Finding the troubles and problems allows us to face those challenging truths, build a way to become healthier and break those cycles, so we don't repeat or pass them along.

Offerings are a method from the ceremony methodology. Offerings are what we do to give back to our ancestors, the land, and all other relations. The offerings that have been put out since my little brothers passing all have to do with my healing journey, my family's, Indigenous people, and other youths who are struggling. These are put together with sacred food, sacred articles, prayer, and songs. Then they are given to the land. I have put out many feast dishes for my little brother and other relatives who have passed away. This is to ensure that their Spirits are fed.

It is also a way for me to thank my relatives who come to visit me. When my little brother comes to visit me in dreams and shares with me, I try to make it a point to put an offering dish out for him. I am thankful for the messages that he has brought me and for the visits. When I get the offerings ready, my love goes into that as well when I am putting it together. My intention is that I want their Spirit to be strong, I want it to be fed. So, although I put real food into the offering, it is Spirit food. It is prepared and delivered in a different way. We are taught that we have our purpose here on this Earth. We are also told that when we go to the Spirit world, we do have our purpose there as well. So, we feed our relatives who have passed on to assist them with the work that they are doing.

I find sometimes it is hard to remember (or we can forget) these simple yet powerful ceremonies we can do for our loved ones. Once during a visit from my little brother, he told me "The least you could do for me is put out food for me once a month." So now I try to be more conscious and aware that Spirits, just like us, need to be fed so that they can be strong and

nourished in a good way as well. It is a simple and beautiful way that we can give something to our relatives who have passed on.

Sweat lodge is another method that I used at the beginning of my healing journey, along with my little brothers' closest friends who were struggling. My dad offered tobacco to a Midewiwin lodge uncle for this ceremony to be conducted with us and the other youths that were affected by my little brother's passing. Through this ceremony there was a lot of trauma and grief that was lifted from me, and I was able to let the grandfathers in that ceremony to take that away from me.

I refer to taking away or lifting these feelings off me through the traditional healing methods that I have experienced. This comes from becoming aware of the traumas that I have endured and being able to accept them. The traditional ways of healing allow me to look at them in a safe way and then being able to let those go, by accepting my experiences, recognizing the way that they have affected me and to letting them go - not to holding onto them anymore.

I have also started to expand my research using autoethnography as my method of investigation. This means learning about situating self into research and being able to convey the message of your own trauma and connecting personal experiences to others. It facilitates part of our healing journey by helping to find that purpose and the meaning of what has happened. My research is autoethnography. It is a qualitative approach that honours and respects my Anishinaabe perspective and worldview. It also provides a critical and culturally appropriate framework to understand grief, trauma, and healing. According to Jones (Jones, 2007):

“Autoethnography is a theoretical, methodological, and (primarily) textual approach that seeks to experience, reflect on, and represent through evocation the

relationship among self and culture, individual and collective experience, and identity politics and appeals for social justice.”

It gives the opportunity to allow readers and researchers a glimpse into my own grief, trauma, and healing. By documenting my own process of trauma, grief, and the ongoing healing process I've been going through since August 22, 2018, is that critical lens.

Through this culturally affirming process of data collection, it will help to allow others to connect on a more personal level. To create a relationship is the altruistic part of my thesis. With relationships we can understand and build on ourselves. Several Indigenous researchers have utilized an autoethnography as methodology for its congruence with Indigenous values and principles relating to research. This includes the importance of sharing one's own experiences and connecting them to the greater society/world in which they live.

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and interpret personal experience to understand broader cultural experience happening in society (Ellias & Bochner, 2000). It is a qualitative approach that displays multiple layers of interpretation as the researcher draws on different methods to both focus outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experiences, and inward, sharing their own intimate relationships to the topic under study.

Being able to include all aspects of my understanding on the topic is why I had chosen autoethnography to assist in telling this story. “Combining ethnography, biography, and self-analysis, autoethnography is a qualitative research method that utilizes data about self and context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between self and others within the same context.” (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, Chang. 2010) The traditional ways of sharing knowledge and

understanding is through spoken word. Autoethnography gives me most of the aspects to share the information.

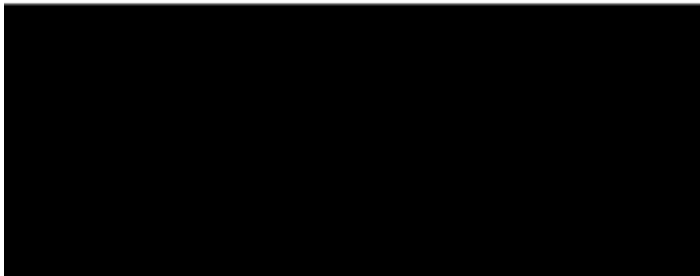
“Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno), (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011)

I will collect my data through journaling (as a form of autoethnography), interviews and document analysis. The journaling that I have been doing since my little brother passed away, has been done on my computer as well as handwritten in a journal that I have. I have also shared dreams that I have received over the past year with my dad orally, which I also consider to be journaling.

3.4 Autoethnography – Photovoice (My memories of my brother)

I have used photovoice as a research methodology to help and show my relationship, the changes I have been through, visual representation of my memories and images that have helped bring memories back to me. I created a photo album of pictures from my childhood up until recently. I have used some of these photographs in my thesis as a way of showing a part of my healing method (figures 3.1 to 3.5).

Figure 3.1 – *Spencer (Left), Me (Middle), Phillip my older brother (Right)*



Note. Growing up my brothers and I were extremely close. We went on a lot of family vacations, and we spent a lot of time together.

Figure 3.2 - Spencer-baa



Note. I took this video of Spencer while we were in Niagara Falls. While we were arranging his funeral and getting his obituary card ready, my family wanted a picture of him smiling. I remembered this video and screenshotted this moment. This is the picture on his obituary card.

Figure 3.3 - Spencer and I on a swim day with the family



Note. Spencer and I loved swimming when we were kids. We really spent a lot of time outdoors together. In the summer months it was rare that we weren't in the water daily.

Figure 3.4 Our March Break we went to Florida to visit our family



Note. We went on a trip to Florida together to go and visit our aunts and uncles who lived there. We stayed and explored together for 2 weeks. This was at a Dolphin cruise in Clearwater Beach with our Aunt Jan, Aunt Sue and Uncle Charlie.

Figure 3.5 - Spencer holding a star fish on our family trip to British Columbia



Note. Spencer when he was younger. We were on a family trip to British Columbia, and he loved the starfish, he wanted to bring them home with us. I remember how stinky they were.

Throughout my healing process I often reflect on my childhood memories. Those are the best memories I have, being a carefree child running around with my two brothers. Looking at the photos from when we were young, helps to remind me about the important roles each of my brothers have played in my life. The continued roles that they have in my life. They have always been my protectors, a place of laughter and a safe place. The encouragement they always gave me to be the best that I can be.

We are told in our stories about how close we are to Creator when we are children. To me that means that we are at our purest form of being. So close and in touch with our Spirits we can be who we truly are. It is when we start growing up that our experiences change us, and we must learn to adapt. We can sometimes lose that connection to the Spirit by outside influences.

These memories and pictures that I'm sharing were used in a method to help and guide me through this process. Photos capture special moments. There are memories, connection, relationships, emotions that are all attached to each of these photos. They each hold a very special place on my life journey.

3.5 Interviews with Elders & Knowledge Holders

To ensure that I am conducting my research in a safe, respectful, and humble way, I have made up tobacco ties for each of my participants. When I am preparing a tobacco tie for a specific purpose or person, I am putting my good intentions towards the making of it. I am thinking of the healing that I want to see move forward with Indigenous people. I am putting in my prayers for my participants as well as my intentions to complete this project in a respectful, honest, and humble manner. This is the type of consent that Indigenous people share with each other in this territory. The teachings that have been passed on to me. Those thoughts and energy

are put into that tobacco. The person it is intended for has the right to respectfully accept or decline the tobacco tie with the intentions.

When my intentions are put into the tobacco ties, I find that the participants already know what they need to share. I will conduct each of my interviews listening to the stories of these amazing human beings, listening to the trauma and the grief they have gone through. Hearing about their sources of healing and how they are continuing to build on those initial resources. There was no need for me to ask questions for them to go deeper or to explain things. Everything that was shared came from a place of Spirit.

My recruitment methods: I am a Mide Kwe who has created relationships with Mide and non-Mide traditional knowledge holders. I will be gifting tobacco ties to ask if they are willing to share their knowledge and stories with me and to be included in my research. I will be using snowball sampling to find my participants. I am starting off with two people who work in traditional healing methods in healing themselves through the grief and trauma that they have experienced. From there they started moving towards guiding and assisting others in their healing journeys as well. Once these interviews are completed, I will be looking for recommendations and suggestions on other possible participants that would be willing to share.

I will be using visiting methodology with my participants. With the tobacco tie as stated before, my intentions are in the tobacco, so they are passed to my participants in a sacred way. It is a conduit of my good energy, thoughts, and prayers. This takes out any kind of control on the process of the knowledge that is being shared. So, as I sit with my participants, they have my time and attention on what they are sharing with me.

3.6 Interviews and the Conversational Method

Conducting interviews with knowledge keepers will allow sacred knowledge to be passed on. Knowledge keepers are the key to healing and are the ones who have gone through their entire life, witnessing trauma. Learning from generations of traditional knowledge, they are the ones who know how to heal through tradition using sacred ceremonies, listening without questioning and carrying a love for ones they do not know and passing that on.

According to Kovach (Kovach, 2019): “The conversational method is of significance to Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral storytelling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm (Kovach, 2019 p. 125)”. The conversational method is something that will keep integrity through the Indigenous research that I will be conducting. I will determine who to interview based on my existing relationships with Elders/knowledge keepers that I have developed over the years. I will interview 6 people and each interview will last approximately 1 hour. All interviews will be transcribed, and I will go back to each knowledge keeper to review the interviews (for authenticity). All interviews that are transcribed will be kept in a locked cabinet of my thesis supervisor and all identifiers will be removed. It is important to know that Elders/knowledge keepers may request that they be identified in the thesis. This is fundamental to Indigenous methodology and honouring the source of the knowledge.

Oral storytelling is so important in Indigenous ways of sharing and keeping knowledge for the future generations. It is important to talk about these hard conversations, so that collectively we can review and analyze the methods that we have found profoundly helpful in healing from grief and trauma in many different instances. To understand our histories and where we stand now, gives us the opportunity to look towards the future. It also allows us to understand

how we want the future to look for us and the generations to come and determine what needs to be changed to manifest that beautiful vision.

3.7 Document Analysis

Through document analysis, I will be looking at how traditional healing has been analyzed and conveyed through a diverse body of documents. The documents that I will be using will be peer reviewed articles, oral teachings, prayers, cultural artifacts, traditional teachings, healing ceremonies, and elder knowledge. An example of a traditional document would be the oral teachings that I carry to heal. They are also sacred articles that I carry and dreams that have been brought to me by my ancestors. The traditional teachings that I carry are all oral.

3.8 Data Analysis

I will be using the Iterative Method to analyze my data. According to Mills (Mills, 2012) it “refers to a systematic, repetitive, and recursive process in qualitative data analysis. An iterative approach involves a sequence of tasks carried out in the same manner each time and executed multiple times (Mills, 2012. p. 503)”.

These tasks include:

- reading, rereading and reviewing my journal, the interviews and the documents for themes that are common (and different);
- member checking my assumed themes by seeking guidance from traditional knowledge keepers involved in my research;
- creating a visual representation of these themes that highlight the complexities of Indigenous and Western ways of healing and;

- referring back to the time immemorial theoretical model/framework of the Midewiwin lodge for reflection and authenticity.

The Iterative Method is the most appropriate way to analyze my data as it creates the space to understand spiritual thought. Talking in an oral fashion or reviewing my data, triggers memories of a Spiritual paradigm. It becomes a way of creating relationships with the spiritual dream, thoughts, memories, ceremonies, and experiences that I have been through. It has also created the space for the participants that have been involved in my thesis to create those relationships as well. It then becomes a tool of creating those important relationships to the knowledge and experiences that my participants and myself have been through.

The visual representation is used to show that these are real events that have happened. It creates the elements of evidence that this is factual information. Showing pictures of my family is evidence to show that these are the relationships that I have. To show the articles that have been used or the sacred places/ceremonies that I have been gifted throughout my lifetime. These are the things that have helped me come to an understanding of what healing is through grief and trauma. Seeing the way that I have evolved and accepted the experiences that I have been through.

The Midewiwin lodge arrived on the Earth in a Spiritual manner. It was given to Anishinaabe to help solidify the understanding of life and living in this reality as a Spirit. All those elements include the four elements of life: air, water, land, and fire. It was an essential tool of the people to help us through this time of healing that we are now in. The teachings that have been passed on from generation to generation. The messages and gifts from Spirit, Creator, and

all of our relations. The repetitive actions of building that Spirit lodge and the ceremonies that are conducted within.

Repetitive action, re-reading and revisiting material, ceremonies, etc. there is always something new to be learned. The teachings that Spencer has left for me are endless and I find them in the photos, birthday cards I kept, the dreams he visits me in, the messages he sends to others. These are important to me because I know that they come from a place of love. It is for me to create an understanding for myself so I can share this knowledge with others.

3.9 Assumptions and Limitations

My key assumptions are that Indigenous traditions and methods focus on the whole person and are critical to healing grief, trauma, and loss. The other assumption I am making is that Western approaches focus on the physical and mental and need to be more holistic.

A potential limitation of my research is that my findings may not be generalizable. However, the themes emerging from the data (especially the knowledge keepers) are examples of authentic practices to heal from grief. These ancestral practices can inform holistic approaches to see, feel, analyze, and address trauma.

3.10 Conclusion

What I have learned through this process is that Indigenous people have all the tools we need to take care of ourselves. It is within, our ways of healing and coping are passed down through our blood memory. While we talk about intergenerational trauma, sacred teachings, memories, and knowledge are also being passed down. Talking about the struggles that we go through is important because it is helping us to move past the trauma and more into the sacred knowledge that has also been passed down through our blood memory.

Chapter 4

4 Findings, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

Throughout my research process, I have learned a lot about the traditional ways of healing, grief, and trauma. I've heard the lived experiences of the participants who were open enough to talk about their grief/traumas and how they had to overcome and continue moving forward. They discussed the healing methods that they found to be the most helpful and how they have included these in their lives daily.

While looking deep into my own grief and trauma I later say recurring things. For instance, when we have a traumatic experience and we start to head down the healing path, we start to open to receiving healing of past trauma as well. Past traumas that we may have repressed when we were children, or others that we just have never dealt with before. When working with the recent trauma of my little brother and healing from it, I became aware that the repressed memories of my late teens had resurfaced. From there I had to acknowledge the trauma and work on healing from the repressed memory, with the tools that I had now gained from the healing journey I have been on.

4.2 Description and Analysis of the Findings

Each of my participants in this research project talked about the grief and trauma that they have experienced throughout their lives. These stories helped with creating real life details

for me to understand what a healing journey can look like in different forms. So it is through these stories that the:

- findings will be presented (in their own words) with my key insights; and
- analysis will be offered in a table that pulls out the themes of the Elder's story.

4.3 Pallah Baker

Table 1 - Pallah Baker

<u>Keywords/ phrase/ teachings</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Intergenerational trauma	Trauma that is passed down from generation to generation.
Spirit World	Is the realm where Spirits are before and after they come to Earth. On Earth we are in a physical vessel.
Ceremony	An act of spiritual practice for giving thanks, praying, singing, dancing, using medicine, etc.
Understanding/knowledge	Pallah used her healing methods to create understanding and knowledge from her trauma.
Healing Methods	Pallah had found solace in Mother nature, a ceremony every morning to give thanks, acknowledging previous traumas, and healing for the future generations.
Mother Earth	When Pallah needed a safe place to go, she went to the Earth and sat there. Became friends with the nature that surrounded her.
Energy	Pallah sees trauma as being an energy. We have the ability through a healing journey to reshape that energy to be something positive.
Western Medicine	Pallah had tried all the things that Western Society said you should do when trying to heal from grief & trauma. She didn't find what she needed with the process.
Thankful	Pallah wakes up every morning and gives thanks. She said her morning Ceremony is what her day depends on. She feels she carries more light when she gives thanks.
Love	Pallah has a lot of love for the ones in her life. Her love for others is what brought her to her healing journey and understanding of grief & trauma.
Unacknowledged Trauma	Pallah talks about the effects of unacknowledged trauma had on her life. How that had changed when she started to heal and acknowledge the trauma she had been through.

Through one of my interviews with a participant, Pallah acknowledges while on the healing journey, you can be open to the opportunity for more healing of memories that have been oppressed for a long time. “It can come from loss of parts of the soul that are taken from us through experiences and for me I’ve had a lifetime of some pretty traumatic experiences from the time I think I was even a baby.” Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal interview [Personal Interview].

It is difficult work to begin a healing journey. You start to become more aware of yourself. Start to analyze your behaviours and how you react to the actions of others. Then understanding the actions of others, how they affect you and then working through the past trauma’s that you’ve experienced. Ultimately you will recognize how important and freeing it is to understand the teachings of those traumas.

4.4 Unacknowledged Trauma

When we open ourselves to the opportunity to heal from our grief and our trauma’s that we’ve been through. We are freeing up that space in a sense. We start to allow previous traumas to come forward and to be acknowledged. Some of these trauma’s may not even be in our consciousness yet. Pallah talks about how unacknowledged trauma can come back and make itself known without us even knowing or understanding our actions.

“Um, and then when I became a teenager I think because like you, you, and I talked really briefly about how unresolved trauma. Right? Continues to perpetuate itself, within, within the being on all four levels on all four bodies. Mental, physical, emotional, and Spiritual and so when we have

trauma, and we don't attend to it. It's like a poison in all levels of our being. And so, when I became a teenager that all started to come out, so not only did I have old traumas. But now I was actually starting to create more traumas, um, by the things I was doing to myself. So, whether it was, you know um, you know drugs and alcohol or um sexual promiscuity, or being really aggressive with people. Um, all of those were things that I think we see that a lot in our youth, right?" Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal interview [Personal Interview].

Pallah had explained her understanding of how unresolved trauma and/or intergenerational trauma came up during her teenage years. She talks about the symptoms that she was experiencing. She also makes the connection between that and problems that a lot of youth are going through. We may not understand where some of our trauma symptoms stem from and they can come out through these symptoms, alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual promiscuity, greed, ego, anger, bullying, depression, etc.

Pallah reflects on this part of her journey and wanted to know what these symptoms were stemming from.

"I continued to abuse myself and my own spirit for quite a few years. Um, and then I became a mom when I was really quite young, I was 18 when I first got pregnant... But now there was this other soul, and it was its own. But it was attached to me. It was a part of me, and I fell in love with him, you know my first child. And that active now loving something, like really loving something, like how I used to love the birds and the trees and the

river when I was younger. It started to change me again.” Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal Interview [Personal Interview]

4.5 Healing

Through the interview with Pallah she talks about her connection to the Earth. A personal experience I had with my connection to the Earth during the traumatic experience I was in, was when I was waiting for my little brother to come down from where he had passed away. When he came down from the building and outside in a body bag, I couldn't handle it. In the sense that it felt like I was not even in my body. What I ended up doing was going over to the grass and falling down on my knees and running my hands through the grass. Feeling that instant connection to the Earth. That grounded me to a safe place to continue my journey. My interview with Pallah Baker showed me that her solace in the trauma she was immersed in, was also the Earth.

“The one thing I did, and this is pre-teen years. So, the one thing I found solace in was being alone in nature. And so, I would leave the home, I would leave the family, I would leave the experiences and I would just go to be alone in the woods and watch. The one thing that I did was I used to watch the water a lot. And so, uh, I grew up on the Connecticut river in Vermont. And I would watch the water and I would. I remember sitting on the dirt and I would cry until I just couldn't cry anymore. And put my hands on the Earth and like a bird would come. You know or the wind would come, and it was some force outside of you reminding you that you're not alone. And, um, that became, they became my best

friends. So, my best friends, my nurturer, my real mother if you will, was the Earth.” Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal Interview [Personal Interview]

She reminisces of where we are and how special it is to be a part of such a beautiful creation. Through the teachings and understanding of being spiritual in an Indigenous framework, we recognize that Mother Earth is paradise. When we live in this reality, we can get stuck in the everyday norms, and lose the sense of appreciation for what we have and the teachings that the Earth has for us. There is much to learn when we sit on the Earth and explore our senses as we give thanks for breathing today and for our health and we begin to humble ourselves. We can then learn to be grateful for the teachings in our life and what they were meant for. This can also give us the understanding that we are never truly alone. As Pallah states that her first mother, nature, birds, animals, plants became her best friends. A safe place for her to go and to physically leave her trauma, was to sit on the Earth and be herself and find solace there.

“Everything is energy and so again if we don’t deal with it healthy. It just keeps changing forms.” Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal Interview [Personal Interview]

Trauma is an energy that we need to acknowledge within ourselves and to face head on. Our Spirit finds different ways to handle trauma, so sometimes we have left it for so long we don’t even know how to approach it. When we do approach it is important to realize that it is an energy and like Pallah states we can deal with it in a healthy way and change the form of that energy. We can learn, heal, and grow when we work with our trauma.

4.6 Healing through the Connection to Mother Earth & Spirit

Pallah talks about the importance of the unseen world or in Indigenous worldview also known as the Spirit world. She looks at the energies and the lessons that nature and the unseen have for her. As stated, before by Pallah, this is where she goes to find her solace. One of the teachings that she had received from sitting on the Earth for many years was:

“Nature taught me that the unseen world of energy is as real as the physical world that we see here. And more pure, more authentic, it's not poisoned, right? So, the way I look at it is when nature becomes poisoned by man, it just recedes, it goes away. It goes back to source. And it recycles and it comes back to life again in another form. Which is a beautiful way of looking at us people, if we took our pain and we learned to recycle it and get back with our real authentic selves, like our soul self, like who we were before we came into this world. Before we took on all that poison, then we can, we could have new life, right?” Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal Interview [Personal Interview]

We think of trauma as being an inanimate object, a series of memories, pain, sadness, and anger. Pallah looks at it as being energy. When we look at our trauma as being energy, then it can make it easier to heal it. It is not about forgetting about what happened but acknowledging what happened and remembering what happened without the pain. Looking at the beauty in the teachings that have come with the trauma. She also does not talk about making a quick fix to the trauma that she has experienced or ignoring it. She talks about some of the Western healing methods that she had tried as well:

“I tried all the things that society should tell me I should do, I tried group therapy, I tried counselling, I tried the medications and what I found was that I still felt powerless. Because I still didn’t understand why was I this way? And isn’t there something that I can do to get better. And it wasn’t until I really started to develop, what I call my daily ceremony. It’s getting up in the morning, taking a deep breath in when you look at the sunrise, saying thank you for this breath, thank you for this beautiful day...” Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal Interview [Personal Interview]

Pallah, when talking about the effects of Western healing methods that she had tried, explains them as leaving her powerless. Through my understanding of Western healing methods regarding grief and trauma, there is a huge focus on mind and body. When Pallah started to include spiritual aspects into her healing methods, she was able to find solace. She was able to find the strength to heal from the trauma. She acknowledges past traumas and has developed healing methods that she is able to continuously use with any future trauma or grief that she experiences.

4.7 Walking the Teachings Forward

When we started to talk more about the grief part, Pallah had started to share about her experience with the physical death of her father. She talked about the medical complications that had happened during one of her father’s surgeries, which left him with a limited life span. He was also told that he wouldn’t be able to hunt or fish ever again. He had a deep connection with the Earth just like Pallah and that was hard on him.

While he was in intensive care, he discharged himself from the hospital and had asked Pallah to take him home. Pallah talked about her last moments with her father and how he said that he had to leave soon. Pallah was instructed to take his truck and dog and as she says, “love took over” and she did what he asked of her to do. She went to his favourite fishing spot, and she sat there. She then explains the spiritual experience of her father leaving this world.

“And it was cool again right, that’s like another miracle. It’s a confirmation that the unseen world is so real and so powerful. And energy never stops, it just changes form. That’s all it does and if we know that that’s true, from losing people we love right. Then so too is it true with our own traumas? They’re just energies that are left inside of us. And so, we can transmute them. We can help them change form and become something that may never be our favourite, but something that can be a source of power for us. And yeah, that’s really what my father taught me.”

Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal Interview [Personal Interview]

The experience that Pallah shared with me describing her last moments with her father and the beautiful experience she had when he was departing this physical Earth, was so beautiful. When we allow ourselves to be open to receiving beautiful messages from the Spirit world, we can be rewarded in such beautiful ways. There is understanding in each of the significant moments that Pallah had experienced. These are messages that I think are being sent to many people, but we can so easily dismiss them as being something weird or out of the ordinary. There is an inability to acknowledge or experience when there is no faith or understanding about what the spiritual world is.

Pallah was amazing with the stories that she has shared about her experiences with grief, trauma, and healing. She has shared many lessons that she has learned and some of the methods that she has started to include in her everyday life. These are all the things that she has used to remove herself from the toxic environment that she was in and having the courage to heal from the grief and trauma that she has experienced. She has also done a lot of reflecting on her life and has seen many of the instances when the symptoms of trauma have come out and she has worked on healing from those as well.

Pallah shared a lot of her life with me, starting from a baby to her current self. The grief, trauma, and the healing that she has been through. I really got to hear and relate to her experiences that were shared. She shared a statement with me that really resonated with me. “Trauma is so beautiful and so hard at the same time.” Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal interview [Personal Interview] We can sympathize with how difficult and hard trauma can be to experience. But there are so many beautiful gifts that come from trauma when we decide to enter on the healing journey.

4.8 Mike Nadjiwon

Table 2 - Mike Nadjiwon

<u>Keywords/ phrase/ teachings</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Intergenerational trauma	Trauma that is passed down from generation to generation.
Spirit World	Is the realm where Spirits are before and after they come to Earth. On Earth we are in a physical vessel.
Awakening	Mike didn't grow up immersed in tradition. When he was introduced, that is when he quit drinking & drugs. He became awakened by his connection to the ways of spirituality.
60's Scoop	Mike was a part of the 60s scoop, and he talks about the effects of it on his life.

Pipe/ Pipe Ceremony	A peace pipe that is filled with sacred medicines, prayed for, and then smoked by the conductor and participants. A very powerful ceremony.
Sage	A sacred medicine used to cleanse our Spirit.
Tobacco	A sacred medicine used for praying.
Spirit	Our being inside our physical vessels. It is the essence of who we are.
Ceremony	Mike talks about various ceremonies that he has participated in on his healing journey.
Jingle dress healing dance	A very powerful ceremony conducted by women who wear jingle dresses.
Western Medicine	Mike had tried antidepressants and didn't find what he needed with the process. He turned to traditional ceremonies and ways of healing to take himself off the medication.
Berries/ Berry Ceremony	Mike had picked up the berries in a wood bowl and started to pray over them every day. He talks about some of the teachings behind this very powerful ceremony.
Faith/ Trust	Mike talks about the importance of taking a leap of faith and trusting the Spirit.

4.9 Realization / Awakening

I had in my interview with Mike Nadjiwon he talked a lot about the traumas that he had gone through in his life. A product of the 60's scoop, he was removed from his birth mother and was in the care at the wardship of the Children's Aid Society and wasn't adopted. "That was because of my adopted father, well my dad, the man that raised me. He was forced to give up his status rights when he went to the second World War. So, at that time, he didn't want me to lose my rights. Because those were the laws in that day, that I would've lost my rights as a status Indian. So, I always carried somewhat of a stigma through my school years because my legal name was Michael Restoule, but I was living with my family. So that always kind of bothered me." Nadjiwon, M. (2020, December 8). Personal Interview [Personal Interview] So although he had experienced these traumas and experiences throughout his school life, his home and family life he describes as being: "I probably had more love than any one child could ever hope for. I

had three brothers and three sisters, that were all older than me. It was like I had seven sets of parents.” Nadjiwon, M. (2020, December 8). Personal Interview [Personal Interview] His adoptive parents and siblings had taken care of him and had given him all the love that a child could ever hope for. With this, he had a hard time understanding why he was having troubles with drugs and alcohol. He describes this time as being self-destructive at times. He also was not raised with any tradition, culture, or language until becoming a student at Cambrian College.

4.10 Introduction to Ceremony

When Mike went to Cambrian College, he was introduced to Indigenous ceremony, culture, and traditions for the first time. During the pipe ceremony, as it was his first time, he was looking at others to see what he needed to do. He had gone to a pipe ceremony that was being conducted and he explained his first experience in a ceremony setting. The effects that it had on him and how that had transpired his way of healing to another place.

“And then they lit the pipes up and then they came around with the pipes and when I smoked from the pipe... And when I smoked from the pipe, this feeling came over me and at the time, the only thing that I had to compare it to was the first time that I got high on cocaine. So, something was happening. And so, I asked about what it was, what those things were. And I found out what they were, it was just sage, and it was tobacco. And at that point, I knew that there was something there that was special. And I began from that point forward. That was the day that I quit using drugs or alcohol.” Nadjiwon, M. (2020, December 8). Personal Interview [Personal Interview]

A powerful experience in an Indigenous pipe ceremony, seems to be the beginning of Mike's healing journey. Indigenous ceremonies can help us feel more of ourselves, we acknowledge our Spirits in that space. Our Spirit in this society is not something that is acknowledged as needing care, love, and attention. We tend to focus on mental, physical, and emotional selves and leave spirituality out of it. Your first time participating in a ceremony or when you do participate in a ceremony, you feel your Spirit being acknowledged, it's a completely amazing feeling.

4.11 Healing Ceremony

Later in his life, at about 35 years and a Midewiwin man for 12 years or so, he offered his tobacco to participate in the Jingle Dress Healing Dance in the Midewiwin Lodge. With his tobacco, he had a question:

“What happened back there? Why, why was I like that?” And then during the ceremony, he had a vision. “And the vision that I had was I could see myself uh, uh above this uh woman that was pregnant. And then in this vision I could recognize that that woman was my birth mother that I had never met yet. And when I recognized that, I ended up seeing myself as a fetus. Inside of her. And I was all warm and I could feel and sense everything that a child could sense in that place. And then what came over me was all of this fear. All of this, not knowing what was happening. This anxiety. This uh, all of these negative emotions that I was feeling. I could feel them. And when I felt them in that ceremony. What happened at that point was I started to throw up. And I was able to let go what it was that happened when I was in the fetus, in my mother, my birth mother”

Nadjiwon, M. (2020, December 8). Personal interview [Personal Interview].

Mike had experienced a lot of healing through the Jingle Dress Healing Dance. He was able to see where all the trauma symptoms that he had experienced while he was in his teen years developed. They went all the way back to when he was in the womb of his mother. He gained more information about his birth parents and found out that there was a lot of traumas that happened during the birth of his birth mother, and the birth of him.

“The Spirit gets impacted by the way the mother is treated. What her emotions are like... If there's worry, if there's fear, if there's anxiety, it's getting transferred to the child and the child feels everything that the mother is feeling.” Nadjiwon, M. (2020, December 8) Personal Interview [Personal Interview].

He talks about the deep connection between himself as a fetus and his mother. How the trauma that his mother was going through while she carried him, was travelling through her and into Mike. Those are some of the intergenerational traumas that he had experienced and had been shown through the jingle dress healing dance in the Midewiwin Lodge.

4.12 Intergenerational Trauma

A beautiful lesson that Mike shared was wanting to know what had happened back there, wanting to know why he was acting excessive in his teen years. The journey also went back further to some of the trauma that his mother had experienced before he was born as well. He had met a grandmother who said that she was friends with his birth mother when they were younger. She had told Mike about some of the trauma that she had to endure in her life. “When

she was five, she was moved off the reserve and then she was put in Residential School. Where she stayed until she was sixteen.” Nadjiwon, M. (2020, December 8) Personal Interview [Personal Interview] This grandmother told him about his birth mother’s experience while she was in residential schools: “Nobody ever visited her, nobody ever, she never went home in the summertime. Nobody ever sent her birthday cards, or nobody ever sent her Christmas presents in all those years. From the age of five until she was sixteen.” Nadjiwon, M. (2020, December 8) Personal Interview [Personal Interview]. Mike’s birth mother had experienced a lot of traumas that he acknowledged and made the efforts to take on that healing.

We often hear about intergenerational trauma. This is when we see trauma that was inflicted on our relatives being passed down through generations. Coping mechanisms and learned behaviours are passed down until someone in the ancestral line is willing to start that healing journey. This is what Mike started for the future generations ahead of him.

Mike talks about how healing ceremonies are a tool for assisting in the healing process. “But that in itself doesn’t bring a healing. Sweat Lodge all of those things bring awareness and can bring healing.” Nadjiwon, M. (2020, December 8) Personal Interview [Personal Interview] Healing is an ongoing journey and healing ceremonies assist so much in that healing journey. It is important to remember and understand the healing journey, so that we can identify when we need to do ceremony or use our medicines.

4.13 Western Medicine

When Mike was going through his depression, he was put on depression medication. He talks about the experiences that he had with the prescribed pharmaceutical drugs. “And I told the psychiatrist that I feel myself dying. And he’s like oh no, no, no, you’re not dying, you’re fine. I

said I'm not talking about physically, I'm talking about Spiritually, I feel myself dying spiritually." Nadjiwon, M. (2020, December 8) Personal Interview [Personal Interview]. The medication that was being prescribed for him was only for his mental health. The Spirit gets hurt when we experience trauma and hardships in our lives, which can lead to depression. Acknowledging his Spirit and the affects the antidepressants had on him, he picked up the berries and weaned himself off the antidepressants. He did this through traditional ways of healing, acknowledging all his being through ceremony. He talks about the teaching behind the berry and how that had helped him get back to a place of strength while he was going through his trauma.

"There was a time on this Earth when we forgot about all of our teachings, and we were sick. And Creator sent that berry down to this Earth, that strawberry. His heart. Heart berry. And that's all we had to eat. So, I prayed over those berries, the way that we were shown to pray over those berries at our fasting camps and at our lodge. And I asked the Spirit in the way those berries get prayed for, to bring whatever it is that I need in that bowl and in those seeds that are in those berries, that life, to help me. And I never took another pill. 150 milligrams of Effexor is a very strong dose of antidepressant for a year and a half. And I never picked up that pill again. I prayed over those berries every day. And then maybe every second day. And then I weaned myself off of those berries, until I got myself back to a place of strength." Nadjiwon, M. (2020 December 8) Personal Interview.

[Personal Interview]

Mike had used traditional medicines to help him get off the western medicine that is being used for anti-depressants. When Mike explains his experience of weaning off with traditional medicines it shows that we have the things that we need to heal our own traumas within

ourselves. It is about asking for that extra help from Spirit. Humbling ourselves and being aware of our own traumas, so we can know what we're healing from.

“Everything we can learn whatever we want from an Elder. We can learn whatever we want from teachings, from a sweat lodge, from a book. We can read. We can listen to other people's experiences. But until we take a leap of faith that what we've heard or what we've discovered is a truth and we test that truth we won't know that it's a truth.” Nadjiwon, M. (2020 December 8) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview].

We have tools that we can utilize to assist us on our healing journey. It is when you go through something, and you realize what it is really, truly like to experience a great loss or trauma that you find the courage and strength to move forward. Trusting in ourselves and in Spirit, a leap of faith is what's needed to start the healing journey.

4.14 Martina Osawamik

Table 3 - Martina Osawamik

<u>Keywords/ phrase/ teachings</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Cedar Bath	Cedar baths are a very powerful ceremony. It is when we pray and pick the cedar, boil it and bathe ourselves in that water. It takes away a lot of the weight that we carry, to cleanse our Spirits.
Baa	-Baa at the end of a name, is an acknowledgement that they have passed onto the Spirit world.
Traditional Funeral	Martina talks alot about traditional funerals that have been done for her loved ones. She talks about some of the beautiful things that happen there to take care of our loved ones.
Songs	Martina talks about singing songs. There are many songs that can be sung for healing and praying.
Drums	Martina talks about hearing the drums while she was waiting for her antidepressant prescription and how they had woken her up and moved her towards traditional medicine.

Responsibility	Martina takes a lot of responsibility and care for her loved ones and the future generations. Making sure that people have an understanding of traditional teachings.
Feasting	The importance of feasting our loved ones who have passed on when they come to visit, when we think of them or when it's been too long. We pray over the food and put out a Spirit plate.
Visitors	Martina talks about a couple of different instances where loved ones have come through dreams or other ways to send messages.

4.15 Healing Methods & Traditional Medicine

Martina Osawamik talks about the grief and trauma that she had endured throughout her life. She also acknowledged the traditional ceremonies and traditional healing methods. “When you think about grief in our family of the Osawamik’s, we have suffered much grief in our families... I’ve learnt to give those cedar baths. And you know when there’s a death in the family, I’ve stepped up to that kind of work way back. And I think it started with my mother.” Osawamik, M. (December 3, 2020) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview] Martina has utilized the cedar bath in many instances throughout her life. She has also taken on the work of helping others with the cedar baths when they are going through their times of grief or trauma.

Martina had lost her mother and then 10 days after, her sister Lily-baa had passed away. “So, I started with the cedar baths and then my mother. And then my sister Lily-Ba, she was Midewiwin. And that was a hard one you know because my mother died just ten days before and then my sister Lily-baa died ten days after.” Osawamik, M. (December 3, 2020) Personal Interview [Personal Interview] Martina talks about how she had taken on the responsibility of the cedar baths for her siblings and family during her sister’s traditional funeral. She also talks about singing songs to help and lift the grief from them. She said that she felt strong in what she was doing and helping her family. “And then I came back home, and I thought I was, like it just hit me after. The grief just struck me, and I was in total shock.” Osawamik, M. (December 3, 2020)

Personal Interview [Personal Interview] When some people experience grief or trauma, they can be the ones who are holding it all together and you don't see them feel it until after the immediate things are over with and things start to settle down. But only then do they allow themselves the space to feel.

4.16 Western Medicine

Martina was overwhelmed and in shock when all the grief had hit her on her ride home. She knew that she needed to take care of herself, and she went to go and look for help to heal through the grief she was going through.

“Yeah, so anyway, I ended up going to Shkagamik-kwe and so I'm sitting there because I didn't know what was happening to me. You know like I thought I was going crazy you know. Like from the grief you know? I have to bury my mother and then my sister who, her and I were like really close eh? So, I was sitting at the, they were going to give me anti-depression pills... I was sitting there and waiting for this prescription for the anti-depressant pills. So, all of a sudden, I hear like the drum. I hear the drum in another room. And then I just kind of woke up from whatever I was in you know, this very deep hurt and the trauma, the shock. I listened to that drum and then I thought holy jeez I'm in the wrong place here, you know, I shouldn't be in, you know getting anti-depression pills... I asked if I could see the healer at the time. And that was Jake, so I went there. Jake Pine was in there and I was in like really heavy grief and what they gave there you know like, the cedar and the sweetgrass. And they asked me, you know like, they told me like, to bathe in this sweetgrass and

the cedar.” Osawamik, M. (2020, December 3) Personal Interview.

[Personal Interview]

Martina recognized that she needed help and went to a place where she knew that she could get the help that she needed. Just like Mike when the antidepressants were involved it was as though her Spirit knew what she needed, and it wasn't in the prescription she was picking up. The drums that she heard, woke her up to a realization that she needed something else. The cedar and the sweetgrass are the traditional medicines that were given to her to use through her grief and trauma.

4.17 Responsibilities to our Loved Ones

Martina is a Nokomis, so she takes the responsibility of making sure that everyone else is doing good. She talks about the responsibilities that she took on for her family and you can hear the importance of that work. In Midewiwin ways, we make sure that our loved one is taken care of in the best way. Through ceremony we assist in making sure that they have everything they need to make it to the Spirit world. Sending them off in the best way possible.

“And so anyways I led when her body arrived. I did the instructions to all my sisters as to what to do and how we were going to do this. And so, it all went well you know. It went so well that we tended to my sister, and you know, shared lots of stories with her. With her spirit you know, that was still there. And anyways that help that I got from doing a cedar bath and also my sisters. This helped you know with the grief of our dear sister. It's a wonderful experience. You know because it does help you know when you're going through all of this trauma, this suffering that you have

in your heart you know when you love somebody so much. And so, I explained to them you know how you know her spirit is going to be leaving and you know going to that realm of the Spirits. And so, they listened. And you know I said she'll always be in every one of your hearts.” Osawamik, M. (2020 December 3) Personal Interview [Personal Interview]

Martina knows the process and protocols of traditional funerals and making sure that the body of our loved one is taken care of in the best way. She took on the responsibility of helping her family understand what their roles were to take care of their beloved sister. She talks about how they shared stories with her sister's spirit as they were doing their work. During traditional funerals we are told that the spirit is staying close to the body for the first four days after they have passed. They then start their journey to the Spirit world.

Martina talks about the teachings that she had shared with her sister after their loved one passed on into the Spirit world. “Making sure you know if they were to dream of their loved one you know, making sure that they feast them.” Osawamik, M. (2020 December 3) Personal Interview [Personal Interview] This is an important teaching about our relatives who have passed on and when they come back to visit us. They can come and visit us in dreams and sometimes it can be encouragement, an old memory, or they can bring us messages. It is important to put out a Spirit plate and feast them for what they have brought. This is to ensure that they are thanked for the visit. Just like how we would treat any living relative when they come and visit us, we make sure that they are taken care of when they visit and before they leave to journey back.

Martina talks about her partner who had passed away and the huge amount of grief and trauma that she had experienced with losing him. He had taught her a lot as he was a Spiritual person, just like her. She had done a Midewiwin funeral for her partner Ron-Baa and she talks about some of the procedures of that. “You know the clothing that he had on. They were in a garbage bag... I went there with this garbage bag full of his clothing, his boots and everything. And that was the hardest thing. You know letting go of those things that he had on. And there was a sacred fire was still on...” Osawamik, M. (2020 December 3) Personal Interview.

[Personal Interview] What she was instructed to do was to burn the clothes that he was wearing when he had passed away. She talks about it as being a really, difficult experience. Being able to let go of that is a very hard thing to do. This is done to help with the grieving process, it is meant to allow us to let our loved ones move forward as well as the loved ones who are left behind.

At the memorial, or the first year after our loved ones have passed, we are taught that it is good to give away the belongings of our loved one in a giveaway. Martina talks about the giveaways that she had done for her partner Rob-Ba. “I had done four memorials that first year of his memories... So that really helped in terms of letting, releasing, eh? You know, it's time to give back.” Osawamik, M. (2020 December 3) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview] This is also a part in being able to let go and help with moving through the grieving process in a healthy and healing way. You also have the support of the community when you are doing these giveaways. This is a physical way in letting go of the grief and trauma that we carry after losing a loved one.

We are told through our Midewiwin teachings that when we go through the first year, we are not to use their names. We are also told to pack up all their belongings and cover them with cedar and we are not to use them in the one-year time of their journey to the Spirit world. It is at

the one-year memorial time where we do a giveaway of their personal belongings, and we can use their belongings. This is also when we can start using their names and asking for their help.

4.18 Healing

Martina has come to a lot of understanding about what it is to move on to the Spirit world. She carries the knowledge that she has gained through her lived experiences, and she shares that with so many others who need support. She is well known in the way that she carries herself by the community. She gives that understanding of being in grief and the healing process. “But I always say you know tears are also healing. You know, it’s ok to shed those tears. Those tears are prayers.” Osawamik, M. (2020 December 3) Personal interview. [Personal Interview]

Shedding tears is a part of the healing process; those are our prayers leaving our body through that Sacred nibi.

Grief can be an overwhelming event to go through. When you’re in it, sometimes it feels like you’re never going to be okay again. Martina talks about some of those emotions and not having the full understanding of what happens when our loved ones move onto the Spirit world.

“Some might resort to you know, drinking, doing drugs, when they don’t understand the sense of that person leaving us behind... So, the thing to understand in my view is, we are all destined to die, to leave this Earth sometime. And we’re placed here you know; we have our own gifts that we bring into this world and to nurture our gifts.” Osawamik, M. (2020 December 3) Personal Interview [Personal Interview]

Through our Midewiwin teachings, we are taught that Mother Earth is paradise. There is a line of Spirits waiting to come here. We all come here with our own gifts to do our work. We get to experience the physical as a spirit in our bodies. When it is our time to go back home,

Creator is the one who calls us. We leave our physical vessel and continue our journey back to the Spirit world. When we arrive at the Spirit world, we're told that all our loved ones and ancestors who have passed on before us are waiting there, ready to celebrate our arrival. Much the same as when a baby is born here on Earth, they are awaiting us.

4.19 Visitors

Martina holds a lot of traditional knowledge that she has shared. She talked about feasting our ancestors and loved ones who have passed on. Earlier in my project I talked about the importance of feasting on our relatives who are in the Spirit World. We do this to help strengthen their Spirit, feed them good energy to keep going. Much in the same way as we need to feed our Spirits. It is also important to feast our relatives when they come to visit us.

Martina shares some of her memories when Ron-Baa had come and visited her. She was sitting in her car when she was doing Rob-Baa's giveaways, visiting the places that were special to him. She saw this configuration "he says there's a little white face he says. And take a look at it and there was like little branches hanging onto that big bird and the legs were flying in the air. And uh so anyways that was a sign for me to see you know. That he was still there to give me, don't feel so sad you know like, I want you to be happy you know." Osawamik, M. (2020 December 3) Personal Interview [Personal Interview] Our loved ones come and check on us and send us signs and messages.

Martina shared so many great teachings and knowledge with me throughout our talk. She confirmed a lot of similar experiences I had been through. Our ancestral ways of understanding death in a physical vessel have such a beautiful story of our forever life.

4.20 Tasha Beeds

Table 4 - Tasha Beeds

<u>Keywords/ phrase/ teachings</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Awakening/ Introduction	Tasha wasn't immersed in tradition and culture, that didn't come until later on in her life. And she talks about the feeling of being reconnected with her traditions and culture.
Racism	Tasha talks about some of the implications of being a black/indigenous woman growing up in a small Saskatchewan town.
Spirit	Tasha refers a lot to Spirit in different instances. Spirit has shown up to Tasha in ways of encouragement and help.
Offerings	Tasha talks about food and tobacco offerings. These are done to pray, give thanks and offer a spiritual gift.
Water Walk	Tasha is a water walker. A water walker is a physical and spiritual act of raising awareness and praying for the water.
Midewiwin Lodge	Tasha talks about the safe space that Midewiwin lodge became for her. She talks about it being a complete culture shock because of the amount of respect and kindness that was there.
Full Moon Ceremony	They are done on the full moon every month. It is conducted by women.
Safe Space	Tasha talks about the variety of ceremonies that she has used on her healing journey, and she refers to them as being safe spaces. It is important to have a safe space when going through grief & trauma.
Fasting	Tasha talks about the importance of fasting. Spending time with our first Mother, learning to be vulnerable and open to the teachings that come with that.
Asking for Help	Tasha talks about the difficulty but the importance of asking for help. Learning how to humble yourself to ask for help when you need it.

4.21 Introduction to Indigenous Traditional, Culture & Ceremony

Tasha Beeds shared a lot of her healing journey with me during her interview. She talked about some of the trauma that she had gone through and many of the methods that she has used to help with healing from her grief and the trauma that she experienced. She also talks about being introduced to Indigenous tradition, culture, and ceremonies and how that had an impact on

her healing journey as well. At the beginning of her interview, Tasha states: “In terms of trauma and grief, I think there’s different levels of trauma and grief and varying stages. Um, but I think for me um, the one place that helped me get the tools for understanding grief and trauma and how to deal with it was the Midewiwin Lodge.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview]

Tasha talks about some of her upbringing and how it was difficult growing up. This is where a lot of her trauma had come from and how she was carrying that trauma with her for a lot of her life. “I wasn’t raised culturally within some of the ideas of traditions, knowledge, legacies, that I’m aware of now. I wasn’t fully immersed in it as a child or as a young woman. So, I carried a lot of traumas, just from being an Indigenous woman of colour. Cause I’m Indigenous and black. And existing in a small town in Saskatchewan was brutal. And so, a lot of traumas came from that. I was carrying grief. I was like walking grief if you will.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview] Not growing up immersed in tradition and culture can disconnect us from our ancestral ways of healing. Tasha later goes on to talk about the impacts of reconnecting with Indigenous ways of healing.

Tasha talks about her upbringing and some of the trauma that she had gone through. “I wasn’t raised culturally within some of the ideas of traditions, knowledge, legacies, that I’m aware of now. I wasn’t fully immersed in it as a child or as a young woman. So, I carried a lot of traumas, just from being an Indigenous woman of colour. Cause I’m Indigenous and Black. And existing in a small town in Saskatchewan was brutal. And so, a lot of traumas came from that. I was carrying grief. I was like walking grief if you will.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview] Looking at trauma that we have been through, and we start the healing journey, you can be brought back to past traumas, or an understanding of past traumas

experienced. A disconnection to culture and tradition is a trauma experience that many face due to the impacts of colonization, racism, and a lack of understanding. So, when a person starts making those relationships with culture and tradition, it's like they found themselves all over again.

“I'm too tired, I'm good, like just do whatever you want. There was like this real pitiful like “oh, poor me” vibe that I was giving off to. And I was like so depressed. And I remember just laying on the couch and like not getting up. But there was this other side of me that was still fighting, like it was, it was like an existential battle that was happening right inside of me. Where this one energy was pulling me, at my Spirit, to give up and then this other energy was pulling the other way and saying “No, you fight for life.” And it was very real.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview]

Tasha talks about the importance of Spirit and the role that Spirit played in her healing journey. When dips during the healing process happen, it can feel as though there is nowhere to go, or you don't know where to go. That is when it starts to feel overwhelming and unimaginable that things will get better. Spirit had come to Tasha and pulled her back and told her that she had to fight for life.

4.22 Offerings, Spiritual Healing & Water Walking

Tasha had talked about how she had the basic understanding of what it was to make an aseema and food offerings to ask for help. When we feel like we are in an unsafe place or we need guidance on how to get out of a situation, we can always make a tobacco and food offering for that healing to come. “I was inside a very dysfunctional relationship and when inside of that

dysfunction I remember pleading for help using my aseema. And making food offerings and asking for help. And so, when we do that, when we kind of humble ourselves. Inside of creation in that way. When we realize that the world is so much larger than us and we ask for that Spiritual help.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview] We can get stuck being inside of our own heads, in our own trauma. When we outsource and look for help, Spiritual help, it allows us to release some of the trauma that we carry. Also, that we are willing to do the work to heal from the trauma. Spirit sends us in the direction of that, but we must do the work to heal.

Tasha is a Water Walker, and she shares her story about how she had become aware of what Water Walking is and how that has impacted her life. “I started water walking out of trauma and out of grief” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview] During this time in her life, she talks about how she had one important person in her life. Her best friend Liz, who helped her through the dysfunction that she was immersed in. Liz is the one who had introduced Tasha to Water Walking.

Later, she starts talking about the importance that Liz had on her healing journey. Tasha talks about Liz being her best friend and how Liz did not consciously know what Tasha was going through with her relationship or how her home life was. Liz was that person who had introduced her with the water walk. Liz had also brought her into the Midewiwin lodge, into the ceremonial spaces where she was able to find the sources to assist her on her healing journey.

“But she did end up taking me to Rosseau. And that was the definitive shift. As soon as I attended the Midewiwin ceremonies and it was like this, it was like walking into another

world. Where people were kind to each other. And there is this sense of like, I was coming home.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview]

Having a safe place when you are in a vulnerable place is so important. Tasha found this immersed in the Midewiwin life, she was able to find a place that respected and loved her. She felt like she had entered an alternate reality because of how much love that was running through that Sacred space.

“But being really super excited that I found this space. Where I felt so comfortable and safe, and the men were so kind and respectful and it was just like I stepped into this alternate reality. And it's not based in non-Indigenous principles. And so, I was filled with life. I don't know how else to say it. I was filled with so much life from that time I spent on that land and in the lodge. And I came home, and I was flying high.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview]

The Water Walk is both a spirituality and physical walk. The Water Walkers are walking from dusk until dawn every day until they complete their walk. They are carrying their prayers with them when they walk. Tasha talks about her first understanding of what the Water Walk was about “Like I didn't understand the Spiritual nature of it as much. As in like I can do this, I can walk 135 kilometers. It's a physical challenge and I liked that mentality. And then, as I, the more and more I walked for water, the more and more I realized what exactly we were doing. In that action um, and it was dealing with grief and trauma my own grief and trauma, but also the collective grief of our people as Indigenous people and the Waters and all of creation.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview]

Tasha had gone out to go and do a tobacco and food offering to get out of the immediate dysfunction that she was living in. This usually brought her to walking by herself. An entity had shown himself to her and she was trying to figure out why. “So, and then they told me who he was and I was like oh that makes so much sense. Like I’m supposed to walk for the water and I’m gonna help him because he’s drying up. He’s dying. And I was kind of dying and so that became my first introduction as a method. Right, I would say Water Walking as a method of healing myself, but also the water.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview.

[Personal Interview] She makes the connection later on about how this being was just like her.

4.23 Spiritual Healing

When we look back at our healing journeys, I think that there is always that pivotal moment that we can look back on. That first time that we had asked for help or the moment when we realized that we needed more help that was outside of ourselves. Tasha talks about that important time when you ask for additional help. “And so, I think for me inside my own cloud or fog of trauma and dysfunction that I was still inside, asking was so pivotal, right? And I just, I did, I asked for help.” Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview] Trauma and grief can be scary when we carry that all within ourselves. It is important to reach out and ask for help to do the things that need to be done to heal.

Tasha talks about her experiences and understanding of what fasting does on the healing journey.

“I think fasting as a method of overcoming trauma and grief is key because it does. It allows you to crawl into the womb again. And that’s like when you’re grieving or when you’re inside of trauma. You, you’re so lost right? It’s like your, it’s like there’s no clear

path out... And so, I think by opening ourselves up as in the way Anishinaabe culture, traditions, show us to do. Like I mean you don't have to open yourself up. But there's something inherent inside of the way that we do them, that is, that allows that process to happen. So, fasting makes you vulnerable. Makes you like just on the pure basis that you're in the bush by yourself." Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview]

Tasha talks about the importance of learning how to be vulnerable. That is what the fasting lodge is, that safe place by yourself. Allowing yourself to move through the emotions, create understanding of what it is that you are going through.

4.24 Western Lens

Going through traditional ways of healing has a stereotype of not being acknowledged for the healing that it gives. The taboo of medicines is that most of society looks at traditional ways of healing. Also, when we talk about our spiritual connections and understandings of our relationships to those Spirits, there are often sideways looks. Tasha talks about some of the effects while going through traditional healing.

"Cause you think you're going kind of crazy at the same time but that says there only, you can only do things this way and this is how the world is and this is what reality is. But that was not my experience. Like I knew I wasn't crazy, and I knew what I was seeing was very, very real." Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview]

4.25 Walking with the Teachings Forward

Tasha talks about a woman that she and a few other women wanted to help during her time of grief. Her husband had passed away and she was having a really hard time. So, they had made a commitment to do full moon ceremonies for her every month for a year. They didn't ask her to come out of her house or be present during the ceremony. They wanted to sing songs and pray for her. "So that's another example of how grief and trauma like Anishinaabe ceremonies can be utilized. So, what we did um was just her sisters. We just went outside, we committed for a year every month on full moon. We went and did a full moon ceremony for her. At her house." Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview] Each month as they did the ceremony, the woman would come closer and closer to the ceremony. Her cries would become a little less, until she ended up sitting in the circle with the women.

Tasha talks about the feeling of doing a ceremony for someone else. It has such healing effects for the ones conducting and participating in the ceremony. "And so, it was really beautiful. And I think that really helped her and it helped me too, that's the thing, right? It's like this double beautiful thing with ceremonies, when you're doing it for other people, you're also getting that healing energy for yourself." Beeds, T. (2020 November 17) Personal Interview. [Personal Interview] Participating in ceremonies is such a beautiful experience to be a part of.

4.26 Discussion

Reflecting on the conversations, my journaling, and the literature I've read, there have been a few consistent themes throughout. Each of the participants in this project have talked about the importance of ceremony. The importance of building relationships throughout the healing process, what that looks like and the feelings because of doing ceremony. Learning how

to be thankful for the teachings that cross our path. The literature and conversations also talk about the lack of acknowledgement to our spiritual beings when treating grief and trauma.

A consistent theme that comes with traditional ways of healing is ceremony. Ceremony encompasses so much of what is needed to heal on a holistic level, mind, body, spirit. Indigenous Healing by Rupert Ross (Ross, 2017) talks about the importance of ceremony and how the Elders have guided him through the healing processes. Ceremony becomes a tool for the healing journey. Pallah talks about giving thanks every morning for the day ahead and how much of an impact that has on her. Mike talks about the impact of the pipe ceremony, berries, jingle dress healing dance, which had helped him on his healing journey. Martina talks about the cedar baths and traditional funeral through ceremony, how they have helped on her healing journey. Tasha talked about water walking, offerings, full moon ceremony and fasting as methods for her healing journey.

Each of these ceremonies are so important to those that participate. Each one of these ceremonies are about relationships. Through ceremony there is an opportunity to learn many lessons. The biggest theme across each ceremony is the importance of relationships. Relationship to the land; to the people; to the moon; to the sun; to Spirit; to Creator; to the animals; to the water; to the sky; and all our relations. Each of these ceremonies can include tobacco offerings, food offerings, giveaways, feast, etc. These are to show the love and respect for what has been given to us. Relationships are important in showing us how to be humble, learning that there needs to be reciprocity for there to be growth and healing.

When each of the participants had talked about the ceremonies that they had participated in or conducted, it showed a large amount of gratitude. Specifically, when Tasha talked about the

full moon ceremony for a woman who was grieving her husband. She talked about doing those ceremonies every month and it was helping the woman, but it was also healing each of the participants in their own healing. Ceremonies are such an important method in a healing journey. Relearning how to build connection with yourself, acknowledging your spirit, learning how to build relationships with Spirit. These are all the things that help to mend the Spirit after it has been through grief or trauma.

I can remember how difficult it was working through the emotions of the trauma and grief I experienced. It was an overwhelming feeling that encompassed my entire being. The Midewiwin funeral and ceremonies that were conducted for Spencer's funeral was a fundamental starting point for my healing journey. The only space that I felt safe and comforted was being a part of the ceremonies; surrounded by the songs, language, and the Spirit.

4.27 Conclusions from the Data

As I became more aware of my own trauma experiences I also began to understand where they stem from. Whether it was intergenerational, inflicted through physical or mental abuse, it brought up other instances where I was able to look at other situations and identify other traumas. A specific example was when I was sitting in a first-year Indigenous studies course at the University of Sudbury. I remember vividly that we were being taught about Residential Schools and the mistreatment of Indigenous people. The reactions of the white students in the class were not what I was expecting. Firstly, they did not realize that it was not that long ago. They started to talk about the guilt, the sadness and almost embarrassment that they felt about what had happened to our people. The horrific events that their ancestors had inflicted on the Indigenous peoples. Reflecting on this memory, I realized that trauma does not just live in the victims of the abuse, it also lives through the ones inflicting the trauma.

There was also the mentioning of pharmaceuticals and western ways of healing through grief and trauma. Pallah had talked about how it almost made her feel worse about the trauma that she had experienced. Mike had talked about the effects of the antidepressant medication that he was on and his experience of getting off them. Martina had talked about the grief of losing her mother and sister within 10 days of each other and was being prescribed medication, until she heard the drum, and she knew she wasn't supposed to be there.

There is a lot of self-reflection that has happened during this process of writing this project. I learnt a lot about myself. When we humble ourselves and ask for Spiritual help, we are declaring that we are ready to do the work for that healing. Spiritual help is not an instant relief of the trauma or grief that we have been through. That help can come in many forms, and it can take us a long time to realize what that is. Are we willing to face the healing that we need from the trauma and grief that we have experienced throughout our lives? It may start off with a recent trauma or loss that has happened in our life to move us to a different way of healing and understanding. When we go on that road, we open the door for our past traumas to come out.

When we look back on our Midewiwin teachings or Indigenous teachings in general. We are told that everything carries a Spirit, the water, rocks, animals, bugs, the wind, and all of creation. Through Pallah's interview, she had brought that teaching back to me. If we look at trauma and grief as being an energy, then we have the power to change the impact of that energy. Changing the energy into something positive, working with those memories that we carry to understand what that lesson was, can become something beautiful.

On my healing journey there have been times when I have had past traumas come up that I had repressed for a very long time. Spirit and my relatives have brought some of those memories back to me and it was retraumatizing to have forgotten some of those things that had

happened to me. Our Spirit can hide those memories from us to protect us, that is how much love is there.

Spirit brings the messages and the guidance in many different forms for us to move on our healing journey. It can bring people into our lives as well as dreams, visions, and messages from other people.

When we go through traditional healing ceremonies, there are tools to assist us, and they can help to relieve some of the pain that we are going through. But what I can tell throughout my journey and hearing about my participant's healing journeys, is that we must work on healing even after having gone through those sacred ceremonies. When I had gone through healing ceremonies, they helped to open those wounds so that they were easier for my spirit to access. Then it was up to me to work on figuring out how I was going to accept and understand the trauma that I had gone through. To understand the teachings and lessons that were there for me.

Dr. Emoto Masaru talks about how we can have the power to heal water, to change the molecular compound of water and bring it back to its natural state. Just by focusing and transferring good energy to that water, by the simple act of sharing beautiful and thoughtful messages through thought only. It makes me think about the trauma that we have inflicted onto the Earth and how that is being transferred into our beings.

There was also the focus on unresolved trauma. When we look at unresolved trauma, that is usually when we see the symptoms of the trauma. These symptoms tend to be almost self-destructing.

We are told that there is a line-up of Spirits waiting to come to Earth because this is paradise. Yet we don't usually take the time to enjoy what the Creator has created for us. We have become selfish in our ways, and we have ended up hurting the Earth.

There is no direct path for healing, I think that it is going to be complex and there are many layers behind true healing. We can look and find the resources that we need to better understand some of the trauma and grief that we have gone through.

When we look at Spiritual healing and the ones who have asked for that help and we receive those messages from our relatives and from Spirit on what we should do to heal.

A dream where my little brother had come through and he had shared such an important message with me. I was feeling upset and especially down this day and I was wondering why it was that my little brother was called back home to the Spirit world. I was feeling sorry for myself and was super pitiful that day. That night I had a dream about him, and he had said to me "grief is a gift" as he was smiling, and he kept repeating that. He had shared that message in a very kind way, could feel the intent behind it and it was meant for me to have a better understanding. This was about a year after his passing, and I was thinking about what that could mean. I had no idea the understanding that would come from those 3 words. I have been gifted with a better understanding of grief and trauma and how to navigate through.

We tend to fear things that we don't understand, or to minimize the effects that they have on us.

The Elders and knowledge keepers have shared a lot with me about their healing journey through grief and trauma. The biggest theme that came out of each of my conversations with

Elders and knowledge keepers was ceremony. Ceremonies were present in each of their healing journeys. There were a variety of different ceremonies that were talked about. But each were so pivotal and helpful in their healing journeys.

Pallah wakes up every morning at sunrise to give thanks for the new day. She said when she does her morning ceremony, she feels like she carries more light, things go smoother, and she feels that others can feel her light as well. As opposed to when she doesn't do her morning ceremony, she says that her day just kind of goes by or it might be a little more difficult.

Mike talks about the importance of ceremonies and taking a leap of faith, trusting in Spirit. Mike gave a holistic view

Each participant shared their beautiful knowledge about their grief and trauma and how they have healed or are healing from those experiences. Although each of them has been through so much, not one of them talked from a place of anger or resentment. They talked about their initial reactions and how difficult it was to navigate through those emotions. They then talked me through the process of healing and how that had created a better understanding. Building relationships to Spirit and immersing in ceremony enforced their walks to a greater understanding.

Chapter 5

5 Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

Throughout this academic and spiritual journey that I have been on since August 22, 2018, I have learned a lot. Taking on the responsibility of writing my master's thesis on grief, trauma, and healing, has allowed me to look deeper into the methods that are being used. It has also allowed me to outsource, looking to other Indigenous knowledge keepers on their experiences, best practices, and spiritual knowledge on understanding of what grief and trauma is. It has also allowed me to better understand what healing is and what that looks like. Everyone has a different healing journey, and it is not an easy route to take. But there is hope in creating more tools and understanding, especially for the future generations to come. Healing is a way of breaking the generational cycles that have been passed down through our blood memory and the everyday trauma that people go through.

5.2 Reflections on the Results Obtained

When I reflect on where I was when I first started my master's degree, it was only a couple weeks after losing my little brother. I was in a completely different state in all aspects of my being. I suffered from severe anxiety, PTSD, grief, depression, and it was difficult for me to be around a lot of people. Certain spaces, smells and topics could trigger me, and I wouldn't be able to breathe, I would panic. I couldn't sleep most nights and I was showing up to classes

exhausted. I didn't understand what grief and trauma could lead to and I didn't understand that there were beautiful gifts that were waiting for me.

My little brother's name meant teacher and he has taught me a lot during his time on this Earth as well as his time in the Spirit world. He is continuously bringing lessons and guidance for me. I never would have looked so much into grief and trauma had I not lost him and was accepted into this master's program. My understanding of trauma has grown so much. I always had a good foundation of understanding what intergenerational trauma was, but now it seems like such a basic understanding. I couldn't understand that there are many symptoms of trauma and how complex that the journey is for someone.

When I would get angry, sad, irritated or feel tired, I would assume that it was just me having a bad day. But once I had started to open to healing from the trauma and grief of my little brother's passing, I started to pay more attention to triggers that were putting me into a PTSD episode. This had started me realizing that there were other things that I have not healed from. It has made me realize that I need to create a healthier relationship with my trauma.

The teachings that I have received during this time have been immensely beautiful and I am grateful for the deeper understanding that I now have. I also acknowledge that this is going to be a lifelong journey. Loss and traumatic situations are a part of life and I feel fortunate to be able to pick up and carry spiritual knowledge on how to heal in situations that will come up throughout my life.

I have never experienced a heart break, trauma, or grief in the same way as I did the day my little brother took his last breath. I could never conceptualize what loss felt like before I lost

my little brother. I have also never had the opportunity to understand the beautiful teachings about loss and trauma through a spiritual aspect.

This is not to say that I still don't hurt or miss my little brother, but I am blessed for all the lessons and understanding that he has brought to me since he has been in the Spirit world. As Pallah Baker stated during our sharing time "Trauma is so beautiful and so hard at the same time." Baker, P. (2020, November 20). Personal interview [Personal Interview]

5.3 Specific Contributions Made

I thought I was going to have a hard time asking people to participate in this study. My experience going through my ethics application and some of the concerns that were being relayed to me about the sensitivity of the topic. I understood that it was a difficult topic to talk about and ask others to share with me. But I didn't be afraid or a sense that I was going to be asking too much, I wanted to conduct this research in the best way possible. Creating the tobacco ties and explaining my intentions to my participants helped in so many ways. After I explained my intentions of my thesis and the work I was doing, the stories poured out of my participants. Each with their own unique ways of storytelling of their trauma and grief experiences and then their healing journey.

There is so much knowledge in the people that are around us daily. What I've realized through research is that everyone has a story, and those stories are beautiful and powerful. There is so much we can learn from sitting with someone and talking about life. The incredible journeys that we walk through in our life are beautiful.

The connection to the spiritual world is something that I was able to understand a lot more. Each of my participants had talked about the messages, guidance, and healing that they had received during their healing journey. It is something that is unseen, but to hear and experience the power and beauty that is surrounding us all the time.

Throughout the interview/visiting process I learned a lot about grief, trauma, and healing. I also got to hear many stories about the ones my participants had lost, the amazing gifts and experiences that they had shared with each of the participants. I heard about the great work they did and how much they had appreciated their lives and the acknowledgement of their forever lives.

I got to hear the beautiful stories of the healing journeys that these individuals have been on. They have inspired me and continue working on the triggers, understanding some of my symptoms of grief and trauma. They give encouragement without realizing what they're doing. Sharing stories is such a beautiful way of communicating some of the hardest occurrences we go through in our lives. Creating conversation about difficult topics, allows for more growth and understanding about it. Looking within ourselves to find the healing that we need. Knowing that we are never alone in this world, our ancestors are so close to us. Sending us the sounds of the drum, listening to the birds singing, the wind blowing and knowing that the Creator has made all of this for our life.

When we go through grief and trauma most don't know where to go. We often experience different symptoms of trauma and grief, and we can forget our normal functions and tend to pick up unhealthy coping mechanisms when we don't acknowledge or understand what death or trauma is. When we move ourselves into a humbling place to ask and receive Spiritual

help and access those beautiful teachings. We acknowledge our Spirit as being an important role in our being.

Special acknowledgement and chi-miigwetch to the participants in my project: Pallah Stimpson, Mike Nadjiwon, Tasha Beeds and Martina Osawamik. They have shared incredible knowledge that supported and furthered my research. Created a more holistic understanding and approach to the work. They each have given me the encouragement and acknowledgement of the work that I have embarked on. Their knowledge will be passed onto the future generations, through their sharing in this project and their own walks in life. They are all amazing knowledge holders and respected community members. I am grateful for their place in my project and more importantly their roles that they have in my life.

My father Mike Nadjiwon has been a major support throughout my healing journey and my project. He has helped and guided me through teachings, songs, healing ceremonies, emotional and spiritual support. He has been a great resource to traditional knowledge and understanding. He is also a keeper of my dreams and visions, and I often go back to him to help me. The work my dad does for Spirit and the future generations has been an inspiration to me and Spencer since we were children. He walks the walk and has made a lot of sacrifices for the future generations. I am forever grateful to him for being my biggest teacher, inspiration, and hero.

My ancestors who have stood beside and behind me with the support of my healing journey. The knowledge that they have passed down through the generations are important aspects in this project. The foundations of my knowledge come from the Three Fires Confederacy - The Midewiwin Lodge. The lodge has been my home since before I was born, I

listened to the songs and teachings inside my mother's womb. My relationship with Spirit is always a work in progress and I am thankful for the reminders from Spirit when I need to rebalance my life.

My supervisor Pamela Toulouse who has been a huge support throughout my project. She has always been there for encouragement and guidance. She has dedicated a lot of her time to my project and helping me through it. This has been a three-year project and she has given me the time to work through my grief and trauma. My deadlines have changed a lot over the duration, and she has supported me throughout with only words of encouragement. I am grateful to have her on my team and to have created a wonderful relationship with her.

I would also like to acknowledge my little brother Spencer. He is the foundation of my work and my biggest teacher. The support he has given me from the Spirit world and helping to guide me through this journey and my work on this Earth. His unconditional love and support are what kept me going through my healing journey and this project. The teachings that he has passed on to me and the ongoing teachings he brings. He is forever my helper, protector, my little brother, and my best friend.

5.4 Implications of My Research for Practices in Grief, Trauma and Healing

Indigenous ways of healing have helped so many of our people come to an understanding of where grief and trauma stem from. Understanding the origins have helped create that movement forward on the healing journey. As each generation works on understanding the origins of trauma that is in us and work on healing, that is breaking cycles for the future generations.

Holistic healing and learning how to be balanced within all four aspects of our being is so crucial. Emotional, mental, physical and spirit all need to be in balance for us to feel good. The implications of being out of balance can start to affect the others. When we neglect one, we can see how it has a profound effect on the others. Missing spirituality, it takes a toll on the mental, physical, and emotional state of our beings. But when you nurture our spirituality, you can feel the negativity leaving your being. You can feel the lightness and happiness of your Spirit. It helps to take care of the other three aspects.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Throughout my healing journey I have gained a lot of knowledge about healing through grief and trauma. But the process of writing an academic paper to fit the molds of the university, that living spirit attached to the knowledge is not transmitted in its entirety in this project.

At one time we had a council to discuss the future of the Anishinaabe People. There was a concern that we wouldn't be able to carry the knowledge onto the future generations if we didn't write it down. They talked about how our oral teachings carry that Sacred life. The language of Anishinaabe is a living spirit in and of itself. During this time of thinking the spirit of the Red Ocher spoke. I am your relative, I have spirit and I can carry the spirit of the words forward. The dilemma was that the Spirit of the spoken Spirit language would die but the Spirit transference by the Ocher would carry things forward too would die it said and like am alive and I will help to carry the sis a Sacred living being that carries that knowledge to the future generations. They talked about how writing our words down on paper, how the Spirit could be lost or not there at all. Throughout the creation of my thesis, I have gained very Sacred

knowledge about grief, trauma & healing. As I've written, re-written and dissected a lot of the pieces in this paper. I can attest that the Spirit is missing in this work. The living Sacred knowledge that was shared with me is not transferred through these words.

It is important to acknowledge and understand the importance of oral teachings, history, and knowledge. Those are the ways that have the most meaningful impact because Spirit is present in that sharing environment. To further research this subject, it needs to be a lived experience.

5.6 Conclusion

The hardest part is letting go. The easy part is in the doing. Thinking and procrastinating on healing is an understandable thing to do. It is easy to get overwhelmed when we have acknowledged or faced our grief or trauma in a long time. Immersing myself even more in our traditional ways of healing through a Midewiwin way of life. I have learned so much about when I need to be making connections to the land, to Spirit, the animals, to myself and to my family.

Spirituality is such an important part of our being, and it can also be the easiest one that we forget about. Especially through the COVID-19 pandemic have we realized what it is to be isolated. Right now, is the perfect way to understand what it is to be a Spirit when we continue from this world. We are unable to see our loved ones in a physical manner. It has become more evident that we need to take better care of Spirits. Feeding our Spirits with good energy, love and understanding.

Seven generational thinking is making us look back seven generations and to look forward to seven generations. Knowing that our ancestors seven generations ago were thinking of us. We are really being taught to be humble in our ways, looking back at our ancestral ways. We must understand where we have been to understand where we are going.

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Appendices

Appendices 1: REB Approval



APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

TYPE OF APPROVAL / New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / Modifications to project / Time extension	
Name of Principal Investigator and school/department	Ashley Nadjiwon, supervisor Pam Toulouse, School of Education
Title of Project	Grief Trauma and Healing
REB file number	6020668
Date of original approval of project	October 20 th , 2020
Date of approval of project modifications or extension (if applicable)	
Final/Interim report due on:	October 20 th , 20201

<i>(You may request an extension)</i>	
Conditions placed on project	No in-person contacts can be approved at this time

During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than one year (e.g. you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate LU REB form. In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best wishes in conducting your research.



Rosanna Langer, PHD, Chair, *Laurentian University Research Ethics Board*