

Justice in the Words of Elders: Stories, Teachings and Wisdom on Unceded Coast Salish Territory

by

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Abstract

This thesis highlights justice in the words of Indigenous Elders living on Unceded Coast Salish Territory. Multiple interviews were held with four Indigenous Elders from four different nations to obtain their perspective on current justice issues affecting today's Aboriginal people/s within the Canadian urban context of Vancouver, British Columbia. Although the core data for this thesis involved extensive interviewing of each Elder, the methodology also sought to understand "justice" through a two-eyed seeing lens that embraced both Indigenous and western approaches to knowledge. Interviews gave Elders an opportunity to share the work each has done to find justice in their personal and professional lives. These were supplemented by participating in culturally-driven justice sites as guided by one Elder-Mentor who sought to demonstrate justice experientially. This Elder's journey to embody justice through traditional values, ceremony, and advocacy work serves as one of the central voices in this exploration of justice.

Keywords: Indigenized research; decolonized; Elders; justice systems; Aboriginal peoples; urban context; Indigenous knowledge, culture and traditional healing.

Dedication

I dedicate this piece of writing to all of my relations, in both worlds; we are all related. This work is especially for Nana and Uncle Allen.

Acknowledgements

I raise my hands and give thanks to the generous teachings of the Coast Salish peoples on their ancestral and unceded territory. As well to the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam), the sel̓il̓wítulh (Tseil-Waututh), the skwxwú7mesh ùxwumixw (Squamish), the Coquitlam, Kwantlen, Tsawwassen and the Stó:lō Nation peoples, who offered their teachings and welcomed me to study, work and play here as a guest in this sacred territory not of my own.

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I raise my hands to my directors, mentors and colleagues at the First Nations Health Authority; I thank you for your support and encouragement through this process as well. It has been a true blessing to be a part of the FNHA Health Benefits family, and great honour to be adopted into the Wolf Clan by the George family.

I wish to extend my thanks across Turtle Island, to my supportive family on unceded Mi'kmaq territory, especially my Elders, Julie Pelissier-Lush and Methilda Knockwood-Snache. Each of these strong Mi'kmaq women has introduced me to ancestral knowledge, community engagement and working with Elders. You have exposed me to a rich Mi'kmaq culture, told many important stories, and provided life lessons I will never forget; all of which have given me entry into the world of appreciating the words of Elders, *wela'lin*.

kinanaskomitin to my Elder-Mentors, who accepted me into their ceremonial family and who guided me into their community. Through their guidance and ceremony, they helped bridge my experience from academic student to student of traditional ways, culture and honouring the gift of this relationship. They helped me understand justice from the Indigenous urban context, and to see the possibilities for it to come alive and be even more fully realized in future years, for this my deepest heartfelt thanks and blessings.

All my relations.

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Chapter 1.

Beginning in the East

1.1. Grandfather Sun rises in the East

I begin with the following story, *The Wise Chief* by Julie Pellissier-Lush (2010), Mi'kmaq Elder, poet, writer, performing artist, and storyteller from Lennox Island First Nation, PEI. It is an appropriate way to begin this exploration of Indigenous justice.

*In the small community, there were once two braves
They did not get along and even started calling names
Soon the fighting began one day after another
The two men actually tried to kill one another.*

*The people could feel it grow bigger and bigger
As everyone would, they gathered to their friends on each side
Soon the hole in the community became quite wide.*

*The Chief of these people was old and quite wise
He knew there must be a plan he could devise
For three days and four hours, he crafted a plan
A beautiful bow and arrow he made with his hand.*

*So unique and so pretty they worked only together
He would give one to each and see how they could measure
The next morning he called in the two braves
Giving one the bow and the other the arrow, he smiled and said.*

*Go out and don't come back till you bring us back food
No other weapons can you take but the one that I did make
Go now and find a way to be brothers
And you will soon learn you will need each other.*

*The two braves took their gifts and with heads down they left the camp
Bringing no other weapons that what they had in their hands
The first day they walked without even stopping*

*They took turns growling instead of talking.
The next day and the next they attempted to hunt without luck
With all their skill they couldn't even catch a duck
After a week of no fortune or working together.
They started to get hungry and more angry and
One took a branch and tried to fashion a bow
The other found twigs for some arrows you know
One try then another, they wouldn't fit
So all they could do is look at the wood and sit.*

*Look here my angry brother we need to make a plan
One brave finally said to the other hungry man
I will take your bow and go hunt us a doe
The other brave looked and with a snarl yelled NO.*

*Why do you get to and I, not a bit
I think that I would rather just stay here and sit
Another day the sun rose and crossed the sky
Soon both braves were starting to wonder why.*

*They were fighting over who'd go hunt
It was hard work to find an animal to kill
And if they didn't eat soon they would both be quite ill
Alright, take my bow and go get us some food.*

*They both smiled as they share this moment or two
They thought they knew now what they had to do.*

*The brave took the bow and lifted the arrow
But alone could not shoot it even at a sparrow
One had to hold the bow in the position to shoot
The other held the arrow right ready to fly.*

*After some hours of practice they were ready to hunt
The Creator took pity on them the braves there and then
A huge doe soon walked gingerly into the glen
With four arms already the arrow did fly
And land in the doe right between her eyes.*

*The night the hunters ate like kings of old
Each mouthful of food way better than gold
They slept side by side with their bow and their arrow
They did not wake till the sun was high overhead.
They prepared the rest of their feast to bring to their Chief
The old chief smiled at the lesson the braves had learned
He who had taught them the lesson they needed to learn*

He never asked for his gift to be returned.

*The lesson was that the people had to work together
Be brothers till the end of forever
Their love for each other is now what they treasure
That arrow and that bow was passed down to their sons
with the lesson that whole community is really and truly one.*

I present this story as it is central to understanding the Indigenous worldview of justice from the Mi'kmaq territory I call home. The Chief, a community Elder, recognized a conflict in a broken relationship between two people. This broken relationship led to dividing the entire community. The Chief took it upon himself to enable the two men to right their wrongs. This came in the form of exiling them from the community they unintentionally harmed by their actions. The Elder introduced a dispute-resolution, which required the men to communicate and work as one, or die by starvation and exposure to the elements. This Mi'kmaq legend recrafted into a poem was written with all ages in mind, but particularly for the youth. I suspect one of the many lessons of this story is, we are all related, we are all one, and for society to function smoothly, we must operate with mutual respect. Another important reason I open my exploration with this story, is that stories such as this are often shared, generation after generation, when the time and place are appropriate, to convey lessons. The oral tradition of story-telling is a function of transferring of a medicine bundle, the transmission of practical and moral teachings to ensure the survival of knowledge of its peoples and community (Iseke and Brennus, 2011).

I also open the examination of justice with a story from my homeland *Epekwitk*, from one of my Elder-mentors. The Eastern direction of the medicine wheel is, from my own teachings, symbolized by the colour yellow, representative of the dawning sun. As recounted by an Elder, it is about birth, rebirth, and recognizing origin stories; it is where our journey begins. The sacred medicine wheel teachings will play a vital role and will be discussed further in each chapter.

There are many reasons I am drawn to the topic of Indigenous justice as described by Elders. The role of Elder has been raised frequently within academic and professional literature affirming consultation on justice issues involving Aboriginal communities typically begins with the leadership of Elders. This has also been echoed by Dr. Ted Palys and his work respecting Aboriginal justice initiatives. On a personal level, my interest in meeting

with Elders to discuss justice was sparked when I read a book called, *In the Words of Elders: Aboriginal Cultures in Transitions* (Kulchuski, McCaskill and Newhouse, 1999). It is a compilation of the transcripts from interviews conducted by Emily Ferries, who visited Elders primarily across Canada to seek out their views on an array of topics, including justice. This important work served to ground me and helped prepare me for my own interviews. The words of those Elders, specifically around their views of traditional justice, as well, as how to apply it in today's world, prompted me to embark on this journey of seeking justice, in the words of Elders in the urban context on unceded Coast Salish Territory.

1.2. Bringing the East West

In further preparation for my journey to seek answers of justice, and to position myself around gaining entry into the communities or organizations where I would find Elders, it was important for me to not only communicate my academic research affiliation, but also who I am. My life journey is important, and I have found that forming a relationship before important work begins starts with introducing oneself.

The Eastern region of Canada commonly referred to as Atlantic Canada, the Maritimes or the East Coast, is ancestral, Unceded Territories of Mi'kma'ki (Mi'kmaq land) and Maliseet (Wolastoqiyik) peoples. I was born in a small New Brunswick town, Miramichi, which is surrounded by no fewer than six Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) First Nation, along the Miramichi River. I was enrolled in the French immersion program beginning in Grade 1, as it was important to my family for me to learn the language of my Grandparents of French-Acadian ancestry. I honoured Acadian heritage at a young age, and grew up no different than the children of Scottish, Irish, and European decent, who represented the majority of the population of the Miramichi. In 2000, my family moved to a different part of Unceded Mi'kmaq Territory, Prince Edward Island (PEI). The Mi'kmaq name for PEI is *Epekwitk*; but it is also called *Abegweit*, the Anglicized version of the Indigenous name. Unceded Mi'kma'ki and Wolastoqiyik Territories are covered by the "Treaties of the Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik first people signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not surrender the land and

resources but recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik title and established a treaty relationship between nations (The Canadian Association of University Teachers (2016)).

Abegweit translates from Mi'kmaq as "land cradled in the waves," accurately depicting the Island of red clay and sandy beaches cradled in the blue waters of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. I also heard it said that the Island is a healing place as the waters also cleanse our minds and feed our bodies. Some of this thesis was composed on Abegweit, during my many visits home; and where I began to explore more fully my Cree (father's side) and Mi'kmaq (mother's side) heritage, and the place my Indigenous education and involvement in performing arts began. Over the years, I have spent time with two respected Mi'kmaq Elders on Abegweit; namely, Julie Pelissier-Lush and Methilda Knockwood-Snache. This thesis could not be composed without this Eastern vantage point. The Mi'kmaq women with whom I connected have begun to show me what it means to be Mi'kmaq. However, more importantly, their teachings were about how to listen, how to interpret, and how to engage with Elders. How I recount and apply teachings, including errors I take full responsibility for. As a novice, I understand my position in the learning process as do the Elders. I am extremely grateful for these teachings as these relationships served to guide my connections with Elders I have met on Unceded Coast Salish Territory, four of whom were interviewed for this thesis. I have been blessed to have met several more Elders as they performed ceremony or spoke at formal and informal gatherings.

The tools with which I was equipped when I began my study (both formal education and cultural connections) and abilities to engage with Elders proved invaluable throughout not only this thesis process, but in all aspects of living a good life.

1.3. A note on identity terminologies

Each individual has the authority to define themselves, when denied, this is a violation of their basic human right. The family, community and nation is the principal author in defining themselves as a collective. At this time, I would like highlight an element identity in relation to the tendency to apply labels within academia, with as much respect toward Indigenous peoples as possible. The United Nations (UN) recommends to identify,

rather than define Indigenous peoples, and an official definition has not been adopted by any UN-body system for these reasons. There are multiple sources, with an abundant of varying specifics about Indigenous peoples, a modern understanding of who Indigenous peoples are, on the global level, has been developed by the UN system. For the purpose of knowledge-sharing, I wish to integrate the following terms which guide a basic understand of who Indigenous peoples are, as:

“self-identification as Indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member; historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; distinct social, economic or political systems; distinct language, culture and beliefs; form non-dominant groups of society; resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.” (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples Factsheet).

I would like to expand upon the meaning of the above “historical continuation of pre-colonial and/or settler societies.” By engaging with Indigenous youth and Elders in my communities, I am seeing a revival, or continuation, of Indigenous peoples defining what it means to occupy and protect ancestral lands, as well as learn and restore ancestral languages. “On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group). This preserves for these communities the sovereign right and power to decide who belongs to them, without external interference.” (United Nations Workshop on Data Collection and Disaggregation for Indigenous Peoples, January 2004).

In Turtle Island/Canada, the terms “Aboriginal” and “Indian” are related to their appearance in legislation or government policy and correspond according to when used formally and in everyday language. The term “Aboriginal” is a government prescribed term, which describes peoples belonging to three main cultural groups of Canada, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. While still used under the *Indian Act of 1876* as legal “Status”, or of being enfranchised to the governmental body, the term “Indian” is rarely used. The term Indigenous, a term which acknowledges Indigenous peoples on a global scale, has

become prominent in the media and formal avenues, with some recent change in federal government vocabulary. The former federal government department, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), is now referred to as Indigenous and Northern Development Canada (INDAC). “Aboriginal” and “Indian” are blanket terms for the original peoples, and are derivatives from oppressive governmental policies, largely, the *Indian Act of 1876*.

To recognize the sacred governance of one’s traditional territory, and to call upon the ancestors, many people choose to refer themselves by their name, a ceremonial name in their ancestral language (if earned through ceremony), followed by the name of their Nation and/or band name. Indigenous language revivalists who have learned the language of the territory, may name of the land from they come, or the traditional name of the Nation that was formed before colonization. This cultural practice of introducing oneself briefly explains the relationships one has with the land, and its people, as essential components of one’s identity.

While I am spending considerable time discussing terms, it is important to understand the appropriate language to gain entry into the community. Each term has a different tone or articulates an emotional connotation. Earlier in my learning, I used the legal term, Aboriginal, and since have preferred to use the term “Indigenous” person or peoples, or the most appropriate term based on the context in which it is said or used. If I am aware of individual or community preferences or naming protocol, I will use the terms that brings the highest respect. Although, many ancestral languages have been silenced or asleep for a time, it is important to use appropriate language when discussing identity of a group of people, because language is key to identity, culture and spirituality.

In terms of position, this thesis is not so much about the Canadian policies that have brought us here or an attempt to provide quick and simple solutions to a complex issue such as justice disproportionately affecting so many lives of Indigenous peoples (globally or nationally); it is about the teachings of Elders. This study highlight what four highly respected Elders, living on Unceded Coast Salish Territory are saying about justice, injustices, and the real issues impacting the lives of Indigenous people here, and the potential ways forward.

The narratives of the Elders also provide their thoughts in relation to what happens when Indigenous people come in contact with the law, not only when it comes to a crime and a punishment, but in an array of varied challenges, often hinging on one's personal identity as an Indigenous person. It is important to listen to these stories for it is herein that truths begin to emerge. Many Elders with whom I have had the fortune to speak would often address the challenges attached to being born, without a choice, into an oppressed and marginalized ethnic group due to colonization. The Elders speak their truth, and my immediate reaction is to listen, and listen intently to what is being shared.

1.4. The spirit and human elements of learning, research and writing as personal journey

Of the many teachings I have received along this path, we are all spiritual beings having a human experience. It is truly a gift to have had many Elders share with me their time, stories and wisdom. Throughout this journey, however, the errors I have made, and will make, are my errors alone and do not reflect upon the wisdom of the Elders.

One of the key processes of graduate studies is commitment, especially when the work aims to advance and contribute to scholarly student literature on diverse topics. From the beginning, my scholarly commitment was to do my best to acquire knowledge, interpret, and express this knowledge in a respectful, culturally conscious or responsive way.

Much of what has been learned during this study, and how it was acquired, was informed by the seven sacred teachings, some refer these as the seven Grandfathers (Benton-Banai, 1988). My father, now recognized as an Elder in his own right, passed on these seven teachings to me: *honesty, truth, courage, humility, respect, wisdom and love*. His earlier work with Elders across Canada in the creation of a substance abuse treatment program for federal-sentenced Aboriginal men, and these sacred teachings which he called the Seven Grandfather Teachings, have guided me during my graduate studies, and have been invaluable pathways of learning.

My cultural teachings began when I was in my early teens. I would often accompany my father and mother when they would visit with Elders at one of the two main reserves on Prince Edward Island. Later, I had the opportunity to participate in and learn about the women's full moon ceremony as guided by Elders Methilda Knockwood-Snache and Elder Georgina Crane (Lennox Island First Nation). I also participated in several sweat lodge ceremonies on Mi'kmaq territory led by Elders from Lennox Island First Nation (PEI), Abegweit First Nation (PEI), and Millbrook First Nation (Nova Scotia). These early experiences of ceremony have shaped my identity. Moreover, these experiences have served to provide a spiritual foundation on which to build knowledge and ultimately work in the interests of Indigenous peoples in one capacity or another.

Another pivotal experience which brought culture into my life was joining PEI's first ever all-Indigenous youth performance troupe. As members of the Confederation of the Arts Young Company for the Charlottetown Festival, we performed *The Talking Stick*, six days a week, for an eight-week run, in the summer of 2011. *The Talking Stick*, was written and directed by Mi'kmaq artist Cathy Elliott, of Sipekne'katik First Nation (Nova Scotia), which featured song, dance and dialogue enjoyed by all ages. Portions of the dance choreography was designed and taught by Anishnaabe artist, Waawaate Fobister, of Grassy Narrows First Nation (Ontario). The 60-minute production featured a collaborative performance of a poem by Mi'kmaq storyteller Julie-Pelissier Lush, of Lennox Island (PEI). It was truly a spirit-enhancing moment in my journey of finding myself through cultural practices, which I shared with my peers and the Elders of all different backgrounds. In the spirit of sharing and reconciliation we delivered *The Talking Stick* to students on Lennox Island First Nations, as well as the opening number to William and Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, during their first Canadian tour.

The cast reunited in October 2011, for a special *Talking Stick* performance for students at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Education Day Event in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This also served as my introduction to the TRC events and the testimonies given by Residential School Survivors. My role as a performance artist continued for another two years. Guided by Julie Pelissier-Lush, a new troupe of talent youth created a production called, *Mi'kmaq Legends*, which occasionally tours Unceded Mi'kmaq Territory, delivering the messages of Mi'kmaq history, language and values through story and song.

Conducting academic research and writing about Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples) and Indigenous people (the people original to a territory) presents several challenges I wish to recognize. Until stricter ethical guidelines were being rewritten and enforced, the history of scientific or academic research has been to observe without consent, take without consultation, reproduce without permission, and/or reciprocally give back to the community where Indigenous knowledge was collected. I wish not to take without giving back in return. I wish not to subscribe to the colonialist tradition of ignoring or dismissing, and oppressing Indigenous peoples. Instead, I wish to continue expanding understanding of Indigenous people and their ways of knowing and doing, while promoting the voices of the Elders and what they have to say about justice. A more insidious issue is research for personal gain. Research with the purpose of completing a credential would be an example. Researchers have been criticized for conducting research, which dehumanizes people for the sake of higher learning. A renewed emphasis on ethics involving the research on Indigenous people has worked to further diminish this claim. I recognize this work is to meet the requirement for an advanced degree, however, I am called to contribute in this small way to the literature respecting Elders views on justice.

Even after these character-shaping experiences, I have felt I am tethered to two worlds, bridging the cultural identities of my Acadian, Mi'kmaq, Cree, and Scottish heritage. Often throughout this process I have asked myself, am I therefore an outsider, collecting stories of what it means to be Indigenous from a non-Indigenous perspective? Am I finding my own voice to lend to the discussion on the movement of justice for and by Indigenous peoples from a Cree, Mi'kmaq French, Scottish point of view?

During this study, I have had many occasions to connect with my Elders, celebrate and experience inclusion, particularly in ceremony with my adopted relatives. All of this helped me to connect to my identity and spirituality, and be given the tools to being able to talk to my relatives about the difficult subject matter at hand. On more than one occasion, I struggled with not having the worldly experience or confidence around writing on the topic of Indigenous justice, and whether or not I was even worthy to speak on this important file given I was not Indigenous enough. My Mom reminded me that my perceptions of shortcomings based on whether I was "Indigenous enough" were unfounded. The use of blood quantum laws to classify individuals as Status versus non-Status, is an arbitrary designation with assimilation as an outcome. I also witnessed during

the course of my studies many discussions around what constitutes being authentic. I openly acknowledge that I am a novice to many of the traditional teachings. My family's cultural journey seems to have been inspired by a movement around reclaiming one's cultural or Indigenous spiritual identity. Inspirational are the Elders, who would openly cast aside the dark curtain of shame of being "Indian", to revive a rich culture based on sacred teachings, communications, protocols, and healing traditions.

Aware of my position and my limitations around cultural knowledge and experiences, I have only just begun the challenging process of decolonizing my vision, goals and actions. Though I have no authority to speak about sacred teachings at length, I feel a strong pull in the direction of the teachings I have been gifted with, as a foundation for my life, including academic work.

On both a personal and professional level, I am committed to helping others through an understanding justice. I am also committed to giving back to the community. The results may serve the purpose of advancing better outcomes or processes for justice providers involving Indigenous people. It may further contribute to the work of decolonizing modes of learning and means to produce knowledge from an Indigenous perspective like the pioneer work of Stó:lō justice leader, Dr. Wenona Victor (2001, 2007, 2012), to be I will discuss later. I now turn my attention to the elements of navigating this journey.

1.5. Medicine wheel helper

I was introduced to medicine wheel teachings over the course on my journey both on the East Coast by the Mi'kmaq Elders of whom I spoke earlier and by several prominent community Elders on Unceded Coast Salish Territory. However, the medicine wheel is not a universal symbol; the directions can vary greatly from place to place; teaching and stories about the medicine wheel may be different from one community to the next. The medicine wheel may not be viewed as ancestral knowledge, rather a tool or guide, to help us conceptualize the lessons we must learn in life. Indigenous scholars have cautioned learners to recognize the hundreds of Indigenous communities across Canada, and to avoid seeing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit through a singular lens, a pan-Aboriginal lens. The diversity among Nations means a different worldview based on specific geographical

location, the land and waters, the survival techniques, languages, dialects, traditions, and the teachings.

When faced with how to tell my story and locate myself within writing about the research I have conducted, I could only come up with the desire to share what few teachings I have about the medicine wheel. Moreover, when I needed a framework for my thoughts, I naturally processed and planned by way of the four directions. Teachings about the medicine and the seven sacred teachings, often depicted in story, have guided me in many facets of my personal journey. I also discovered that the medicine wheel has been used in many professional domains when from Indigenous scholars (Baskin, McPherson, and Strike, 2012; Monchalin, 2016). The diversity of areas which use version of the medicine wheel symbol and teachings includes health, economic development, education, and environmental sustainability. The more I read about Indigenous research, the more strongly I became interested in the potential use of the medicine wheel to guide this study. As will be elaborated on further when discussing methods, I arranged my methodological approach, interview questions, and my analysis of findings, and discussion around the four directions of the medicine wheel.

Initially, the medicine wheel was not something that I had planned to incorporate into my research. Only after a period of struggle during this journey that I decided to rely more heavily on the teachings of the medicine wheel. However, many years of Western academic training including colonial templates of research methodology, was a significant factor in my self-censorship. I felt uncomfortable at first, and even awkward to give myself permission to Indigenize my approach. This required altogether new ways of talking about myself, the work I set out to do and the people behind the concepts I want to learn more about, and the people I was interviewing. I shed any remaining constraints, gaining a new confidence, and validated the medicine wheel as foundational in my thesis organization, inquiry, and analysis.

It took a lot of patience (from within and from my mentors) for me to build the courage to be truthful outwardly. Being truthful outwardly depended on me becoming honest inwardly. This was accomplished by listening carefully, and working hard to eliminate self-doubt and second-guessing my abilities, which came in times of stress and uncertainty. The latter arrived at several stages during this study, but the teachings served

to act as a foundation in navigating this journey. At the beginning, I would rely on one teaching; but, I quickly realized how the teachings are intertwined, linked to each other, and built upon each other. The success of the interviews with the Elders was that I was also living the teachings, and the Elders could see and hear this. Self-reflection was essential to my learning and growth at several junctures, when my path was not clear or straight. I learned the lesson of humility on more than one occasion, especially when plans did not materialize as I would have hoped. The seven sacred teachings have kept me grounded, focused, and well positioned for this respectful work that was required.

I often view the seven sacred teachings as channels by which one can acquire and relay information. These teachings reside in each of the four sacred directions of the medicine wheel: tracing in clockwise fashion from East to South, to West, then to North. This orientation may vary by the worldview of a community, Nation or cultural group, and dependent upon their unique teachings about their origin and location within Creation. The teachings of the medicine wheel are countless. Each Elder or person who conveys the teachings has his or her own variations, nuances and stories that are presented to elaborate on this life teaching and learning tool. I also relied on written accounts, one of which has been frequently referenced in the literature, *Sacred Tree* (Bopp and Bopp, 1989). Yet, oral accounts hold unique opportunities to discover and when the time is right, ask questions. The medicine wheel, a natural compass of each direction, and all the teachings they hold, was my guide or template where I took sanctuary. The reader is directed to Appendix A entitled, Medicine wheel helper wherein the main aspects of each direction are summarized. A simplistic description of some of the sacred teachings of each direction is provided in each of the remaining chapters.

I came to an understanding that I could not proceed in completing this academic work without acknowledging the subjective and spiritual nature of learning and contributing that are embedded in the sacred teachings. Teachings of a spiritual nature take a lifetime of practice and cannot be perfectly defined, as it is a dynamic process, dependent on one's interactions. I need a lifetime of learning from the external world, combined with internal understanding and healing, to work well. I felt it necessary to monitor the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of self, and maintaining balance through the medicine wheel teachings to see a clear path. Lastly, the views of the Elders presented require my utmost respect, for they are not only Elders whose wisdom is undeniable, but also fellow

human beings, each with a story to tell about how issues around justice, or injustices, are engaging and personal. Their life experiences add a unique dimension that will become evident throughout this paper.

As I have referred to the medicine wheel as a natural compass, this further elaboration should also position its utility for inquiry. The teachings comprise stories and lessons that reflect my value system, providing a guide for living a good life. By listening to Elders, one is reminded of these important values and living a good and just life. The natural law is a foundation for justice for some Indigenous scholars; simply doing it the right way. Dr. Joseph Couture, a pioneer of bringing healing in an Indigenized way, into the correctional system, as the first Indigenous person to receive a PhD in Psychology in Canada, the 2007 National Aboriginal Achievement Award recipient, wrote:

It seems to me that Indian spiritual mind, or spiritualized mentality, perceives or experiences the Creative Mind in all, everywhere. It is not linear, by dynamic and holistic. It is the “signs” of all the God Creator manifesting that constitute the “laws of nature” or, in Western terms, the Natural or Cosmic Law. For an Indian, these (the Laws) are the Right Things, with which one strives to relate to in a Right Way: a theme, the variations of which are to be found in the tribal rituals across the continent. (Couture and McGowan, 2013, 10)

The medicine wheel served to ground me and guide my thinking and conceptual framework for the thesis, as well as a teaching tool used by Elders in various forums with different groups, including offenders healing from substance abuse (Kunic and Varis, 2009). Indigenous professionals working to eliminate drug and alcohol abuse in Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations (Baskin, 2002; Martel and Brassard, 2008). The symbol of the circle makes interconnectedness of the four quadrants’ teachings readily visible and comprehensive. I was benefitted by the medicine wheel, as I set out in the process of Indigenizing my own research approach.

When I describe the wheel teachings to others, I speak from what I know and by no means from a place of authority. I have an awareness of what these teachings mean; and it will take a lifetime to truly understand, to honour and live the teachings. I rely on the medicine wheel teachings in establishing balance the of my physical, emotional, mental and spiritual domains of self. Living the teachings such as being substance free, refrain

from harming others, and commitment to ceremony and the protocols of the land and the people wherever I reside, is honouring the teachings, Creator, Ancestors and all creations.

As mentioned, it is not easy to articulate these teachings either, and my academic training has told me there is no place for personal, spiritual knowledge in research. Its use seems contrary to that which is deemed “legitimate” knowledge acquisition, research and presentation of findings. However, Indigenous scholars are unapologetically writing about their ways of knowing for decades and there is a greater acceptance in the academy for such thought. This thesis has also been about Indigenizing research, or decolonizing methodologies, and contributing to its growth and acceptance. These cultural teachings are central to understanding justice and its processes, and cannot be neglected, dismissed, or worse, re-interpreted for ease of use or understanding by Western scholars.

1.6. Medicine wheel helper: Teachings from the Eastern direction

The sacred teachings of the Eastern direction are many, including, and certainly not limited to, what the childhood of the life cycle brings. The Eastern direction is what I begin with because the East is the direction from where the sun rises. This direction represents the dawn or beginning of any kind of new journey, and creation. The East is about lessons learned in childhood and the gifts the young ones give to all else who have aged and have not seen the world from the eyes of a child in a while. (see Appendix A: Medicine wheel helper). Norm Wesley, an Elder from the Moose Cree Nation, said when introducing the Cree Creation Story (2015), “before you know who you are, and where you are going, you have to know where you have come from.” Indigenous justice is evolving; its growth can be linked to those who have spent time defining and conceptualizing it, nurturing it, and implementing some form of it that works for the respective community it serves – the ancestral knowledge holders, the community keepers, the Elders.

1.7. Elders

An Elder is concerned about their community and future generations. An Elder continues to learn deeply and broadly. An Elder helps people learn

from history and from life. They help us learn from the traditions and adapt that and translate that into the modern day context. An Elder is always an Elder in the making. A wise Elder understands that they never arrive – it's not some destination you get to, it's a journey that goes on. They encourage us to listen, to pay attention, and find one's own path to wisdom.

-Chris Hsiung (2016) Director and Producer of the award-winning documentary "Elder in the Making"

It is up to the community members to define who the Elders of their community are. I have been asked throughout my journey, who is an Elder? What makes one qualified as an Elder? It is not a job that one applies for, and it is not something that happens by a certain date. Following the Grandfather teaching of humility, Elders are not boastful, and do not consider or refer to themselves as Elders, knowledge keepers, or healers. An Elder is typically generous in teachings, full of wisdom, and humble at heart. It is not surprising then that Elders tend to avoid such a discussion. I have not yet met an Elder who is boastful or self-promoting.

One of the Elders with whom I worked closely offered the following: An Elder is a teacher, firm yet gentle, one who provides correction through modeling proper behaviour, and is adept at telling stories with a life lesson. Elders have much training by their grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, and other community members. Elders often times have been mentored by other Elders. In my connections with Elders, most are very effective in guiding individuals by living good examples, helping those who have made a mistake to "right a wrong" in a good way, and empower the learner to make the right decision next time. However, I should say that not all Elders are as described above or in such glowing terms. Elders are human and they stumble, fall and sometimes demonstrate the opposites of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, e.g. hate instead of love or disrespect instead of respect. During the course of this study, I learned quite quickly that not all Elders are the same nor can be called upon as they should attend to personal matters before continuing their helping and guiding role.

I am inspired by Blackfoot filmmaker, Cowboy Smithx, who produced a film called "Elder in the Making"; encouraging me to also say, I am an Elder in the making, and to ask what kind of Elder I want to be, as we are all Elders in the making. The director of the film, Chris Hsiung, reflects on his work with Elders in a REDxTalks episode (Hsiung, 2015). Hsiung echoes my sentiments about Elders; the following summarizes the most important

considerations. Elders do not ask us to look at them, rather to look in the direction they point to; they encourage us to find the good ways to grow, according to the teachings; and how to do a good job with all the tools available, and sustain that goodness. Personally and professionally, I have been blessed along my path to have a number of Elders to help me find the good path. One such Elder, a mentor, someone I have sat with countless times, was one of the Elders interviewed for this study. I was able to hear his stories, his reflections on life, and his own life journey. I took away many pieces of advice, and saw that justice is as much about the teachings as it is about concepts, processes and formal institutions. We share a love for sacred teachings, especially from Northern Cree traditions, he has introduced me to many Elders, sites of justice and ceremony, and for this, I am forever grateful.

Elders are ancestral knowledge keepers and community peacekeepers. They present with the experience-based wisdom and possess the abilities to guide those in conflict and guide them back to the teachings meant to restore individual balance physical, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Elders are teachers, spiritual advisors, cultural historians, and often seek to restore harmony to the community. From my teachings, and my review of the literature on the roles of Elders, one distinct role of the Elders is facilitating ceremonies. Ceremony, from what I have learned, is any culturally focused event where individuals come together to learn from an Elder. It may come in the form of a sacred sweat lodge ceremony, sharing circle, or simple prayer. In some instances, Elders may be present to perform ceremony if called upon in a sentencing circle or forums where traditional ways need to be respected.

Indigenous scholars such as Monchalin (2016) and Simpson (2008) speak of Elders as ones who guide, instruct, and teach the next new generation. This new generation, often referred to as the seventh generation, is being provided the necessary tools through the Elders to lead two Nations of people to the sacred Eighth fire, the prophecy of the next generation, which will be lit in the name of unity and peace. Metallic (2008) further highlighted that Elders instruct on history of their people and what this struggle is about. He stated, "The Indigenous struggle is about living and respecting the teachings of our ancestors. Our struggle is to rebuild our nations out of the shadow of colonialism" (Metallic, 2008, 62).

Before my research began, I visited a Mi'kmaq Elder from Lennox Island First Nation, PEI. I spent an entire day with her as she is close friends with my father, and the time seemed right to make the visit that had been promised for some time. During the day, I assisted her with taking down the wooden frame of a sacred sweat lodge and preparing it to be burned, to end its life in an honourable way. After our work was done, we simply sat and had tea and snacks and just chatted casually. Yet, near the end of our day, I asked one question that was very spiritual in nature. I was given a very different answer than what I expected. Maybe I was looking for exactitude. Maybe I was looking for all the answers neatly condensed to fill the short time remaining; but, instead, my Island Elder recommended a book for me to read, *The Medicine wheel: Earth Astrology* (1980) by Sun Bear and Wabun Wind. In the end, the answer to my question was quite clear: consult the teachings of the Medicine wheel at times of uncertainty, find where you are at within it, and work on balancing your four aspects of self - mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health. If one aspect of self is lacking attention, you will be off-centered, and your walk will not be centered on the good path. The book was often consulted during my study.

1.8. Guides of Indigenous justice: Walk and talk of Elders

Elders hold the secrets of dynamics of the New Vision. They are propelled by the past, are absolutely drawn to the future. -Dr. Joseph Couture

Through the teachings, I have learned about the sacredness of all individuals situated in the life cycle. We honour women, children, men, and the two-spirited, all in the Great Spirit's likeness. Elders are viewed as sacred beings for many reasons. Most importantly, and obvious in many cultures, they represent the wiser age group having the ability to reach into the past, preserving teachings from generations before and applying their own life experiences, and transmitting these to community members, and in particular, the youth. With those teachings, they educate and guide the younger ones, and present to them pathways, lessons, and values. With a wealth of wisdom, cultivated from years of experience of struggles and triumphs, Elders are mature in spirit, compassionate, and embodiments of the teachings. They possess patience and humility. They have walked many miles, and, as captured succinctly in the opening quote, they have great insights into the future, and are drawn to it as they have a special place in the life cycle.

Their words are important, and we must also acknowledge those who have worked hard to ensure their words live on.

I am grateful to be following the leads of my supervisor, Dr. Ted Palys and the works of his former students Dr. Wenona Victor (2001) and Tammy T'at'usayalthium Doward (2005). Both have been pioneers in documenting the journey and teachings of the Stó:lō justice and the conditions and understandings of how to apply Indigenous justice in the urban Coast Salish Territory of Vancouver (from Tsleil-Waututh Inlet to New Westminster, and East Vancouver to the Downtown Eastside). Emphasis is placed around the role and importance of Elders in the process of exploring and creating justice.

1.8.1. The Stó:lō Nation's Continuing Quest for Justice as a model

I became interested in the work of Dr. Victor (2001) not only for her comprehensive work, which was ground-breaking in terms of engaging a First Nation community in the exploration of Aboriginal justice, determining the appropriate methodological approach, and capturing the results of the findings; but, how she engaged the Elders. Like myself, I believe Victor had to find a way to enter into her community as a member from that community, but also as a researcher and someone who had to position herself around some of the broader issues. She writes:

This conceptual understanding of colonialism provides a fairly clear intellectual picture of the oppressive relationship that currently exists between Euro-Canadian agencies and First Nations. But it does little to help the reader understand how such a relationship will and does negatively affect both the colonizers and the colonized mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. At present, I do not have a full understanding of this effect for the colonizers. I can see that present day Canadian society is filled with social inequalities and violence, and is still very much dominated by the perspectives of White men, but whether or not Canadian society connects these and other problems to the manner in which they founded their Nation is unclear to me. I can, however, make a clear and distinct connection of the processes and ideologies of colonization to the present day problems that are currently afflicting Aboriginal communities. I also understand how colonization has impacted Aboriginal people mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. (Victor, 2001, 8)

The pathway for uncovering how best to discover what Aboriginal justice means and how best to see its return to the community was in Victor's 2001 work entitled, *'Searching for the Bone Needle': The Sto:lo Nation's Continuing Quest for Justice*. The means by which this discovery was accomplished was principally through interviews with nine Elders and oral traditions as passed down in *sxwoxwiyam* (oral traditions to pass teachings, customs, traditions and the "how-to" of Sto:lo culture from one generation to the next). Both of the data sources helped to identify Sto:lo principles and ideologies or "teachings" that played a role in how "justice" was seen and "experienced" by the Sto:lo people prior to contact (Victor, 2001). I took note of the protocols she used, and became aware of the potential for a departure from a formal questionnaire in favour of traditional storytelling.

The themes presented in *'Searching for the Bone Needle': The Sto:lo Nation's Continuing Quest for Justice* (Victor, 2001) are sacred teachings from a very specific place and time. The Stó:lō community is deeply informed by generations of Elders and Elders in the making despite the impacts of colonialism and the residential school experience. In her thesis, now Dr. Wenona Victor, the first Indigenous Studies faculty member of the University of the Fraser Valley, she focuses on the meaning of Stó:lō Nation justice and *Qwi:qwelstóm* as processes unique to the land and people of the river, their ceremonies and ways of knowing and living.

An analysis of her data revealed four main themes or components of Stó:lō justice: 1) Elders; 2) Family, Family ties and connections; 3) Teachings (respect, humility, sharing, role modeling, balance and harmony, and consensus); and 4) Spirituality. Each of these comprised an aspect of how justice was understood, transmitted, and experienced. Additionally, each could not be one without the other; they intersected multiple times like the crossing lines of the X in the medicine wheel. At the very centre we find identity, both individual and collective, with the latter, I would see as the Stó:lō Nation itself. These core elements of Elders, family and family ties and connections, teachings, and spirituality, are the foundation for justice according to the Stó:lō community, and emerged through the words of the Elders whether it be in explanation or through storytelling. Victor (2001) presents one of her observations around the Elders in this way: "the role of Elders in facilitating the ancestral ways of doing justice in the Stó:lō community reminds us of how

different life is here in post-colonial time compared to the “old ways” our Elders sometimes refer to”.

Further tenets of justice according to Victor (2001) are elaborations to the Seven Sacred Grandfather teachings of which I spoke earlier. These variations include being harmonious with others, viewing everything as living, having respect for everything, and having a strong sense of consensual decision-making. This latter tenet is a facet we see our Indigenous leaders demanding from all levels of government. This concept, if realized, will naturally yield greater unity in the face of adversity and diversity. It is an ideal that should be front and center with all justice initiatives, and certainly a goal of urban justice initiatives where significant diversity exists.

As noted by many writings on Indigenous justice, to be reviewed later in this paper, Victor (2001) noted that one facet of justice missing from the criminal justice system and from urban Indigenous justice initiatives is the lack of the wrongdoer spending time with Elders. An Elder should play a significant role in counselling a wrongdoer. This should involve exploring their thoughts and behaviours, their path and purpose in life, as well as providing the opportunity to be mentored and monitored for a period of time. After some time of counsel and guidance, another ceremony would be held so the wrongdoer could stand in front of Elders and the community to be recognized and honoured for their efforts to make positive changes. This form of justice aims to transform a sense of responsibility in the wrongdoer, a sense of responsibility for their actions, and bring humility and gratitude for the process and their learning experiences (Victor, 2001). Victor explains how she sees the essence of justice working on different levels:

I theorize this would motivate one to continue having a positive relationship within oneself and other people; without the risk of causing harm again. This process and much more in terms of the spiritual element of these ceremonies, which I have no authority to speak of, and the advice Elders bestow upon the wrongdoer, empowers and restores a lost person into a positive, productive member of their community once again, is the meaning of the Qwi:qwelstóm, a Halq'eméylem word describing justice according to the Sto:lo community. (Victor, 2001, 111-16)

Victor's work is ground-breaking on a number of fronts as I mentioned earlier. The power of her work lays in her ability to present the worldview of Stó:lō justice through the voices of her people. The message is clear, and the goals of her people are clear, which

aims to bring traditional forms of justice back to her Nation. Her views on Aboriginal justice are also clear, and she writes in her review of broader Aboriginal justice initiatives:

These examples of Aboriginal justice initiatives can be distinguished in the extent to which (1) the program is designed and implemented by Aboriginal people; and (2) the extent to which the program is supported by an Aboriginal community. However, an important third element is missing: (3) the extent to which the program's design, development and implementation reflects the culture, customs, traditions and spirituality of the respective First Nation community. Without this third element, Aboriginal justice initiatives represent "indigenisation" or "accommodation." This is no longer acceptable. My dream is larger than this. Call me an idealist, call me a romantic, call me a traditionalist, call me what you will, but I stand firm in my dream to live according to my Sto:lo beliefs. Neither a mainstream program that is run by Aboriginal people, nor an Aboriginal program that is run by non-Aboriginal people is sufficient. We deserve better. Aboriginal justice must necessarily be based on the culture of the respective First Nation community. For this to happen, Aboriginal people need to continue to demand the space and the freedom to recover and reclaim what is rightly ours – especially our inherent right to live according to our own cultural beliefs and systems. (Victor, 2001, 18-19)

Victor (2001) also explains that given the diversity of First Nations, "there will never be a single definition for Aboriginal justice."

Dr. Victor composed her thesis 16 years ago, and as a student who drew heavily on her work, my wish, and that of my Indigenous peers, remains "...to create space and the freedom for postcolonial Indigenous thought that is guided and nurtured by the teachings of our Old People" (Victor, 2001, 137).

1.9. The thesis

My proposal for a Master of Arts thesis for the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University stated I would present Indigenous Elder views of how the histories of Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, collective and individual experiences, identities and justice processes, both traditional and contemporary, interact in an urban context. The proposal highlighted three main areas of inquiry. From seeds of identity, grew my passion for exploring what it means to be an Indigenous urbanite's potential involvement in the processes of justice. Second, the study sought to understand why government's arbitrary

and legally bound legislation and policy have been slow to take into consideration culturally responsive forms of justice for Aboriginal people of Canada. While progress has been made to address culturally responsive forms of justice, which will also be highlighted in the paper, this study will thirdly, present a unique understanding and vision of urban Indigenous justice. By collecting, examining and synthesizing the perspectives of our Elders – those individuals who represent their respective communities and who are traditional holders of knowledge and wisdom – their vision of Indigenous justice for the future will be accessible to all those who have a stake in this matter.

This thesis will build upon the contributions of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars. These include the work of Dr. Wenona Victor (2001; 2005; 2007; 2008; 2012), whose work on justice within the Stó:lō First Nation, British Columbia, provides insight on Aboriginal justice according to the Stó:lō peoples, and Dr. Ted Palys, who has worked for Aboriginal justice for more than two decades in multiple domains. I would like to expand upon the both authors' work through an examination of Vancouver's Aboriginal experience in relation to identity and justice principally through the lens of respected community Elders.

Justice services providers such as the Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Service Society (VATJSS) have a unique position of supporting those who originate from many different First Nations and mixed Aboriginal heritages, guiding them in their journey, and applying many innovative ways of doing justice in culturally-specific ways. In an urban setting such as Vancouver, one finds a diverse range of communities, and therein, the ambiguity and fluidity of Aboriginal and First Nations' identity become an important element when intersecting with justice-related issues and services.

Elders are sacred teachers of culture including language, spiritual beliefs, and sacred practices specific to their territory. Some Elders may also possess the important role in the community as healer, providing spiritual guidance rooted in the beliefs and practices of its people. All Elders represent an important link between a difficult and often traumatic past for their peoples from European contact to the present day, where we find a significant number of Aboriginal people in conflict with the law and entwined in the justice system. It is therefore vital that we hear the teachings, views and vision of our Elders when it comes to justice.

Numerous scholars (Green, 1998; Hamilton, 2001; Palys, 1993; Palys, Isaak and Nuszdorfer, 2012; Palys and Victor, 2005; Ross, 1992, 1996, 2014) have presented on the topic of Aboriginal justice and the need to consider the holistic Aboriginal world-view in the administration of justice respecting Aboriginal people in Canada. Additionally, the landmark court case, *R. v. Gladue*, [1999] 1 S.C.R. 688 and Section 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code affirm that judges should consider an offender's cultural background and circumstance in sentencing decisions as well applying restorative justice principles (Legal Services Society, 2011). This thesis will provide a missing dialogue to the discussion and current practice of urban Aboriginal justice in Canada. What Elders have to say about justice in today's contemporary society and how it must be applied from an Indigenous perspective will be invaluable information upon which justice service providers can ground their practices and continue to serve Aboriginal people. Consultation with Aboriginal Elders could also serve to rejuvenate how self-determined justice can be achieved through culturally decolonized methods and practices. In turn, these approaches may also serve to strengthen Aboriginal people's identity by bringing greater clarity to the ambiguity that often accompanies Aboriginal people when they are entangled within a Western justice system. Ultimately, a voice must be given to those with no voice, on a path that leads to justice.

Initially, when considering questions or issues that could guide my inquiry, I considered many. Many questions arranged by the four directions of the medicine wheel was a way for me to brainstorm various themes of inquiry and allow the participant to be inspired by a question or topic they felt like expanding on. Please see Appendix C Medicine wheel Interview Guide. Some of these lines of inquiry includes:

Is identity important? Can identity lead to a better life? What of Urban Aboriginal people and sense of identity? Is identity connected to justice?

What is justice from an Aboriginal perspective?

Where does justice occur? What do those sites of justice look like, formal and informal, institutional and community-based? How can we make Aboriginal Justice accessible?

Can we have two systems of justice operating within a pluralist society? Does the dominant culture's justice "trump" other forms of justice?

Are there certain sites of justice that we should pay attention to? Where are they, what can we learn from them? Who are the players? What teachings can be learned and how does society or community benefit?

Can we have effective justice systems operating one within another?

Why do Aboriginal people have such a distrust of Western justice systems? Why, after several decades of supporting and allocating resources to Aboriginal justice initiatives, do we continue to see an over-representation of Aboriginal people involved in the criminal justice system?

Who are the keepers of justice?

While this list seems daunting, in conjunction with my main lines of inquiry around identity and its interconnectedness to justice, government policy respecting justice for Aboriginal people, and an understanding and vision of urban Aboriginal justice, it was nonetheless necessary to articulate these at the beginning. However, in the end, the central question is simply, *what is Aboriginal justice in the context of contemporary urban Vancouver, and how should it be applied and realized?*

Chapter 2.

Teachings from the South

2.1. Returning to justice teachings

One early popular work about Aboriginal justice came from Rupert Ross, a former Assistant Crown Attorney with the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, who sought to learn from Indigenous ways of knowing, healing and justice. His work sparked an unprecedented level of interest in how best to serve the interests of Aboriginal people in relation to criminal justice matters.

According to Ross (2014), justice involves three relational goals. They include the offender reaching an emotional understanding of the damage of their crimes; examining disharmony in the offender's life and its linkage to the crime; and exploring the options for the offender and victim to "move out of the relational disfigurement that has bound them together in fear, guilt and anger from the moment of the crime."

However, there is much more that we must take into account beyond the offender, on which much of Ross' writing seems focused. In particular, a relational view of justice depends heavily on repairing the emotional harm and understanding how the crime affected the victim. The presence of the community and Elders are also integral to these relational goals.

The community's role is to validate the healing and reconciliation, to ensure that all involved have returned to positive relations within the community. Elders need to see this balance in their community by counselling not only the offender(s) and the victim(s), but their family members as well. Ross recognized that Elders see justice not simply as forging reconciliation among the parties involved, but also ensuring that the community is safe and peaceful. This challenge is often overlooked in the literature. Indigenous justice concerns itself not only with outcomes – correcting problematic behaviours – but also the methods and strategies by which peace is restored and maintained.

Ross explains the Indigenous worldview in terms of justice as healing. He cites many Indigenous scholars and Elders, working to understand the common themes, the common threads, and common practices as presented in story and through current work. His work as an ally is to deliver these perspectives, along with his own learning journey as he describes moments of realization or connection to the Elders' stories regarding justice.

Ross cites strong Indigenous scholars such as Betty Bestian, James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson, and Vine Deloria Jr., all of whom talk about the intrinsic nature of human beings' spiritual connection with the natural world, which challenges the Judeo-Christian worldview that humans were placed on the Earth to use and control the land and natural inhabitants. Indigenous peoples prefer to view humans as simply another member of the natural and spirit world in which we all have an ethical responsibility to take care of each spirit holder. According to Indigenous epistemology, every item in existence holds a spirit. We all share the four elements of Creation: fire, water, earth and air (Ross, 2014, 23-24).

One of his stories in *Indigenous Healing* (Ross, 2014) that was particularly illuminating involved a simple re-telling of a conversation Ross had with Mary Ann Anderson, an Elder from Big Trout Lake in Ontario. Her view of the current justice system is that it employs fear-based tactics to deter persons from committing crime or being caught in a wrongdoing. She suggests that our criminal justice system's response to crime and punishment by placing an offender in jail is a form of "terrorism." Elder Mary Ann notes that many Indigenous men and women who offend committed their act of wrongdoing while intoxicated, and that persons who abuse substances or have addictions are dealing with trauma issues. In that case, they are mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually unwell. The Elder stated, "you can't scare an ill person into becoming healthy." (Ross, 2014, 12). As a solution, she suggests individuals in trouble need a vast network of social supports, an Elders council, and where appropriate, rehabilitation and counselling. These would allow the person to heal their trauma in a culturally relevant way. If the crime was a violation of someone else's human rights, an act of violence for example, those harmed would need a similar network of supports to heal in a healthy way, with an Elder who could provide cultural teachings. These efforts of supporting offenders and victims do happen in

cities, but in many cases there are simply not enough resources for rehabilitation centres with a focus on Aboriginal cultural practices.

In his first book, *Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality* (Ross, 1992) spoke primarily to differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worldviews. This cultural examination offered a significant first step in understanding how each culture approaches such fundamental acts as child rearing and responding to transgressions against another member of the community. For many years, there was an assumption that “both societies shared common notions of the ‘proper’ way to relate to and treat the universe, other people, and one’s own mental and spiritual health” (Ross, 1992, 184). While these cultural differences may appear inconsequential to those observant of the culture of the colonized world, according to Ross the heart of the matter is quite simple:

Until recently, Native people have been willing to endure many of the traditionally unethical requirements of our legal system in the belief that we too aimed at restoring interpersonal harmony and individual mental health. That belief was mistaken, for our courts focus primarily on the preservation of public peace. The Native approach essentially ignores what was done and concentrates instead upon the personal or interpersonal dysfunctions which caused the problem in the first place. Their first priority lies in trying to correct those dysfunctions rather than in trying to keep those continuing dysfunctions from erupting into further harmful and illegal acts. (Ross, 1992, 46)

In *Return to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* (1996) Ross discusses the role of the Elder in community healing, and shows how their work around spiritual healing can reconnect individuals to traditional ways of living and interacting, those important roads that were controlled and literally closed for generations. Beyond the healing role that Elders fulfil, Ross sees that their work goes far beyond this. “Native leaders and Elders are working to restore their people, especially to their youth, the best parts of their traditional value system, the philosophy that sustained them on this continent for many thousands of years.” (Ross, 1996).

Ross also described examples of Aboriginal justice at work occurring in Canadian communities such as Cree First Nation in Northern Ontario, Teslin First Nation in the Yukon, Hollow Water First Nation in Manitoba as well as discussing the court systems of other Indigenous peoples internationally, such as the Navajo (Navajo Tribal Court, United

States) and Maori peoples (Family Group Conference Approach, New Zealand). He openly acknowledges the contribution of no less than thirty-six Elders from across the country to his work, representing both rural and urban environments. Several prominent Elders, whose own work on Aboriginal social justice, include Dr. Marie Battiste (Mi'kmaq, Eskasoni, Nova Scotia), Dr. Patricia Monture-Angus (Mohawk, Six Nations Grand River, Ontario), Murray Sinclair (Ojibway, Selkirk, Manitoba) and Clare Brant (Mohawk, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Ontario). The contributions of the Elders to the works by Ross show how important they are to include in any examination of contemporary Aboriginal justice issues in the urban context.

2.2. Indigenous justice: In the words of Elders

A second important set of readings around Aboriginal justice is the work of Emily Faries, who conducted interviews with several of Elders, and editors Kulchyski, McCaskill and Newhouse (1999). What made *In the Words of Elders: Aboriginal Cultures in Transition* different from other works respecting Aboriginal justice was that it offered words of wisdom from sixteen traditional Elders from eight cultural regions of Canada. In addition to discussing traditional justice, they offered their teachings and opinions on important matters such as cultural practices, ceremony, stages of life, work, land and traditional territories, and family. The four main themes presented by the twelve Elders who offered their teachings on justice were: 1) role of Elder, 2) role of community; 3) role of traditional values and teachings; and 4) role of traditional justice principles. The table below presents a comparative summary of Elders perspectives of traditional justice from the work of *In the Words of Elders: Aboriginal Cultures in Transition* (Kulchyski, McCaskill and Newhouse, 1999).

Table 2-1. Comparative summary of Elder perspectives

<p style="text-align: center;">Role of Elders</p> <p>Processes hinged on the decisions made by the Elders; especially in the instance of disrespecting the law of the community</p> <p>Elders and medicines serve to keep culture and healing path alive and real for all races</p> <p>Elders are critical in making the community-based approach work, and it is the words of the Elders representing community interest that will guide the process and outcomes.</p> <p>Traditional justice approaches need to also focus on traditional teachings and spiritual guides by an Elder so guidance is given.</p> <p>Elder intervention is a power tool to alter behaviour.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Role of Community</p> <p>Traditional justice involved family, and participation from many members of the community to help offenders and victims;</p> <p>Justice involves community-based approach and in some instances, working in isolated camps to correct behaviour;</p> <p>The offender is accountable to the community and often brought before the community with sanctions of loss of possessions, shaming, airing grievances or banishment.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Role of Traditional Values and Teachings</p> <p>Cultural practices are key to living a good life Justice involved talking about the wrong-doing or unwanted behaviour and how to bring about change;</p> <p>A continuation of the current justice system plays into avoiding responsibilities and not being able to uncover the truth, which is central to Inuit traditional justice.</p> <p>Justice was acknowledgement of speaking the truth and if there was wrong-doing there were consequences.</p> <p>Truth reflects respect and without respect, particularly self-respect, nothing will change and it brings dishonour to the Elders, family and community.</p> <p>Justice involved living on the land, living without drugs, and sharing stories, these ways allowed for living in harmony.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Role of Traditional Justice</p> <p>Reparation and restorative acts by the offender to the victim made things right after a period away (after deep reflection and taking responsibility).</p> <p>Justice system must adapt to meet the needs of the local community and its principles and customs, unique to the territory.</p> <p>Restorative justice plays a role in maintaining balance within the social structure of community.</p> <p>Various forms of shaming or banishment sends a clear message of community denunciation and mirrors the contemporary justice goals of deterrence. Despite the harsh nature of banishment of an individual from a community, there was a possibility of return after deep reflection and genuine change.</p> <p>Discussing problems, bringing together offender and victim, and learning forgiving through spiritual practices lead by Elders and medicine people are central tenants of traditional Inuit ways.</p>

The summaries reflect the four central themes. The Elder, community, traditional values and teachings, and traditional justice principles play a role as pillars of justice. Taken together, the words of these twelve Elders presents a vision of how traditional justice was applied before colonization or how the Elders in traditional territories would like to take justice into their own communities.

Although some Elders spoke of working within the current justice system by providing assistance to the judges so they may understand traditional justice practices, many Elders were unequivocal in their belief that the current criminal justice system promotes avoidance of responsibility, an adversarial system of blame and punishment, lost opportunities for teaching and learning, an absence of personal growth, and a distancing from traditional justice principles of restorative justice, healing and community engagement in the process.

2.3. Justice as accountability, family, healing and empowerment

Palys and Victor (2007) assert several reasons why Aboriginal peoples should not be obstructed from, rather encouraged, to exercise their right to create justice systems that reflect Indigenous traditions. These include: a) the inherent right to self-determination and protection by the *Constitution Act*; b) a necessary response to an unjust, externally imposed justice system that countless committees and commissions of Inquiry have highlighted; and c) a timely connection of Aboriginal peoples with forms of justice that are meaningful within broader community governance processes.

Palys and Victor (2007) recount the early days of establishing a community-based justice programme, Qwi:qwelstóm for Stó:lō Nation, and with it valuable lessons. Prompted by a number of “false starts” by engaging “experts” in other justice initiatives, it was quickly revealed that their approaches did not meet the needs of the community. So, it became clear to the community Elders and the Justice Coordinator, Dr. Wenona Victor, that the community was more than capable of developing its own justice functions. It was the Stó:lō community and its people who needed to be engaged with its own culture, customs, and traditions (Victor, 2005, 7). One of the first steps included asking the Elders, beginning with a simple opening question, “Traditionally, prior to the courts coming to our territory, what did we do to resolve conflict in our communities?” As with the inquiry of Ross discussed earlier (Ross, 1992; 1996, 2014), the answers that the Elders provided centered on family as “justice” with the role of Elders; the role of family ties and connections; sacred teachings and spirituality as fundamental to the guiding of the justice programme (Ross, 1996, 9-10). The role of the Elder in the Qwi:qwelstóm process is

paramount to achieving the outcomes, and focuses on balance of the self and community in keeping with Stó:lō tradition, practice and culture (Victor, 2005, 15-16). It was this reading in particular and my involvement with a number of Aboriginal justice initiatives that fostered my interest in this topic.

Mi'kmaq-Celtic scholar Cyndi Baskin (2002), an Associate Professor in the Ryerson University School of Social Work, describes Indigenous justice in these terms:

In a traditional way of our culture, wrongdoing is a collective responsibility and the process involves all parties acknowledging the wrong, allowing for atonement and installing a system of compensation in order to restore harmony to the community. (Baskin, 2002, 133)

Her work shows a clear contrast between Anglo-Canadian justice and traditional Indigenous justice practices. While the former is driven by the state and is individualistic in nature, traditional Indigenous justice is rooted in community through laws tied to sacred values and teachings. Consensus, arbitration through peacekeeping methods, and the administration of laws by the collective (i.e., family; clan; tribe; community) are fundamental features of Indigenous justice systems (Baskin, 2002, 134-135).

2.4. The Downtown Eastside: Root of the problem or misrepresentation?

To better understand the lives of urban Indigenous people, a review of the literature that examined Vancouver was undertaken. The majority of this literature focused on the Downtown Eastside (DTES), a location that figures prominently in justice and outreach services.

Between January to March 2002, Griffiths (2002) surveyed 200 Aboriginal individuals who attended First United Church, located in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) of Vancouver. The National Community Research Project (NCRP) examined access and delivery of services to Aboriginal people who had suffered a criminal victimization. Victimization included assault, sexual assault, and murder, but also included broader domains such as suicide, alcoholism, drug use, depression, and neglect. The NCRP also examined how victimization affected Aboriginal people's sense of community and

neighborhood including social cohesion and perceptions of danger in their community, all of which are important to determining types of community structures and policies requiring repair, maintenance, and enhancement to build a strong social fabric in both urban and rural Aboriginal communities (Griffiths, 2002).

The study found that the majority of respondents feel comfortable in their neighbourhood, have a network of friends, generally limit their travel to the urban area, and have no plans to leave the area or to return to their community or reserve of origin. Both Aboriginal men and women in the sample showed no statistical differences on multiple dimensions covered in the survey questionnaire. "Although 17% of the women in the sample had been the victims of physical abuse, there were no differences in perceptions of safety, degree of identification with the neighbourhood, patterns of use/abuse of alcohol and drugs, the extent to which programs and services were accessed, and the use of hospital facilities." (Griffiths, 2002). However, Aboriginal women did rely to a greater extent than men did on family members, the women's centre, and First United Church for assistance in times of difficulty.

Relevant to this paper, Griffiths (2002) found that, contrary to public perceptions of the DTES, a high percentage (70%) of respondents had their own residence and were not as "transient" as assumed. Further, they had maintained some form of contact with their families, were not severely impaired by alcohol and/or drug addiction, and had relatively high levels of participation in various aspects of Aboriginal culture and traditions. Combined with neighbourhood and friendship networks, residents perceived many positive attributes of their community. The author saw "a vast wealth of untapped human potential" among the Aboriginal residents of the DTES, even though the community is "overshadowed by the highly visible negative attributes" of poverty, drug addiction, and notions of a general dysfunction. Based on his findings, Griffiths recommended a "re-examination of the assumptions that have provided the foundation for the policies and programs for Aboriginal people in the inner city" and further suggested that "...efforts should be made to develop mechanisms to ensure the ongoing participation of community residents in the development of policies and programs that affect the neighbourhoods" (Griffiths, 2002, 50-51).

2.5. Initiatives on Unceded Coast Salish Territory promoting Aboriginal engagement and services

At present, within British Columbia and the Greater Vancouver area there are a few notable initiatives and programs, which aim to assist First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to access appropriate justice-related services.

During the 1990s, there was a substantial increase in activity by Aboriginal communities to take control of justice measures to deal with conflict and crime largely driven by decades of inquiries and worsening of justice outcomes for its peoples. The Aboriginal Justice Strategy (AJS) was one such program initiative, funded and administered by the Aboriginal Justice Directorate within the federal Department of Justice that helped with this increased level of community engagement. AJS helped launch Aboriginally run justice service organizations distinctly for Aboriginal people, customizing services according to the cultural needs and practices of the community. In rural, reserve and urban communities across Canada, AJS has funded 275 programs serving nearly 800 Aboriginal communities across the country (Department of Justice, 2016). More specifically, AJS objectives include: (1) to contribute to a decrease in the rates of victimization, crime and incarceration among Aboriginal people in communities with AJS programs; (2) to assist Aboriginal people in assuming greater responsibility for the administration of justice in their communities; (3) to provide better and more timely information about community-based justice programs funded by the AJS; and (4) to reflect and include Aboriginal values within the justice system (Department of Justice, 2016). Currently, within the entire province of British Columbia, there are 30 different Aboriginal justice programs "...jointly funded by the federal Department of Justice and B.C. Corrections." (Government of British Columbia, 2016).

2.5.1. Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society

Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society (VATJSS) became operational in the Spring of 2000 with a two-pronged mandate: (1) to deliver services to Aboriginal community members who enter the criminal justice system, both accused

persons and victims of crimes (VATJSS, 2016); (2) and to provide relevant, culturally informed justice services by and for Indigenous people living in the Metro Vancouver area.

The involvement of Elders from the point of consultation on developing and managing services is an important foundational structure of building best practice model for services unique to the needs of Aboriginal people. Elders contributed to the development of VATJSS at every stage from the original design of the program (see Doward, 2005) to each stage of the justice processes VATJSS provides, which focus on repairing the relationships harmed by criminal acts. With a slogan of "*Strengthening Resiliency within the Aboriginal Community*," the organization's "non-adversarial, non-retributive approach to justice emphasizes healing in victims, meaningful accountability of offenders, and the involvement of community members in creation of a healthier and safer community" (VATJSS, 2016).

Doward (2005) created a Masters of Arts thesis around the role of community in the design and development of VATJSS. She found distinct features in the development of successful Aboriginal services created by and for the Aboriginal community within the urban context. Doward (2005, 80) defines community as encompassing three main elements: identity, space and relationships. "Identify" in this context refers to anyone who self-identifies as Aboriginal. "Space" refers to where Aboriginal services can be found, usually in places near other Aboriginal organizations and services; also being a safe space, where Aboriginal people can gather and feel a part of a culture. This flows into the last segment of community, "relationships." The success of Aboriginal organizations and services depends heavily upon the relationships formed, where people come together to respect their differences and celebrate and move forward with common goals and values. The author asserts the design, development and delivery of successful Aboriginal services of any kind depends on forming strong relationships in safe Indigenized spaces where Aboriginal people of all Nation origins can congregate (Doward, 2005). Moreover, Doward (2005) felt that it was up to Indigenous people to determine the right to self-identify and to decide where and how their individual identity fits into a larger relational network of Aboriginal people within the urban context. I now turn to a review of two notable justice-related initiatives that have met with relative success.

2.5.2. Qwi:qwelstóm Stó:lō Nation Justice

Qwi:qwelstóm, the Stó:lō Nation Justice Program (Qwí:qwelstóm Stó:lō Service Agency Justice Program, 2016) focuses on the interrelatedness of all living things and healing relationships between individuals, families and communities. Rooted in traditional Stó:lō processes for dispute resolution, justice workers and Elders bring family and community together, empowering all involved to reach an agreement on how to restore balance and harmony.

Qwi:qwelstóm is a Halq'eméylem word that describes the Stó:lō people's worldview in relation to "justice", more broadly, as good relations between individuals, within families, within the entire community. Palys and Victor (2005) describe Dr. Wenona Victor's journey in the early creation stage of *Qwi:qwelstóm*, in 1999. Victor was appointed by the Stó:lō Nation to assist in implementing a Family Group Conferencing programme, which grew into *Qwi:qwelstóm* as it stands today. The naming of a programme or initiative for the Stó:lō community by the Stó:lō people is particularly important. The Elders involved in the Halq'eméylem language revitalization programme were instrumental in the naming of the programme. After several months, the Elders returned with *Qwi:qwelstóm kwelam t' ey*, meaning "they are teaching you, moving you toward the good" as a close but incomplete translation.

The Stó:lō Nation community made a commitment to the three main principles of *Qwi:qwelstóm*: that it "(1) be based on Stó:lō culture, customs and traditions; (2) be supported by the Stó:lō communities; and (3) be driven by the Stó:lō people." (Palys and Victor, 2005, 9). The program is accountable to the two bodies within the governing structure, the House of Justice and the Elders Council for *Qwi:qwelstóm*. The Elders play an integral role in the daily operation of the program and each process including counselling individuals and families, to come to a consensual solution, ensuring culture and tradition is being followed (Palys and Victor, 7-10). Participants of *Qwi:qwelstóm* are person(s) willing to take responsibility for their harmful actions, and the person(s) harmed are invited to participate and are informed of the process. The process aims to restore harmony and balance with emphasis on respect and teachings, guided by the Stó:lō community Elders. Elders' role in the process is to speak with the individuals involved on how to live in a good way responsibly, conscious of the interconnectedness of all living

beings and our own individual actions. In these ways the community, Elders, all individuals involved in the dispute and resolution are empowered to be involved in restoring balance in a meaningful way (Qwí:qwelstóm Stó:lō Service Agency Justice Program, 2016).

2.5.3. A vision of Elders: Consultation and consensus

Discussing the works of Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society (VATJSS) and Qwí:qwelstóm Stó:lō Service Agency Justice Program illuminates the role Elders played in providing the vision for these particular community-based initiatives. Despite their different locations, one being an urban multi-cultural space meant for urban Indigenous community members, the other specifically established for the Stó:lō community, Elders were consulted in the creation of these justice services.

Elders were consulted during the development of VATJSS on the desirability of program and services; the principles and characteristics to operate from; who should be able to access the services; and what roles the Elders would take on. Services offered by VATJSS are meant to be inclusive to people who self-identify as Aboriginal, and those who wish to engage in a cultural aspect they may have been disconnected from (Palys, Isaak, Nuszdorfer, 2012). Although the frequency of Elder consultations is not suggested, community-based justice-related services would benefit greatly through annual consultations.

Both organizations have a foundational set of core values and protocols informed with consultation and consensus by Elders and community members. Particularly in the development of VATJSS, community members advised the program to be "...a healing-based forum that would be run by community member for community members with the objective of healing relations and bringing people back to the community." (Palys, Isaak, Nuszdorfer, 2012, 10). To "seek justice" has been a reoccurring theme that I have encountered quite frequently in the literature. Justice, the sense of doing what is right, is something we all encounter, however life has many ways by which we lose that sense of rightness, depending upon one's psychological, sociological, and economical placement. Indigenous Elders are most often viewed as a moral compass when it comes to what is justice and a good way of living.

Elders having the years of observation, experience, and ties to past generations, transfer those values and beliefs associated with justice tied to the culture. Organizations such as VATJSS and Qwí:qwelstóm, in working closely with Elders through consultation and direct engagement, help those people in need of support and guidance return to the cultural teachings and living well. The broader society must recognize the many ways transformative and preventative measures of justice can help people heal the root causes of relationship breakdown, conflict and, law-breaking through the work of Elders.

Chapter 3.

Lesson in the West

3.1. Etuaptmumk, a poem by Rebecca Thomas, Mi'kmaq

Even when not living in one's territory, we bring the identity of home territories everywhere we go. Significant stories travel across this land to remind us that as Aboriginal people, many of us are working within common visions, purposes, and ways of living Indigenous identities and realities. I present the following words written by Rebecca Thomas, Halifax Poet Laureate, Mi'kmaq Coordinator for Aboriginal Student Service at the Nova Scotia Community College, and Mi'kmaq member of Lennox Island First Nation, Abegweit (Prince Edward Island).

*I lost my talk, said Rita Joe.
For me, I was never given the option to know.
The feel the flow of the words as they rolled off my tongue.
Giving me the lyrics of how our world was sung.
My perspective was spun using the threads of both your world and theirs
Left to cobble together a spirit from rags and tears.
Painfully aware that I was different.*

*Through hard work and determination
I found my Indigenous articulation,
A compilation of two ways make up the sum of me.*

*You have two eyes.
Yet you only have one view,
Your way is best you would argue.
Centuries of being in the position to subdue those who would aspire.
They say that the sun never set on the British Empire.
And because we recognized the hubris that defines your story.
We have a sunrise and sunset in our territory,*

*With my heart and eyes, I have a completely different view,
The consequence of my skin comes in an entirely different hue.
Don't you see? Although you represent us,
We think very differently than you.
Because we see the world not through one set of eyes,
But through two.*

*Thousands of years long, we were independent, proud and strong.
We belonged to this earth, the way power belongs to money and privilege to birth.
We put our communities first.*

*But then came the fleets.
Filled with those, YOU would ironically define today, as “come from away.”
To invade every inch of our world.
To break our spirit and pull the threads that would unfurl us to catch the way you
speak.
But this is not the poem for the retelling of a one-sided history.
Each of our worlds has its strengths.
Yours is in power,
It gets to eat its cake and define race.
It has the ability to unapologetically take up space.
If societal progress is linear, this society is top tier.
Terra nullius, as though we were never here.
It must be nice to be so confident.*

*Your strength is that this society is ubiquitous
Built on reified rubrics of tradition and rhetoric.
Your notions of diversity are ad hoc in nature.
An after-thought feature to an immovable structure.
This isn't a conviction or an acquittal,
Just the voice coming from an eye honed to be critical,
Who does not shy away from the opportunity to be political.
If you push our two sides of a Venn together you'll get a circle.*

*We were never meant to be static.
Like the rivers around us, we shift and change and remain dynamic.
We bring to the table something that is able to change your worldview and show
you what we are capable of.
That a lot can come from a holistic concept of the Earth.
You are not a plague nor we a curse or a problem in need of a solution.
But we've got to rid ourselves of the spiritual dissolution.
The dilution of our treaties written to share this land.
And we ask that you understand that we are the experts on what we need.
Don't feed us your good intentions
Carefully laid apologies will not get you an historical exemption.
We plan out our actions for the next seven generations and we ask that you do that
same.*

*Open your other set of eyes
Recognize the pain you have caused
Take a pause and start breathing.
Welcome to the world of Two Eyed Seeing.*

I chose to include this spoken word piece, which was delivered at a Graduate Research Conference as part of the keynote address by Thomas that examined the gift of multiple perspectives or Two-Eyed Seeing (Thomas, 2016). It reflects much of my experience about what it means to be an Indigenous woman studying and working in modern urban society. Beyond that, Thomas also gives precise answers in her work as to what Indigenous justice means to an Indigenous person such as herself, and others who are made to wear the shame of colonial oppression. It's a voice like Rebecca's which offers honest ways to come to grips with the many injustices, while honouring our way of living on our terms with an identity not prescribed but lived.

One of the reasons I chose the topic of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal justice was to more fully understand and explore my own Indigenous culture. I also knew that such an examination would have to start first with speaking to Elders. This examination would further provide important lessons around applying an Indigenous epistemology. The Elders with whom I connected and subsequently interviewed, all encountered justice and injustices in their personal and professional lives. Throughout my study, I also received teachings from many Elders who were not formally interviewed.

During my research, I was invited to participate in ceremony and cultural activities including powwows in Vancouver and Kamloops. While there were personal motivations to participate, an Indigenous research paradigm requires that the learner be fully engaged. One of the most important teachings, reinforced through this study, is that everything we do in this life is a process. This participant-observation style has provided me with an opportunity to go beyond the interviews and experience the process including those sites of justice that I will address further in this paper. I now turn my attention to a brief examination of identity, and what I have learned about how identity becomes a critical aspect of culture, and in turn, justice.

3.2. Identity in full circle

In a review of over 20 diverse scholarly works on issues regarding Indigenous identities, in my earlier years of graduate studies, I uncovered four reoccurring themes that centered on the history, nature, type and development of identity in the Canadian

context. More specifically, the themes spoke of how: (1) the history of colonization is embedded in the collective identity of Aboriginal people; (2) Aboriginal identity is dynamic, fluid, political, and changes over time; (3) there are significant variations between individual and collective Aboriginal identity; and (4) the influence of the collective experience and resistance to governments and private industry have led to a greater visibility of Aboriginal identities.

The colonization of Indigenous Turtle Island through discriminatory laws and policies has regulated the lives and identities of the original people in every way. While attempts have been made to devolve institutional authority to First Nation communities in areas such as health, education, and social welfare, many important domains including criminal justice and self-government, are far from being under the full control of Aboriginal people. Despite how Aboriginal people are governed, their identity is dynamic and fluid, often changing to accommodate circumstance and situation (Carlston, 2010; Martel and Brassard, 2008). Aboriginal identity is often politicized (Coates, 1999), and dominates discussions about who is entitled to what based on Status, e.g.: registered Indian versus non-registered Indian. On an individual level, identity is something that can be embraced, lived, or denied. There are many Aboriginal people who have formulated an individual identity that is linked to characteristics of the collective Aboriginal identity or constructed through self-discovery, and created to fit that person's lifestyle. Their connectedness to Aboriginal communities and its members are based on their own interpretation.

While legal recognition of Aboriginal identity is important, the literature has identified a major issue with Aboriginal identity formation and development when controlled externally. Identity must be an individual and community process. It cannot be prescribed by such colonial means as by blood quantum. A community should have the right to decide who is a member of a band, who can live in that First Nation community, and who should enjoy benefits of acceptance and belonging (Palmater, 2011). In this regard, and of relevance to this paper, justice is being able to live one's life without being told who you are.

Understanding Aboriginal identity can begin the process of a reparation of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Deer (2013) believes that advancing educational developments that support Aboriginal people identities are

essential to ethno-cultural preservation and an evolution founded on principles of a respected and sound multicultural society. Education about Indigenous Turtle Islanders, who Indigenous people are, plays a significant role in reducing racism and discrimination against Indigenous people, while ameliorating the numerous social, economic, and health conditions that continue to plague Canadian society. Advancing the Canadian Aboriginal identity will play a monumental role in seeing justice served.

3.3. Medicine wheel helper: Teachings from the Western direction

The teachings from the Western Direction, the West Wind, are plentiful, including, and certainly not limited to, what teachers visit us during adulthood, the autumn time of life. To add to the on-going discussion of what the Medicine wheel teachings are, from what was passed down to me, which may be very different, or similar to what is carried by others, the teachings from the West is a time for cultivating the mental aspect or mental intelligence. What I mean by mental intelligence is to not only move from being motivated by emotional needs as in childhood, our physical needs in adolescence, and now in adulthood be motivated to balance our mental needs. This requires challenging the mind to expand, learn new ways, perhaps by picking up a new trade or skill and traveling and learning from different from ourselves. It is not to say that in previous life phases, we are not already doing this, as there is no structured order when we learn; rather it is more of a heightened awareness when we are in the learning phase, we are able to teach others and make significant contributions to family and community when engaged in this process.

Black is often the colour of the wheel quadrant in the direction of the West. However, my teachings reserve the colour red for this quadrant, the direction of the setting sun, a fiery red, like the burning embers of the sacred fire. My ancestors, the Red people originated in the West. While my journey brought me to the Coast Salish territory to learn new ways of the West, I also experienced the urban Coast Salish territory as a mosaic of Nations, where a collection of people from all different lands, languages, beliefs have come together to learn and re-learn cultural ways. This has been my experience in the urban context.

The life cycle of the Western direction is adulthood, where many of life's challenges must be understood and mastered through the Grandfather teachings, principally love, respect, honesty and courage. It is a time when men and women start doing men and women things and leave youth behind as they take on more responsibility. It is often a time to fully accept responsibility. We mature, and carry ourselves with a maturity of spirit. We learn to seek help from Elders, and even ask for help from our ancestors of the spirit world. In adulthood, we learn how to speak truthfully and be honest with oneself. It is usually in this phase that we find others coming to grips with substance abuse issues, and using their mental strengths to help them abstain from substances and unhealthy behaviours by being more cognitively aware and resilient.

3.4. On Indigenizing methodology

In the sunset stages of my research for this thesis I discovered the work of Maori scholar, Dr. Linda Smith (2012) of New Zealand. I took a small, yet significant, step toward decolonizing methodology. This opens the door for further study with the goal of fully integrating decolonized method of an Indigenized research, for more meaningful knowledge collection and sharing. A greater amount of time and effort is required to fully understand and implement the teachings of decolonized methodology akin to Dr. Smith's work. Her writing on the ways of Indigenous knowledge and methodology has helped validate the uniqueness of my current study, the techniques I employed, and modes chosen to present results. Accessing knowledge within an Indigenous (or Indigenized) context is a complex arena dependent on forming meaningful relationships based on respect, trust and reciprocity, which are under constant negotiation, as these relationships are highly fluid (Smith, 2012).

As a young person, making connections with Elders is important on several levels. It is important that I am able to bridge the divide and not let my lack of knowledge and experience be a barrier to collecting and understanding the experiences of the Elders. Being open, asking with respect, being grateful for all I receive, even if it does not fit my expectations, are important practices and a framework that serves as a guide.

In essence, my experience echoes the foundations of this Indigenous researcher from the other side of the world. Smith (2012) in her book *Decolonized Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, described similar questions, similar positioning and doubts that I carried during the study. Her words helped me realize I have been negotiating my place in this interesting elite position of university researcher trained in a Western worldview. However, in the last four years, I have built upon my experiences of spending time with Indigenous Elders learning about issues ranging from daily life, to ceremonies and spirituality, to the broad spectrum of what justice means from an Indigenous perspective.

3.5. Mi'kmaq Elder Alfred Marshall teachings: Two-Eyed Seeing

Seeking out young knowledge keepers, like Mi'kmaq poet Rebecca Thomas, who introduced this chapter, has helped me navigate through this unique learning process. Thomas spoke about the work of Mi'kmaq Elders, Albert Marshall and his wife Murdena Marshall of Eskasoni First Nation, near Unama'ki (Cape Breton), Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia. With their friend, a biologist at Cape Breton University, Dr. Cheryl Bartlett, this team used research to breathe life into the long-existing human nature of Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall, 2009). Two-Eyed Seeing is expressed, by Elder Albert Marshall, as: "To see from one eye with the strength of Indigenous ways of knowing, and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these eyes together, for the benefit of all" (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall, 2012, 5). Two-Eyed Seeing was developed as a model for introducing traditional ecological knowledge within science courses at Cape Breton University to attract Mi'kmaq students and introduce traditional Indigenous knowledge in the sciences.

From its conception in 2004, Two-Eyed Seeing has created greater capacity for co-learning between established science and health students and organizations interested in trans-cultural collaboration. This model has been adopted nationally, namely by The Canadian Institutes of Health Research's (CIHR) Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health. The inclusion of the Two-Eyed Seeing approach guides the management of contributions

and tension between Indigenous and Western epistemology and research processes. Moreover, the approach is seen as supporting Indigenous cultural renewal where community based research is involved (Hall, Dell, Fornssler, Hopkins, and Mushquash, 2015). I strongly identify with this way of seeing since I have been navigating this world with double vision, two cultural identities, as an Acadian and Cree-Mi'kmaq, raised within a Western system of colonial education. While the concept has been expressed differently over the years, Two-Eyed Seeing, helped me, along with the work of Smith to understand my role as novice researcher and young urban Indigenous woman. These pieces of work provided much needed encouragement to place my own research into the growing body of work around a cultural appropriateness of research and resurgence in its own right. When research through Two-Eyed Seeing is conducted as cultural resurgence, each element of my process – visiting Elders, participating in sites of justice, thinking and writing with two lenses is therefore ceremony (Hall et al., 2015; Wilson, 2008).

3.6. Seeing with Coyote eyes

Although the teachings of Stó:lō scholar Dr. Jo-Anne Archibald's *Indigenous Storywork* came later in this study, it nonetheless is one that needs to be included. Its inclusion allows me to keep to the forefront the seven theoretical storywork principles of respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. These principles are important, as the work of Archibald are borne out of Stó:lō ancestral knowledge (Archibald, 2008). These act as another pillar of principles that I can apply to my entire research. Despite this important reading arriving at the end of my research journey (as an academic institution affiliate), I believe it highly important to discuss this work since it has direct relevance to my research which involves the interviewing of Elders.

Having the Mi'kmaq teaching of Two-Eyed Seeing of the East Coast, applied as best as I could, the work of Dr. Archibald presents a teaching from the West Coast that must be highlighted and understood as a researcher engaged in research on Unceded Coast Salish Territory. I present a central piece of Dr. Archibald's work, and the teachings of *Coyote Eyes*.

“Now Rabbit left, and Coyote kept practicing. He sent his eyes back and forth to the tree four times. Then he thought, “I should show off this new trick to the Human People, instead of doing it for myself...With his new audience, Coyote sang the Rabbit’s song, and the crowd was very impressed to see his eyes fly out of his head and perch on the branch of a tree...Now Coyote was blind, and staggered out of the village hoping to find new eyes.”

I begin with the following excerpts from the beginning of *Coyote Eyes* as Archibald explains that it is the Trickster, ever-present in traditional storytelling, who teaches us about human nature and allows us to reflect on our own actions as humans. Coyote was intent on wanting to dazzle people with his new found ‘eyes’. However, he did not heed such important lessons as patience, humility and the importance of listening. Even though Coyote was able to find new eyes for his sockets, representing both the micro (Mouse) and macro (Buffalo) levels of ‘seeing’, he was still in desperate need of practice, and being able to balance these new ‘strategies’. According to Tafoya (1982, 24) as quoted in Archibald (2008), “To be a whole human being (one must say a complete Coyote), one must learn to switch back and forth between the eyes of not only the Mouse and Buffalo...and all other animals of legend.” Traditional stories of Coyote place this individual “in a journeying mode, learning lessons the ‘hard’ way.” often the result of being disconnected and unable to make meaning from Indigenous stories. (Archibald, 208, 8). The learning requiring us to ‘see’ and ‘understand’ Indigenous stories is akin to an apprenticeship and guidance by those entrusted in the oral traditions. Elders taught Archibald about seven principles related to storywork that allowed her in turn to use these stories effectively. In addition to the principles, Archibald was introduced to stories research as methodology. She continues to discuss the role of Elders in cultural teachings, and how to understand their stories and the authority from which they speak. Archibald makes a point that the balance of First Nation holism is sometimes symbolized by the medicine wheel (Archibald, 2008). In this regard, my own research aims to work toward the principle of holism.

In reviewing the work of Archibald, I am reminded of several occurrences in my research journey. One was learnt early in the process. I carry teachings, but I am not a teacher. During this journey, I was fortunate to have been guided by one of the Elders, who ensured I would not go too far astray in my novice role. Littledrum, who I will introduce later, provided me with that holistic approach aimed at balance. Through ceremony and

practice, and I was able to walk more carefully and adhere to the principles of which Archibald highlights. The author further introduces four principles that should guide one's research methodology. They are: "showing respect for cultural protocols, appreciating the significance of and reverence for spirituality, honouring teacher and learner responsibilities, and practicing a cyclical type of reciprocity" (Archibald, 2008). These principles are very close to those of the seven sacred teachings that guided my work particularly the teaching of respect (for Indigenous cultures and all my relations), courage (to learn and practice ceremony in my work), truth (responsibly seeking purpose in my work), and wisdom (to share with others that which I have learned). In this regard, they both mirror and complement one another. However, the four principles introduced by Archibald stand on their own and should be followed on Unceded Coast Salish Territory.

Reflecting on Archibald's work, and her discussion around authority of Elders, and that not all Elders live and understand the "good" cultural traditions, this important point is well-understood in terms of my own research. I had an encounter with an Elder I thought would be ideal for my study, who then turned out not to be one who could represent cultural knowledge to the highest degree. Without going into detail, I felt this Elder was not showing healthy traits and I perceived a lack of balance of the seven sacred teachings. I say this because not all Elders are healthy and ready to instruct youth. All actions, in the early stages, must be about getting to know the Elder, and building trusting, respectful relations with reciprocity.

In terms of interpreting stories, I cannot emphasize enough the work of Dr. Archibald. Her readings illuminate the critical mistake of losing the "eyes" of Indigenous oral tradition and understanding to Western worldviews shaped by colonial schooling and academic literacy. A perfect example is my interview with a hereditary Chief whose stories were rich in metaphors and moral teachings. When I introduced my inquiry about what constitutes Aboriginal justice, I was met by a lengthy story about traditional life of the People of the Inlet and the Salmon people. Having not read Archibald meant, I did not grasp as quickly the importance of story-telling and how Indigenous orality is a means to convey historical, political, and cultural issues that can give context to the discussion at hand. I spent far too long in analyzing the stories of the Elder, and would have welcomed the work of Archibald and others to guide my understanding. In the end, I was able to gain

an understanding of how to work with Indigenous storywork; but, at an excruciating slow pace.

Lastly, I learned that one of my preliminary Elder interviews was deeply entrenched in the Westernized approach, and was too concerned about receiving direct answers to my questions. Even having the teachings of Two-Eyed Seeing, I was not as able to keep my biases in check. Although the Elder was at ease with my questioning, and the responses were quite beneficial and well-understood, more attention could have been spent on the Elder speaking about her life experiences and her own journey as an Elder. This would have invited greater storytelling, and a further exploration of context and important considerations from an Indigenous perspective. In the end, I set up a second interview with this Elder and what was not accomplished the first time was achieved the second time around.

I cannot emphasize enough the work of Dr. Archibald to those embarking down a similar path of decolonizing or Indigenizing education, regardless of the chosen topic or field. I also acknowledge that her work is grounded in Stó:lō tradition, and further reading, interpretation and integration in my work would have added another dimension to my readiness. However, this research journey has also reinforced that learning is continuous, and no one is entirely equipped with all the answers in a perfect sense. I am grateful to have been introduced to the teaching of *Coyote Eyes* even if at the conclusion of composing this manuscript.

3.7. Intentions of the researcher

Engaging in decolonization has been a simultaneous process of Indigenizing my education that has inevitably seeped into every part of my life. This work has required me to commit to rethinking about colonized constraints and integrating Indigenous ways into my thought, my actions, interactions with others, and how I build and maintain relationships. This research has required me to think more critically about my processes, relationships and the ways I work with accumulating knowledge and the analysis of an array of various kinds of data. No doubt, this attention to decolonizing and Indigenizing delayed my thesis process.

Smith (2012) discusses research methodology as requiring equal respect for all beings, critical evaluation of one's position, how to relate to others, and being humble. Many times I had to check myself, check my privilege, and understand my sheltered worldview. I also contend with my lack of Indigenous knowledge and status, which were challenging. I never lived on a reserve and I do not have Indian status, which means I cannot fully understand many core issues my status-holding colleagues experience or the Elders may discuss. However, by conducting a family history inquiry and continuing to incorporate elements into my way of being, and my Cree heritage, has become a method of cultural resurgence.

Therefore, this personal cultural identity discovery has also opened a further door as researcher. My Cree Grandmother and her family had to abandon their cultural identity and accept assimilation into the broader Western systemic culture as a matter of survival. I understand the realities of racism and marginalization much better now from my own discovery. Discussing cultural identity matters with others, often in casual conversation, I would receive a wide-range of varied reactions when telling them I was neither a Registered Indian nor Band member. I have been both devalued by those subscribing to the government's way of identifying Indigenous people (for example by the blood quantum rule), and conversely validated by those who decolonized the definition of one's rightful identity. One of my daily exercises as a decolonized Indigenous scholar was to set aside the emotions attached to identity, and seek comfort in the wisdom of the Elders. The ones with whom I connected for this thesis transcended those issues of identity and saw only my commitment to life-long learning on the Red Road and the Sacred teachings, and provided nothing but encouragement to find answers to my central research questions around Indigenous justice.

Smith describes what I am doing (research agenda) as a political protest and challenging politics of the colonized world and suggesting radical changes in society by asking for a change in the collective consciousness of how we think about cultural identity and justice. She writes,

The research agenda is conceptualized as constituting a programme and set of approaches that are situated within the decolonization politics of the Indigenous people' movement. The agenda is focused strategically on the goal of self-determination of indigenous people. Self-determination in a

research agenda becomes something more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economical terrains. It necessarily involves the process of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples. The processes, approaches and methodologies – while dynamic and open to different influences and possibilities – are critical elements of a strategic research agenda. (Smith, 2012, 120)

Beginning in the East with the decolonization process, and moving clockwise, to transformation in the South, mobilization in the West, and healing and justice in the North, these elements and the ordering, the arrangement in the Medicine wheel mirrors my journey as an Indigenous person and researcher. The nature of the Wheel is not that each process ends with specific answers and outcomes; but rather findings, discoveries and teachings from each direction can build upon each other simultaneously, and each must be balanced on a daily-basis through relationship building, action, and reflection.

3.8. Design and guiding principles

The research design implemented for this study blends qualitative research designs and an Indigenous research paradigm (Palys and Atchison, 2014; Wilson, 2001, 2003, 2008). This study focuses on the narratives of Elders, their stories, and views concerning justice. The research methodology attempts to embody what some Indigenous scholars define as an Indigenous research paradigm. I have been fortunate enough to be able to participate in this research as an observer and contributor, open to the emotional, spiritual and physical, reciprocal in nature, of this learning experience, which accompanies the mental aspect of knowledge acquisition.

My research was also guided by the principles that are contained in several important research documents. A trailblazer bringing Aboriginal perspectives to the forefront of academia, Dr. Marlene Brant Castellano, a Mohawk of the Bay of Quinte, is Professor Emerita of Trent University. In her article “Ethics of Aboriginal Research”, she presents important considerations respecting Aboriginal perspectives on ethics, and highlights that: “the persons who are most knowledgeable about physical and spiritual reality, the teachings and practice of ceremonies, and the nuances of meaning in Aboriginal languages, are Elders” (Castellano, 2013, 101). It is Castellano’s view that the

teaching device of the medicine wheel, with its holistic application to living and non-living relationships, “fosters awareness that any particular event or phenomenon functions as part of a larger whole”. (Castellano, 2013, 104). Moreover, there are teachings about relationships that signify that “humans have an obligation to learn the rules relating to the world with respect” and when one seeks knowledge from an Elder, it is an obligation to offer tobacco or other appropriate gifts to “symbolize that you are accepting the ethical obligations that go with received knowledge” (Castellano, 2013, 104).

Also instructive was an article by Kowalsky, Thurston, Verhoef, and Rutherford (1996) in which the authors described their qualitative research project examining issues of fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects in a northern Dene community. Most important to my research were the lessons learned around the stages of entry. While it was originally my intent to conduct interviews with Elders engaged with the Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society (VATJSS), I entered into what Kowalsky, Thurston, Verhoef, and Rutherford (1996) describe as the “stopping stage” often characterized by researchers encountering a period of assessment by the community and seemingly blocked entry. While a formal follow-up session was held, and I was led to believe that the interviews of Elders would materialize, that period was my “waiting stage” (Kowalsky, Thurston, Verhoef and Rutherford, 1996). Unfortunately, the waiting stage was simply that. The contact person was neither available nor overly receptive to the study, even though I was given assurances that the organization supported the study. While I accepted the guidelines that Kowalsky, Thurston, Verhoef and Rutherford (1996) emphasized, namely, one should “be prepared for the uncertainty of the process,” and “recognize that Aboriginal people are in charge and be patient” (274), after a period of time, I intuitively knew that the study would not advance as planned. I had to accept the “be prepared for the unexpected” guideline. Kowalsky, Thurston, Verhoef and Rutherford’s (1996) other guidelines of allowing for time; being sensitive; recognizing and respecting the spiritual component; and considering what facilitates interaction with community members, were words of wisdom to a novice researcher, who learned her first lesson in gaining entry into a community.

Other work that guided my study included the Indigenous research paradigm contributions of Dr. Shawn Wilson, Opaskwayak Cree from Northern Manitoba, professor at Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and lecturer at the School of Public Health,

University of Sydney. Wilson (2001; 2003; 2008) describes the development of the Indigenous paradigm as a form of research to advance the decolonization of Indigenous people. The decolonized scholarship movement acknowledges and promotes the perspectives, values and principles that have emerged from the work of Aboriginal scholars, such as Wilson. The author offers that knowledge is relational and “you [the researcher] are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research” (Wilson, 2003).

Wilson (2003) indicates that many Indigenous scholars agree on several conditions to ensure the work and study conducted is done with the upmost of care. Knowledge must be honoured and respected. Knowledge must be cultivated. Cultivating Indigenous knowledge in a decolonized fashion falls under the four sacred teachings of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and integrity. When integrated, these four teachings can guide a researcher to set positive intentions, listen with an open heart, commit to replenishing the source from which the knowledge came, committing to ones plans and maintaining good relationships with each individual within the process of acquiring and communicating knowledge (Wilson, 2003).

The work of Indigenous Australian, Dr. Karen Martin, of Griffith University in Australia, was beneficial by providing four main principles of Indigenous research. These included (1) being culturally safe; (2) respectfully grounded in resistance as an emancipatory imperative; (3) maintaining the political integrity of Indigenous research; and (4) privileging Indigenous voice in Indigenous research (Martin, 2003, 205).

Although Martin’s work is centred in Australia, I acknowledge the positioning of her work. She states, “I actively use the strength of my Aboriginal heritage and not position myself in a reactive stance of resisting or opposing western research frameworks and ideologies.” (Martin, 2003). As an Indigenous researcher, I want to be a positive source of research integrating First Nations perspectives. Many First Nation and Indigenous scholars’ writings resonate with my values, cultural practices and teachings. I want to effectively use the methodologies in which I have been trained ensuring they are used in a “good way” and contribute in a “good way.” It is important to honour the “social mores as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people” (Martin, 2003).

Martin (2003) emphasises privileging the voice, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands. This is one of the main goals of this study. I would like to privilege the voices of the Elders I interview. I would like to reside myself, as Martin (2003) did in the “relational epistemology,” seeing things relationally, by focusing my attention on our “interrelatedness and interdependence with each other” (Martin, 2003, 207).

Another highly influential Indigenous scholar is Dr. Lynn Lavallée, of the School of Social Work at Ryerson University on Iroquois Territory (Toronto). She explains that Indigenous knowledge encompasses three processes: empirical observation, traditional teachings, and revelation. Her work provides important considerations in relation to spiritual knowledge. She also provides important instructions surrounding the unique position of the researcher. By identifying oneself, your name, your birthplace and who your family is, you locate yourself as a researcher, and show where your teachings and worldview originates. Locating one’s self is important within the Indigenous research paradigm as a way of being respectful to those engaged in the process (Lavalée, 2009).

3.9. The study

This study is intended to answer the long list of questions and lines of inquiry that were contained in the Introduction section of the paper as well as supplementary questions that arose throughout the research process. However, the core question, comprising the multiple strands of inquiry, is: what is justice in the context of contemporary urban Indigenous territory of Vancouver, and how should it be applied and realized?

3.10. Participants

Those invited to participate in the study were recognized Elders within their respective communities and/or communities of work in the Greater Metro Vancouver area. Each person also was chosen based on their direct professional involvement in either an Aboriginal justice profession, past or present, or a related justice profession, past or present. This recruitment was conducted over several months in early 2015. Given that my initial plan to conduct interviews with Elders associated with an Aboriginal justice

organization did not materialize, I was particularly mindful of the need to nurture a personal connection with each Elder contacted. The initial personal connection allowed me to build a relationship of trust, particularly around my background and affiliation, before the formal interview process was to begin.

Four participants volunteered to participate in the study. Each participant was given a copy of the Letter of Intent (see Appendix B) and the medicine wheel Interview Guide (see Appendix C) prior to the interview so the participant could be introduced to the study and the kinds of questions I wanted each participant to think about prior to the interview.

The participant chose the setting where the interview was to be held. Elder interviewees invited me into their homes, or a local café or restaurant. In the latter case, the sharing of a meal after discussing the interview was seen as a cultural protocol that was fully respected. Although the interview was formal, I was mindful to take the time necessary for the person to ask me any questions before beginning and taking additional time to explain the academic and research nature of the study. I also explained why Indigenous views justice was of interest to me, and potentially how others could use my findings.

After the initial stage of the interview process was established, I reminded each participant of the purpose of the study as outlined in the Letter of Intent, and then asked permission to take an audio recording of the conversation. I further explained I would be transcribing the interview, and it was important to ensure complete accuracy. I also made a point to explain the other processes that I would be following, including an analysis of the transcription with potential follow-up to clarify any points. Additionally, I made each participant aware that the transcription and thesis would be shared with him or her as part of the research process. It was important to receive their verbal confirmation of the permission to record. My research design did not include a participant consent form to be signed; instead, I relied on oral tradition and took verbal agreement as the participant's informed consent. In keeping with a decolonized research approach, I was particularly sensitive to approaches that would create a barrier to this important research. One does not know what could be potential triggers, and I am more than aware that the presence of a written document requiring a signature could be problematic especially for Elders who

come from a period of time when there was tremendous mistrust of authority. Furthermore, I felt it would be an empty gesture, contradicting my genuine intention, and would take away from the use of oral tradition to work together in the spirit of this study.

While I was initially contemplating the identification of each Elder by name and including a biography, issues of anonymity arose. At the time of the interview, I asked permission to use their names. However, one Elder wished not to be named in writing. For this reason I chose to refer to all Elders involved by a specific direction, i.e. Elder of the East, and so on. While the number of Elders participating in the study was not as many as originally envisioned, four quality interviews were conducted. Upon reflection, only four Elders stories was an abundance of quality material to decipher as it takes a generous amount of time to unpack the meanings within storywork. A brief synopsis of the Elders' profile is depicted on a separate Medicine wheel (see Appendix D: Elders in Each Direction).

Not only did I have the fortune of quality data, but also there was a unique opportunity presented when one of the Elders offered to introduce me to his teachings, ceremonies, and sites of justice, medicine walks, and his oral history, which I openly accepted. The depth of this experience was more than I could have expected and I quickly found myself in a participant-observation role. This will be discussed separately under the next sub-heading.

3.11. Participant-observation

In seeking an understanding of the core meanings of justice from Indigenous perspectives, I was honoured to receive the teachings and stories of my Elder-Mentor, Elder in the Northern Direction, Littledrum, who will be presented more formally later in this paper. On invitation, I sat with him and listened to his stories on many occasions. Littledrum gently offered advice on the many questions I had regarding justice, the teachings and his life. He also encouraged me to participate in ceremonies, gather medicines, attend cultural gatherings, and participate in important meetings and events in the community such as the honouring of Aboriginal Veterans in the Downtown Eastside,

meetings regarding a proposed healing centre for the DTES and powwows, all of which I refer to as sites of justice.

Attending these sites of justice, usually accompanied by Littledrum, ensured my safety and provided confidence to someone not yet “connected” to the community. In addition, receiving teachings from all the Elders was particularly important, as I was able to experience justice at work, which provided me a unique way of engaging in my own research. Committing to ceremony and going into the sacred sweat lodge with other Elders, and those individuals seeking healing and reconciliation, allowed me to be fully engaged in the process, and apply the Indigenous research paradigm or decolonized academic approach more authentically. By being an active participant in the process, learning through action and observation, created opportunities to understand the teachings experientially, engage directly with the people and culture, learn protocols, and hear the language and respectful ways of communicating on this sacred territory.

Many Indigenous scholars across Canada, New Zealand and Australia speak of conducting research in a respectful way by attending to the very peoples the issues, events and phenomena impact. The authors' work I cited earlier has deeply enriched my learning, but it was the Elders who gently guided this research study by ensuring the protocols of the Indigenous research methodology were honoured.

3.12. Medicine wheel as a representation of interview guide

As mentioned, the Medicine wheel was used as a research tool to represent, in a culturally responsive and more easily understood way, the four main areas of inquiry. The Medicine wheel also served as a reminder of the respect that I had for the traditional teachings that are present in the Medicine wheel, and allowed the Elders to use the Medicine wheel as their guide to present their teachings around Aboriginal justice, with or without the questions depicted on the tool.

Applying Indigenous values to a decolonized research approach, the Medicine wheel teachings in the four directions were applied broadly, to keep the research culturally

focused to each phase of this study - design, formation of the interview questions, interview process, and thematic analysis.

During the interviews, the Medicine wheel interview guide was present for the Elder's reference. The questions were to some degree a proxy as I had numerous other questions. It allowed a starting point, and the four main themes of identity (who we are), Aboriginal justice (what is it), accessing Aboriginal justice services, and the next generation (future), provided a broad enough yet significant trajectory for dialogue with each Elder. Occasionally, after a pause in the conversation, the participant would recall a question that they felt particularly inspired by, but this semi-structured approach had a life of its own as they used the questions, the Medicine wheel, or their pre-interview thinking as their guide. Since this was an exploratory study of Elders' views of traditional justice issues, it was important for me to give a wide range of freedom to each participant to speak on the questions, and an opening question to set the tone, "Will you tell me a story about justice?"

3.13. Interviewing the Elders

Before the formal interview began, I offered each Elder a small tobacco pouch, which contained tobacco wrapped in red broad cloth. This was an acknowledgement of the nature of the conversation as a sacred teaching, and symbolized an exchange for their time and teachings. Justice is often said to be inherently linked to spirituality, sometimes described as walking the good path in a respectful way. Talking about justice is then a talk about the Spirit, our relationship to our world, and the path on which we find ourselves. Although in the beginning, I did not fully understand this concept, I did recognize starting out that in order to do good work I would need to begin the process in a good way. The tobacco offering was a fundamental teaching I had with other experiences involving Elders, and it applied equally to this endeavour. Tobacco is also offered as a prayer for a good relationship between the giver and the receiver. Tobacco, in its purest form, is a conduit of the heart's intentions.

I was particularly aware of the concept of inductive integrity as expressed by American sociologist Howard Becker (Palys, 2008). Becker sees the first obligation of

qualitative research as ensuring “one’s research has inductive integrity by taking the research site and its inhabitants on their own ground and understanding them on their own terms for their own sake.” (Palys, 2008, 59) By applying this concept, I was able to navigate more authentically and not be constrained by structure or the formality of using a pre-determined battery of questions. Rather, the context called for a simple question, “will you tell me a story about justice and what that means to you,” and permitted the researcher to understand both milieu and Elders ‘on their terms.’ The concept of inductive integrity was also applied to the analytic approach as considerable time was spent in understanding the context and the narrative of the Elders. My research was also about commitment to examining and giving “voice” to the wisdom of the Elders in a collaborative process (Palys and Atchison, 2014).

There were many conversations about justice and spiritual teachings that were not recorded, as they would occur spontaneously as we talked about my academic or professional work, arrangements for next meetings, or some other exchange not related to the study. Conversations with Elder in the Western Direction, although not used as data, strongly influenced how I approach the topic of justice, conducted my research in a way that respected Indigenous values and principles, and prepared for my analysis and writing as a sacred obligation.

3.14. Analytic approach

The most commonly understood features of qualitative research methodology emphasise location of themes, topics, commonalities and contrasts (Palys and Atchison, 2014). Additionally, the qualitative analytic approach, as introduced by Becker (1998), is not so concerned with numbers and frequencies, but focuses on something unique. Becker states,

Qualitative comparative analysis is not much concerned with numbers or percentages of cases, or with evaluating the influence of variables considered separately. It was created to do a different job: to find explanations of historical events about which we know too much to swallow any simple answers. It is pointed toward the description of combinations of elements considered as wholes, toward conjunctures of things, people, characteristics and events.” (Becker, 1998, 188)

A goal in the analysis stage of this work was to create an authentic means to understand and reflect what the Elders were sharing with me and isolate the combinations of elements as offered by Becker. Particular attention was given to nuance, indirect meanings, and lesser mentioned, but equally important, themes that emerged. My earlier analysis using an open coding manual method of the Elders' sharing in *In the Words of Elders: Aboriginal Cultures in Transition* (Kulchuski, McCaskill and Newhouse, 1999) produced quick, well-understood and clear themes with rich descriptions.

Time was taken to understand the meanings behind reoccurring themes such as *Elder*. Is there any variation in meaning attributed to the word by the research participants? How are Elders connected to justice? What is their specific role? Is it in relation to teachings, healing, guiding, or providing conflict resolution to individuals, families and community? At times, the participants would return to a word or phrase. Coding for themes came in second and third readings, and a careful reflection of each narrative. Although I was exposed to digital tools for narrative analysis, such as NVivo, I felt detecting themes and unveiling the moral of a story could not be done appropriately through a digital coding software.

The Western qualitative research paradigm tends to place emphasis on the individual, the parts, and a "splitting up" of the narrative to understand what is being said. However, as one Elder stated, it is essential to braid the pieces together to make it strong, everlasting, and to see the beauty and power of the whole. The knowledge of Indigenous people must be seen in that respect as well, as a whole, as represented by the Medicine wheel.

3.15. The analysis

Upon completion of the interview process, I then transcribed each of the audio recordings verbatim. Each transcript and audio file was reviewed by my senior supervisor, Dr. Ted Palys.

The core data set for this study consists of one-on-one in-depth interviews with four (4) First Nations Elders and professionals, past or present, whose work was founded on establishing justice for First Nations people in Vancouver, British Columbia.

While my original Medicine wheel guide and questioning focused primarily on themes of (1) identity and justice, (2) justice and its definition, (3) justice services accessibility, and (4) justice for the next generation, I understood these lines of inquiry were arbitrary, and may not yield exact responses to the questions situated in each category. Furthermore, given the nature of the interview process, and respecting the Elder to discuss Aboriginal justice in the way best suited to them, I was more than prepared to allow themes to emerge during the interview process. Likewise, in the thematic analysis, I had to allow the themes to be discovered with attention to multiple lenses. One of the first lenses was a more traditional one. Did the Elders talk about teachings in relation to the Medicine wheel? Did the Elders offer their own teachings in the four directions (East, South, West and North) connecting it to the topic of justice?

The medicine wheel teachings, while almost endless and as varied as there are stories, often focus on the four aspects of being and creation (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual). In one way, justice or where it is applied, individually or collectively, could be connected to the physical aspect in terms of place. Where does justice occur and where do we find the teachings of justice most present? For example, do Elders speak of justice occurring in a courtroom, a sentencing circle, a prison, a sacred sweat lodge, in the community, along a riverbank, in nature or on the streets? Maybe justice happens everywhere as suggested in the Qwí:qwelstóm program. I then considered the direction of the South and teachings surrounding the emotional aspect of being. Elders often view the direction of the South as one where we spend time healing from shame, guilt, anger, resentment, and all the emotions that have affected us on a daily basis, embedded deeply within ourselves. The direction of the West represents the teaching around the mental aspects of self, particularly recognition of our intellectual gifts and how we can begin the process of positive change whether it's in treatment, completing an educational, vocational or occupational goal, or reconciling with a victim and making restitution, all of which requires full cognitive functioning. Lastly, the direction of the North is one of a spiritual connection, and often the teachings focus on the cultural teachings of values and living in harmony. Often when a person is hurting, lost, feeling shame or guilt, a return to the

teachings can allow the individual to begin anew. The teachings speak most often about following the ways of the Creator, and guided by Elders, who know the traditional ways.

My academic training and knowledge regarding social justice issues, albeit limited, taught me ways to look at issues from the lens of a discipline - social psychology, psychology or criminology, I also considered the importance of applying a lens or filter that was more attentive to time (past, present, and future), place (locations where justice could be applied), people (relationship to the application of justice), and processes of justice (Western versus Aboriginal approaches and methods). Lastly, I was also mindful that there could be a lens unique to Elders and how they view the topic. It was quite possible that the themes uncovered in the review of *In the Words of Elders: Aboriginal Cultures in Transition* (Kulchyski, McCaskill and Newhouse, 1999) could repeat themselves. Those themes, as you may recall, were the role of Elder; the role of community; the role of traditional values and teachings; and the role of traditional justice principles (see Table 1 presented earlier).

Transcripts were manually coded. They were then analyzed and classified into clusters or themes. I then applied a further filter that allowed for themes to be categorized into general or specific layers. For example, an Elder could be speaking generally about crime or victimization by Aboriginal peoples as a result of the colonization of their original territories and governing structures. The remedies to this, as suggested by numerous scholars (Palmater, 2014; Smith, 2011; Strega and Brown, 2015), is to end all forms of colonization of Indigenous people in the modern era.

Each Elder's views were then summarized and presented using the most appropriate lens based on the overall findings. Following the general classification and summation of each of the four narratives, I re-reviewed each of the interviews several times to consider nuanced meanings, structure and flow of the narrative, the story, the experiences, the teachings, and even hidden meanings in each of the Elders' spoken word. Despite how little time I was able to spend with each person, the narrative and stories needed to be studied carefully, since it is not the quantity of time that is most important, but the quality of the dialogue. Lastly, I applied one last analysis, and that was to determine the similarities and differences in the Elder's summaries to see their words in totality. As stated earlier, one Elder offered to show me examples of justice at work in

the greater Vancouver area. In order to put this into the context of this study, I have chosen to consider these examples as locations or sites of justice.

Chapter 4.

Wisdom from the North

4.1. Findings: The Elders speak

The following section presents the findings that were obtained from the four Elder participants, who were interviewed for this study. While some of the excerpts from their interview are quite lengthy, they are being provided in their entirety as the opinion, view and/or teaching are embedded in a story or explanation that must be heard from beginning to end. Themes that stand out are highlighted, and are summarized at the end of each Elder's section. The focus is primarily on each Elder interview. I begin my analysis and writing with the words of the Elder I began with when I sought out the wisdom on justice from traditional knowledge holders.

4.1.1. Elder in the Eastern Direction

As a correctional program developer and director, Elder of the Eastern Direction worked for decades developing and facilitating culturally responsive programs for numerous organizations including federal corrections. This Elder, an Anishnaabe woman, began by speaking about her career. It was a good way to open the discussion, and understand the Elder's experience in working with both male and female Aboriginal offenders involved in the criminal justice system. The Elder provided insight into different ways offenders could access healing even in prison.

One program my female Elder developed for Aboriginal women in prison involved coordinated visits with their children. The Elder describes the process as follows:

So once the women completed the parenting program, then they would apply to have their children brought into the jail for a visit, 'cause they have like a two-bedroom family visiting unit connected to the jail. So, anybody that wants to have a family visit could have access to that little apartment... So I bought a double-wide trailer, had it delivered to the grounds, all the equipment, 'cause we were going to teach them cooking too, so we had dishes and pots and pans, and all kinds of office supplies

and desks and computers, we started with nothing, so we needed all of that to complete the program, so. So I worked there for about nine months and right away as soon as they finished the program, then we would find out who's eligible to have their kids to come and visit.

The Elder told me how she would drive all over the Prairies to pick up the children and bring them to prison to visit with their mothers for periods of three to five days. Trailers were set up where the women and children could spend time together, prepare and eat meals together. The goal of the program was to reconnect the women with their children, and provide the appropriate environment where nurturing and caring could flourish without fear of reprisal or pressure to return to previous lifestyles that contributed to their criminality. The primary goal was to motivate the women to focus on being with their children, and make the necessary changes in their lives to avoid activities that would result in returning to prison.

You know like when the kids left, and the moms were told, you can't really, you got to be strong when the kids leave, we don't want them to see you cry, you know. So we had some really, really good visits, you know. I guess, the reason for their program and everything, so that the women would be more connected to their children, and not want to come to jail. Not want to leave their kids. So that was the ultimate goal of that program.

The Elder also spoke of the need for Elders to visit offenders in prison, and providing the cultural-spiritual connections whether be within the correctional institution or in community-run social-cultural activities. She talked about offenders not being aware or having little knowledge about their cultural heritage. Having the opportunity to interact and learn from the Elder, was an ideal way for many offenders to begin understanding themselves, their struggles, their strengths, and their heritage. Often, with this experience came a healing path, reconciliation, and health. The program guided by traditional approaches helped the women build and re-build healthy relationships with their children as well as providing new ways to cope.

The Elder explained that either the Elder would be provided an honorarium through the program budget or she would provide the visiting Elder a stipend from her own pocket – it is that important for Elders to visit people in prison. The visiting Elders would bring to the offenders their teachings and important messages for them to reflect on. Again, for

many, it was their first time hearing about the medicine wheel, seven grandfather teachings, or stories with lessons attached. Peace pipe ceremonies were occasionally held, depending on the Elder, their background, beliefs, or spiritual training. Elders may have different ceremonial training and practices, but the goals of healing were most often the same. The Elder expanded on the diversity of approaches in a program she developed and facilitated with Aboriginal men in prison.

Cultural awareness, we had a lot of that in the program, too, but it was up to them what they wanted to do, like one did a medicine wheel but she did it in her own way, another one did a medicine wheel and his own way but also the seven grandfather teachings, he would go into each of the seven grandfather teachings, and so every Elder that came brought in their own knowledge and experience. One Elder, he did a pipe ceremony with the guys one time, so it was different, each Elder had their own experience and knowledge.

The importance of having an Elder was emphasized, and so, too, was the relationship that the offender and Elder were forming.

Yeah, so it was really supportive to have an Elder with us. And for a lot of the guys who never knew Elders, a lot of the guys from urban centres, or they didn't know their relatives, or they didn't know Elders, had no idea of the role of Elders or even how to approach an Elder, you know with tobacco, with a request, and the Elders were available to them, all they had to do was ask.

Culturally responsive correctional programs including Elders and children

The Elder took time to discuss the results of the programs in which she was involved. One of the programs she facilitated was the Aboriginal Offender Substance Abuse Program (AOSAP) for federally sentenced men, which was evaluated through research. The recidivism rate for this program during an eighteen-month follow-up was 22% (Kunic and Varis, 2010). The other was a women offenders program. She noticed through both research and her own experience a consistently low recidivism rate for those Aboriginal offenders who successfully completed the program she developed. She saw a willingness of both men and women to change their lives once exposed to traditional healing and the solid cultural foundation on which to rebuild their lives. In the view of the Elder in the Eastern Direction, culturally responsive programming and engagement with Elders appear to motivate several offenders to change their life before reintegrating back

into society. Particular correctional programming literature suggests that “offender ethnicity and culture remain important responsivity factors in effective correctional programming (Usher and Stewart, 2011). Programs that incorporate Elders, cultural values and teachings, traditional healing, and ceremonies provide opportunities for offenders to deal with such issues as substance abuse in ways that may make sense to them, especially when an Elder is involved, who can present traditions and stories relevant to that territory or region. She outlined many types of programs that focused on addiction recovery, and exposing offenders to tools and concepts to assist them when they leave prison by adopting alternative coping mechanisms to manage their substance abuse issues. These included both traditional and contemporary best practices.

A second sharing

The Elder of the Eastern Direction was the first Elder to be interviewed. My first meeting with this Elder was at her retirement feast, where family, friends and community came together to honour and celebrate her three decades of providing services, developing programs, and facilitating the healing journey of countless Aboriginal men and women. The interview was arranged and conducted shortly thereafter. We chatted for some time and she showed me her art room where she had many completed works of art, mostly paintings she had done. An important bond was made, and following our meeting, she invited me to come back at any time, despite our busy schedules. The Elder, although retired from corrections, teaches at the Vancouver Community College in Vancouver and continues to work in the field of addictions.

The first interview was not the last with the Elder in the Eastern Direction. The focus for this second interview was on the fundamental question: *What is Aboriginal justice in the context of contemporary urban Vancouver, and how should it be applied and realized?* The Elder presented her views on what constitutes doing justice, processes involved and outcomes that would be respectful of Indigenous peoples.

The following is a summary of four principal themes:

Community rehabilitation and prevention

The Elder in the Eastern Direction suggested the need for more cultural awareness in the community in the form of programs and workshops for public school students of all ages:

In the community a lot more should be taking place. I know there is a certain amount, but I believe there should be more, and I know there's going to be more funding available in the community to do that, especially in the schools, I believe if they did more cultural awareness and history in the schools it would be great.

The Elder emphasized those in conflict with the law or at high risk should be able to readily access supportive community members, justice workers and Elders. There is a need for more rehabilitation centers to help integrate offenders back into the community. These would include healing lodges and culturally responsive treatment programs. She offered concrete suggestions regarding what is needed in Vancouver:

I believe organizations can get together to promote wellness, a healing program for people who have been incarcerated. I don't know if it would be called a healing program, or some kind of circle that can be facilitated through the Friendship Centre because that is a gathering place for families, children and adults. And there's a youth centre, UNYA (Urban Native Youth Association); they have a lot of programs and services for the youth, they would provide these services, and help the youth, for the youth at risk, for the youth that have just been released from a detention centre.

The Elder spoke about the importance of transition services:

It seems like there needs to be a bridge for those coming out of detention centers, prisons and even halfway houses or into programming in a good case, and bridging to those community-based organizations, with more support and more programming available. It sounds like there needs to be a tighter bridge between the individual organization and the organization with the individual and families involved.

These passages illuminate the number of ways offenders coming out of detention centres can access services. However, she also recognizes there needs to be a more

significant network built among the programs and services in the urban centre, and for the detention centres need to provide better access to offenders coming out of prison.

Individual responsibility for one's actions

The Elder stated that the individual's sense of accountability could be realized through a talking circle with Elders, community members and justice workers; this sense of accountability is an important first step towards healing the trauma, often at the root of one's suffering and involvement in the criminal justice system. The Elder further explained that accepting responsibility for wrongdoing is the first step in healing and rehabilitation with the eventual goal of creating a cohesive community. This responsibility is guided by the Grandfather Teachings of respect, honesty, respect, love, humility, truth, courage and wisdom. When a person has lived outside of this context, it can be difficult to get in touch with one's cultural teachings without the help of Elders, and perhaps traditional justice practices like a sacred talking circle ceremony.

Justice is healing

The Elder explained that talking circles are conducted the same way traditional ceremonies are conducted. The process involves an opening, prayers, sharing, use of traditional medicines, and closing the circle; in this way the traditional process of sharing, healing and justice can be experienced simultaneously. Justice circles, with a panel of community Elders coming together with justice workers and community members to hear the offender's story, provide a safe venue and opportunity for the offender to accept responsibility for their actions and understand how they have caused harm to others. As the Elder emphasized, "... having support is number one, and I think what the healing circle does is gives them support, like they're not alone."

The last several words, "you are not alone" are extremely important as establishing a life after prison or struggling with an addiction cannot be done alone. Former prisoners grappling with these issues can be aided by the support of healthy Elders, family and community members, and the teachings and relationships that these individuals can provide. The Elder was of the belief that social isolation is a factor in onset or persistence of substance abuse. In her experience, she sees the Indigenous community as more than

prepared and willing to connect the right people and resources to help get the individual on the Red Road.

While the Elder in the Eastern Direction focused on three main themes that were central to approaching justice in the urban context: (1) community rehabilitation and prevention; (2) individual responsibility for one's actions; and (3) justice as healing – she also elaborated more specifically on what would be required to achieve justice. These include: (1) providing culturally responsive interventions and programs; (2) supporting those individuals in conflict with the law or at risk with access to the community including Elders, justice workers, and family; (3) accepting individual responsibility for one's actions guided by traditional methods; and (4) adopting a traditional approach to realize justice and its inevitable pathway to healing and reconciliation guided by supportive and helping relationships.

4.1.2. Elder in the Southern Direction

The Elder in the Southern Direction, an urban Indigenous justice leader in the Coast Salish territory originally from the interior of British Columbia, offered his understanding of the processes that an Indigenous person in conflict with the law must go through. His description of Indigenous justice emphasized basic human rights principles. He also gifted me with several stories, which came from his personal experience in maintaining the safety and harmony of the urban community of Vancouver as well as in his home community.

Culture is a community responsibility

The Elder in the Southern Direction began by explaining that, in Indigenous communities, justice is a community responsibility, and that an important part of justice is thus restoring those community-based processes instead of relying on government funding that often results in pseudo-Indigenous programming at best. The Elder views the community as a cohesive family engaged in traditional activities, as described below:

There's not enough traditional programming out in the field, we don't teach enough paddle making, languages, regalia, drum making, we do all those, those are all great activities, that's not tradition, the story in-between is. I always say, it's not the government's responsibility to

teach tradition and culture and pay to teach traditional culture, it's the family and it's the individual's responsibility to try to learn as much as possible and try to find people that can provide that service, provide and share that traditional culture and if we can donate money or an honorarium to that person as a family unit or as a group unit or an individual, I think that shows far more respect than the government paying for it. And then does it actually comes from the heart, is it forgotten tradition or is just a pat traditional, pat culture that the government's paying for that you had to write up and submit a proposal at need basis for is that true traditional, true culture or is that government projects.

The Elder is suggesting that the community must accept full responsibility for teaching traditions and culture. It is not the government's responsibility to provide those services, yet it ought to support those processes the Elder described.

In further explaining the need to promote positive identities and healthier lifestyles through culture, the Elder was clear about the dilemma when having to seek funding to train others so traditional culture can thrive:

Just something I've seen just over the last 20-30 years of being here in Vancouver, and years ago asking the government, applying for funds specifically saying you'd like to do more training programs for traditional culture, getting turned down so many times, and having to word play in the proposal to get grants, that's not what we want to do.

As this suggests, relationships of dependency devalue what Aboriginal people want or are trying to achieve because one is obliged to put Indigenous programming in government boxes that may not necessarily reflect the community's aspirations and ways to achieve these.

Aboriginal justice is community engagement

The Elder in the Southern Direction provided his view on what Indigenous justice entails, but explains creating it is not an easy task. He points out the challenges from an Aboriginal organization perspective recounting a recent dialogue that highlights where an Indigenous service provider and Indigenous community may find themselves.

I've [Elder] found if we're [Aboriginal justice organization] heavily relying on having the court workers say, "what are you [community] doing to create Aboriginal justice?, then they [community] say, "we

need our own Aboriginal justice in our community". And, they look at me and say "I want you to develop Aboriginal justice in my community with my culture," and I would say...[directing the comments back to the community], "that sounds wonderful, but I can't do it," and they'll [community] say, "but you're an Aboriginal organization, this is what you do.

He continues by acknowledging the mandate of the Aboriginal justice community is to help communities with Aboriginal justice programs and services, but offers an important caveat.

Yes it is, but I don't know what your tradition and culture is. I don't know what your traditional laws are.

The Elder was stressing the importance of community being fully engaged and key community players setting the cultural foundation, and in most cases doing the work for themselves. The Elder is suggesting community members, who want to develop a justice program, are the best people to create programs and services tailored to their own unique needs. However, the statement presents one of the more fundamental challenges in creating Aboriginal justice in an urban setting like Vancouver where there is a diversity of First Nation cultures and traditions. How can we reconcile diversity and a generalized approach? His next point, while not a full answer to that issue, is worth noting. The Elder pointed to education as an important role of Aboriginal organizations involved in justice services.

Part of our job is to educate the government, educate the justice system, and educate those who work in the justice system, how and why individual's behaviours are. And how we [Indigenous interveners] help, not correct; but actually help heal them [offenders]

The Elder suggests that the community also has an important role to play in the education process.

We say to the community...part of the educational process, for the justice system is prepared and willing to listen to you...what types of Aboriginal justice system you would like to start....they [justice system] are willing to listen and learn.

Lastly, the Elder suggests that the justice system is looking at what the community can provide.

What they [justice system officials] are looking for is not you [community] to follow the rules, but what kind of resources you can bring to the table so that they [justice system officials] can make the justice system work and benefit for both sides.

Working within the court system for Aboriginal people, bringing an Aboriginal perspective to the justice process, the Elder consistently reinforced the power that even one individual, passionate about justice, can make to bring about change. Although the Elder pointed to the importance of Indigenous values as central to bringing about positive change by reducing addictions, preventing or lifting an individual or family out of poverty, he acknowledged that these efforts are rather futile without a fundamental change. He provided the following:

You can stable (sic) an individual from their addiction. You can teach them traditional values, principles and culture. You can get the husband and wife to speak healthy to one and other. You can get the child to understand that their parents are alcoholics...and it's not their fault. But, if you don't have a stable environment to live in, it can explode, it's going to be gone, fall off to the sides, become poverty again. You need a stable environment, you need a foundation to start building on, and that foundation is usually a home.

The Elder then offered his views on community, possibly to show how that stable environment could be created through a collective effort.

Aboriginal justice in action as empowerment

Aside from the issues that he encountered working on the front lines for Aboriginal justice in Urban Coast Salish communities, he outlines two different events, in two very different communities and how community members in these communities dealt with conflict. He offered these to illustrate how community members who share the same values and goals can work together to resolve problematic and challenging circumstances that threaten the harmony of the community.

He tells the story of these two different places; one is the urban community in which he lives; and the other, where he goes to visit family on the Reserve.

The urban context

The first story focuses around a party house, the noise of people coming and going from this house, and the disruption it caused to the other families living in this urban community. He describes a resident in his community that hosted reoccurring noisy, social events, and the action a group of neighbours took to deliver a very simple message to the offending host.

We had a party next door to our house just a couple weeks ago, so everybody in our co-op, got the kids to make up a sign, kids to stand there and hold a sign, family members to stand out in front of the house with candles and they just stood there, not talking and looking and when the people came outside and seen us, they were angry, guy started yelling, we just stood there and stared at him, and didn't say anything, and kept talking back and forth, and the guy finally went back inside, but he knew we were there, and he was there, that's all we wanted, has not had a party ever since. Well, he has had a party, by 10 o'clock it was shut down. Silence.

He explains further, why this approach works:

They're more on trying to resolve conflict and trying not to create conflict, but you can guarantee that if a police officer shows up, there's conflict right there. And that creates animosity, anger against the next-door neighbour. And the neighbour says, "This is a really good community and we'd like to keep it that way, and you're a party house and we have children and we don't want you to party any longer," and very simple, they all stood, they're all afraid but when you have one person come out and you have 30 people standing there, that makes them go, "I don't want to start a conflict here because I'm going to lose, because there's 30 of them, 30 to 1," but the people have spoken.

The Elder described how the community united to solve the problem of a disruptive neighbour. What the Elder wanted to highlight here is that the community came to a consensus on setting quiet hours, which one member disrespected. When the community demonstrated their wishes in numbers, showing the disruptive neighbour they were unhappy with his late-night activity, the impact was to validate community norms without calling in authorities and creating conflict. Ending the disruptive activities was out of respect for the community's rules around quiet hours and showed the importance of maintaining peace within the community through informal yet effective social control.

The reserve context

Now does that work on a reserve? Yes it does. Because on my reserve, my family is considered the justice family. We all have specific purposes, and because I'm the oldest, and I'm a male on the reserve, I'm supposed to be taking control of the justice part, not just working here, so I go home, because of my sister, band members start to come to my sister's house, because they see my car out front, they want to come in, "Hi, you still working with court workers, okay" and another car pulls up, and another car pulls up, and they're looking for some guidance and they want me to do something ...they said "We have a drug dealer here and we'd like you to ask him to leave," I said, "Okay, not a problem, but I'm not doing it alone.

The Elder explains how he approached the situation:

So I need you to call as many people as you can with cars, we'll go to this person's house, we'll get in front of the house, and all of our lights will flash towards his house, we'll call the landlord and we'll ask him to come and stand beside me, we won't say anything, and the only person that will speak is me and there will be no conflict with anything that I say," So we went, 40 cars show up, we all honked our horns three times and, I got out of the car and stood there and the guy comes out, and goes "What?"

The community through the Elder speaks:

[I said] "Just wanted to tell you the community knows you're here, the community knows what you do for a living, the community wants you to stop, the community wants you out of here, and we're keeping an eye on you," and he gave me a few good choice words, and I went, "I'm not saying anything that these people don't agree to, it's just you, this is community, they're talking to you," and he said "I don't have to listen to you, the landlord tells me," and "the landlord is a part of the community, you think he's going to argue with the community about what they want and you're a part of what they don't want, they want him to have an income, but they don't care about the income you're giving, because you're not giving the right one, and you're doing something we don't want, because you're going to be next selling to our children, so you're going to leave at the end of the month," and it was a couple weeks away, he said "that's not fair you can't do that" and I said "I don't care, the community is speaking, so every night we're going to keep doing this, until you leave," and he gave me a few more choice words, "I'll call the police."

The Elder had obviously anticipated this:

Well, if you look way over in the corner, the police are sitting over there, and there's not a thing they can do because they're not a part of this community, we are, all he can do is stop you from shooting me, but that's not going to happen is it? So he can't do anything at all, he's only one person, there's 40 of us, you are going to leave, thank you. I'm not here to argue, not here to fight, just here to give you a message.

The Elder then explained what happened over the course of several days afterward.

Got back to my car and we all started to leave. So every night for about four nights in a row, that's what they did, they drive and stop, and they were all scared but you're in a car. What's he going to do? So they pulled up, stopped, honk your horn and sit there for 5 minutes. He's not going to come outside, he's just going to know you're there and he's going to leave.

At the time of the interview, I accepted this as another example of how a particular community dealt with unacceptable behaviour that contravened community norms. On further reflection, there is vast difference between being noisy and disruptive, in the first example; and dealing in drugs and being asked to leave the community, in this latter example. Perhaps the community had attempted to deal with the community member who was dealing drugs previously. With the presence of the "police," perhaps this was sanctioned somehow by the leadership of the community as an appropriate course of action. This example raises serious questions that were not probed at the time such as whether community leaders were consulted. If so, what were their recommendations? Were the police investigating allegations of drug trafficking? What other actions could have been taken especially to ensure fairness and a just method to resolution? Exiling a community member without due process or formal proceedings raises some serious concerns. The Elder did provide his own reflection of the situation by stating:

Why do you [community] wait until afterwards and then why do you black sheep the individual, just because he's committed a crime, we don't want to have anything to do with him, he's a bad, bad person. No, he's your member, he's related to a lot of you, why do you turn him away? [Is] all you want is cream of the crop, why only provide service for them because they're nice and they're going to succeed? ... [It doesn't] mean he's not a valuable person, he could succeed as the other individuals, and [if] he could succeed, everyone could.

Clearly, there are many considerations when dealing with members who are contravening community values and norms. Foremost, are the principles of justice.

Aboriginal justice priorities are community driven

Knowing that my interview was nearing the end, I asked him what he believed are the priorities for justice. The Elder in the Southern Direction stated:

The prevention stage needs to start to grow, specifically with the individual family, when the family has a child, when they are raising the child, when the child is in school, when the child goes from school to start their career...if they [family] start to falter, and from this area, you [individual] become at risk that's when the community should be involved,

More specifically, he turns to an example of positive community action, but also an area of concern and obviously, a priority:

Lillooet-Lytton, you hear nothing, but that's a community now taking care of their members... It's the old saying, "the community raises a child" and it's absolutely true, somewhere out there it should be reinstated in a lot of people's goals.

Here the Elder speaks directly to a community taking responsibility for all members as an important principle of justice. Justice is not a single instance of reacting to an act of harm against someone. Justice should be an ever-present condition of community operating with a sense of responsibility and accountability among all its members. The principle of an entire community raising a child suggests that all members are responsible for the well-being for others. Children are watched over by many including family, extended family, and neighbours, not the parent(s) alone. When a community works cohesively toward common goals, perhaps there would be fewer instances of harm and a greater sense of justice. The Elder provided the following statistics and narrative to make his point:

We shouldn't have 4500 Aboriginal children apprehended through the province. Those 4500 children should be back in their communities, and if they're taken from their families they're going to be taken in by biological family in the community. There should not be 1200 special needs children taken from their communities, taken really away from their communities, those children should be provided for and given opportunities to living in their community. The families should be given

the opportunity in teaching, training, and support to be able to take care of their children.

The Elder's narratives paint a clear picture of his views on how Aboriginal justice should be community based. His stories of community action point to a theme echoed in the literature. Yet, I believe that in order for this to work, community leadership is required. While his two stories of community in-action, both on and off reserve, to deal with problematic behaviours suggest a degree of community self-empowerment essential to advancing justice, it also presents with the need for safeguards, another important principle in justice.

Following my interview with the Elder in the Sothern Direction, I was left with this lingering thought. As long as Aboriginal people and organizations, which promote and facilitate cultural approaches to justice, are placed in a dependent role, whether it is intended or not, advancement will not be fully realized. The Elder's main themes respecting Aboriginal justice affirm that, (1) Culture is a community responsibility; (2) Aboriginal justice is community engagement; (3) Aboriginal justice in action is empowerment; and (4) Aboriginal justice priorities are community driven.

I now turn to the Elder in the Western direction for his views on Aboriginal justice.

4.1.3. Elder in the Western Direction

The Elder in the Western direction, Leonard George, a hereditary Chief of Tsleil-Waututh Nation, began his thoughts about "Aboriginal justice" by relaying a personal story about the children of the Inlet.

The Story as a metaphor

At the head of the Inlet is a river, and pink salmon, chum salmon, Coho, and spring salmon went up that river. And, the best salmon for smoking for food is pink and chum salmon, right, especially pink, and so when the salmon would come and we knew they were in the river back home to spawn, my grandfather would literally drop into the river with the salmon and they rub up beside him because there were so many, and he would thank the salmon for returning to the river. "Thank you for coming, we also thank you for the food that you provide us to better survive the winter, our people are so grateful to you," and he would talk

to the salmon not through the earth but through the salmon, and then he would go outside the river, the salmon indicated to him that enough salmon had gone up the river to spawn, and they were safe, and then he would let the people, but he would wait for that signal from the salmon, and let the people know it's okay. Everybody knew that was the process. He would gut it so the head and innards all come out, the bone and the fin, and he would offer it and thank the salmon for giving themselves to the people for the winter, and the innards of salmon with the bone, they place it back in the river so that the spirit of the fish will always know where it belongs, so that they knew that the spirit of the salmon belongs to the river and the oceans.

Once they did that then all the people began to fish, to get food, and the smoked salmon, back in those days, was a person to a lot mentors because they told us to take it slow, and the only access to the land is on the water. You couldn't just get in, you had to go in the canoe and go and so basically in the winter, the land between the river and everywhere. Everywhere that you see, in Burnaby and Tsleil-Waututh, everywhere was difficult to hunt, to do anything so tons and tons of smoked salmon and shellfish, were depended on for the winter food. So it was value to peoples' lives. At first, they would have some moose and elk and deer meat that was smoked as well, but you can't smoke meat as well as you can salmon.

In contrast to the first two Elders, the Elder of the Western Direction used more frequent traditional storytelling as a method to present on traditional Aboriginal justice. I have encountered other Elders who presented in this manner, and the indirect nature of their conversation often left me reflecting on what was really said. In fact, for many months after this Elder interview, I was particularly fixated on this story of river and ocean, salmon, his people and the harvesting process. The Elder's telling of the Salmon and the Salmon People was not an indirect response at all, but rather a prelude to one of the central messages throughout the interview, that being, the importance of the air, water, land, wildlife, forest, and the relationship that the peoples have to each. More importantly, it may be a metaphor for the contemporary injustice that plagues the environment. A considerable number of First Nation peoples in this part of the country have been engaged in environmental protection activities for years. This is where his priorities for justice are rooted; respecting and giving thanks to life-giving qualities of the water, its inhabitants as well as the land and all its habitants. Protecting these natural resources, which provide shelter and food to the community, is one of his highest priorities for doing justice.

The Elder in the Western Direction's story reminds us about how valuable resources are to his peoples' survival. To protect these is justice; to disrespect these, a wrongdoing; and not to heed the teachings, an injustice.

The Story of the Salmon People

Mr. George also told a story, which had been passed down through several generations, about what his great grandfather observed at the time of the annual salmon run, when masses of salmon swam up Burrard Inlet.

Around the time that these fish runs were happening, these young two men, just about ready to become men, 13, 14 years old, were playing in the river with the salmon. Because back then in the summertime, the river was deep, salmon were so plump, it became difficult to cross the river, because there were so many salmon. They were running and playing in the river, chasing salmon, the intention was not to hurt them but the young boys were playing foolishly. And my Dad's Grandfather, he got upset with them, went down to the river and said, "What are you guys doing?"

The boys said, "We're playing."

The Grandfather said, "These are our salmon people, he said, you have to treat them with respect, all the time, you cannot disrespect them. You can't be catching them and throw them out of the water, and not abuse them and not hurt them, that's disrespectful." And then that was that, and they went away. And boys being boys, a couple days later they were back playing in the river doing the same thing. And when that happened Grandfather went back down to the river and he said, "Salmon People, I'm sorry for my people disrespecting you, maybe if they're going to disrespect you, it's not safe for you to be here."

And just like that, by the end of the day, all the salmon in the river, and it's during spawning time, disappeared. There were no salmon, and the people got really scared, really sad, and they cried, scared for their lives, "how are we going to make it through the winter?" And the two boys were terrified and, the Elder said to the boys, "You see what happens when you abuse the place they have been given to us, it disappears,"

They started apologizing to him. Grandfather said, "It's not me that you have to apologize, it's to the Salmon People, apologize to them,"

And, they felt awful about that. So they went to the river. The two boys they didn't believe in themselves enough to talk to the Salmon and they said (softly), "Oh sorry salmon." Grandfather said, "They can't hear you, you have to say it like you mean it." So they went down to the river and they said, "We're sorry Salmon People that we hurt you and we didn't mean to, we know you had to go away, but if you come back, we will

respect you." And before the day was over, all the Salmon came back. And people were happy, and those two boys became really good men, fishermen, really good providers, they helped the old people and they helped families, worked hard, taking care of everything, so it was a good lesson that that happened.

And when Grandfather became old man, he went back to the river, as he did many times, and as his life was fading, he was ready to go home to the Spirit World, and his wish was to go back to the river, he went down, him and that man, so they were sitting in a big canoe, watching the river, watching people, watching life, and he went to sleep, and the people, wrapped him in bear furs, and they carried him down to the canoe and they put him in the canoe, and as the sun set, they went to paddle him down to an island just off the inlet and that island became his final resting place. And when they were paddling him down the river, two killer whales came along side that canoe, one on either side, and they followed him all the way down to the island. The men first sat on the side of the canoe, until they took Grandfather out of the canoe and brought him up on the beach, once they got on to the beach, the whales backed out and they left. So because the killers whales are looked at as the Grandmothers and Grandfathers of salmon, our fish, that's the way we look at it, the Grandmother and Grandfather of the salmon came out of respect for the Grandfather, and the way he treated life, they asked to be beside him and then they left.

When my Dad told me that, he said, "That is not a legend, the man became a legend, but a legend in my mind is something that's created to teach people," he said "it actually is our history." The way we manage the land, our resources, and the kind of respect you need to have, and so in that to me, the authority that he had and the way he handled the boys, the way he handled the salmon, the way he managed, when people fish and when people didn't fish, and to exercise that is laws that create justice. And if that form of justice was used in today's values, the quality of life that we seen back then would be much higher. But the British Empire created assimilation. And this is the first thing they did was push traditional justice aside because it didn't accommodate their view that they had to control and dominate. So in today's society, the understanding of justice that they have is to accommodate, the principle of concern and make room for ownership, and materialistic values, the justice of humans, is really the justice of life...the outcome of our behaviour, when we look at them, [justice is] the consequence of what they do, and what I mean by that is, this inlet right now is from Jericho, from Lighthouse Park, all the way in, is the Inlet of my people and so the Inlet today is contaminated and over-developed and industrialized, and what you call civilized today, as it is, it is so beautiful and so very attractive to people all over the world. So traditionally when the Salmon people lived here, we had to sometimes we had to fight, battle to protect our homeland where we lived.

The story of the Salmon people is one of many that comprise the sacred history of the children of the Inlet, presenting an oral example of 'traditional justice'. The story describes how the Elder, an extension of community, treated the boys. The boys' wrongdoing became a teaching point, and the story demonstrates how the boys accepted the lesson by the Grandfather. However, listening to Elders is not the central lesson in the story. Rather, the boys learned, the hard way at first, why treating the Salmon People and the Inlet with upmost respect, is important to the community. Each sentence is rich in capturing the culture of the Tseil-Waututh community and how justice was achieved in general terms. The Elder in the Western Direction, gives us a new understanding around the importance of our relationship to the environment and all living beings. Leonard presents a little further in the interview how injustice in the contemporary context especially in relation to the pipeline dispute, particularly for this region, is as much about environmental degradation as it is about destruction of the traditional ways of life.

When justice died

A sense of justice was abolished by the onset of the colonists' legal system, foreign to the justice principles presented by such stories, outlining the sacredness of the land. In Leonard's words, the turning point for justice came with colonization:

The British Empire created assimilation. And this is the first thing they did was push traditional justice aside because it didn't accommodate their view that they had to control and dominate.

The fundamental differences in spiritual belief systems and governing structures between the thousands of groups of original peoples across the continent and the European settler society were dealt with by intolerance, suppression and domination over the Indigenous peoples in the form of genocide, and prohibition of cultural-spiritual practices. Colonization is persistent attempts at eradicating Indigenous cultural identities and ways given to the original land keepers by Creator and Creation itself. These ways of maintaining harmony are told through the stories, the songs, and the ceremonies rooted from the land, passed from the Elders to the following generation. Mechanisms of colonization, the silencing of the original, ancestral voices of land-based nations, is recognized as the root of the on-going injustices and broken relations. Injustice against Indigenous peoples, in its many forms, would seem counter to the founding legal principles

of a nation, which prides itself in the “mosaic of multiculturalism.” On the topic of cultures, Leonard discusses the importance of cultures as the basis of justice.

Culture as a basis of justice

The Elder in the Western Direction began by stating that “the mind-set of human beings, of a human...is different than a member of nationhood” whether it be Canada or even the province of British Columbia. Elder Leonard explains:

There are thousands of cultures within BC alone. In British Columbia, East Indian, Pakistan, Hindu, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Spanish, Irish, Italian, and these are labels that were given to these people.

He made the point that:

They [a cultural group] do what they have to do to survive in it [the world, state or jurisdiction in which they live]. They don't necessarily agree with it. If you gave them a better option that helped them really implement their own culture, and implement their own values, they'll say, yeah, let's do that. That to me is justice.

The Elder adds:

...the way I think is a form of justice, traditional justice that affects the people about our relationships of the world.

My interpretation is that Leonard believes a cultural group's freedom to practice its culture and live the traditional values are the foundation by which people can live a just life and maintain balanced relationships in the world. It follows that this freedom, in his mind, is justice. While I may have probed further, I let the Elder in the Western Direction conclude his discussion.

That's not justice

Leonard turns lastly to a discussion on the environment, coming full circle to his opening remarks. Chief Leonard begins by addressing the very contentious issue of the proposed American owned Kinder Morgan Company's Trans Mountain Pipeline System that will carry crude and refined oil from Alberta to the west coast of British Columbia. He speaks to the sacredness of land and its protection as justice. He explained:

And, so today, to protect our land, we can't fight them only because we don't have the ability to fight. So we have to do it legally...but to defend our land in Canada against Kinder Morgan, we have the same values that my Grandfather protected the fish with, the salmon; we're doing it for the same reason.

Spoken from a place of his lived experience as a hereditary Chief and firm belief, he emphasized:

And to protect it, like my Grandfather. We don't just look at myself as a community member, my people, my Grandkids. We look at you [signifying those outside his home community], we look at everybody in Burnaby, and everybody in Vancouver, and everybody in BC. We stand up for all the people who know in their heart and spirit that this is the wrong thing to do and stand up for them as well. And ensure the goodness of the sacred land, the law that they have to protect, is justice, for a whole bunch of people, the majority of people. But now what the government uses only protects the individual, the one that pays them...that's not justice.

As a leader, Leonard believes that justice is an individual responsibility. He believes that each person must contribute positively to the preservation of the land. Clearly, the environment figures prominently in the presence or absence of justice as he so clearly points out in his opening story, which address the laws of nature. Not serving the people is injustice.

Leonard, the Elder in the Western Direction, brought forth some very fundamental teachings of justice that centred on nature and human relationships. He spoke of the salmon as central to the Tsleil-Waututh, and the need to respect and protect that, which is central to one's culture or risk losing both culture or self in the process. He emphasizes that governments and businesses are accountable to respect the environment. Discussions around justice should not be reserved solely for the marginalized or those before the courts. Justice is about "the outcome of our behaviour, about the consequences of what they do" even among all levels of governments, corporations and businesses.

In sum, the following themes of a Tsleil-Waututh perspective of justice, in the words of Leonard, are: (1) every person is accountable to the community and has the responsibility for the well-being of all Creation; (2) cultures, values and individual relationships are the basis of justice; (3) the central role of Elder as teacher, guide, mentor,

and voice of justice for their peoples is vitally important to living well; and (4) environmental justice is human justice; broadening our perspective on what constitutes justice and injustice.

4.1.4. Elder in the Northern Direction

Elder in the Northern Direction, is a Cree man, who was born in Northern Saskatchewan, and who spent his early life in Regina. An Elder gave him the spiritual name, Littledrum, after years as an active leader and social justice advocate of the Downtown Eastside (DTES) community. He is a survivor of the child welfare system. Littledrum began living in the DTES after serving a sentence in a medium security prison in Alberta as a young man. He has been walking the Red Road of recovery for 25 years, having struggled with addictions as a young adult. His sharing, and perspectives on justice, was much different from the interviews with the other Elders. There were many formal and informal interviews, to the extent that I felt I came to know him on a personal level. In the interviews intended for this study as well as our frequent conversations, Littledrum spoke of pivotal points of his life journey that led him to believe that culture saves lives, including his own, passing his ethnographic personal history to me over numerous interviews.

Littledrum first began this sharing journey by offering views of what justice is, and what injustices he sees are occurring locally and globally. The dialogue was a blend of his own experiences and the daily contemporary context in which he sees justice issues affecting his community. He spoke about the issues that affected him throughout his life, such as the politics of his own identity as Cree, and spent considerable time telling his life story from childhood, adolescence and through his adulthood with the themes of justice and injustice woven throughout. I am honoured to be a recipient of these stories as they are rich in meaning and teaching. I present first with an in-depth description of his life in Northern Saskatchewan in the mid- to late-1950s and 1960s, which predates the three decades of Vancouver and the Downtown Eastside.

Littledrum offers up a defining event of his childhood as an example an injustice he shares with thousands of other Indigenous people. He was eight years old, his sister

six years of age, when they were apprehended and placed in foster care. He lived in numerous foster homes where he suffered racism, abuse and neglect.

You know like I was 8 years old when I was apprehended and put into foster care. And, I think I was 9 years before somebody pointed out, I was sitting on the swing in my new school, and the boys come out of the school and said "hey there's an effing Indian" and I even looked behind me, because I thought they were talking about someone else. Nobody – up until that point in my life – nobody bothered to point out that I was any different. In the city, I had a friend that lived across the street he was a non-Native dude and my parents never taught me he was any different from the rest of us. Like to my parents, it was never an issue. I didn't realize it was a big thing, or that I was any different than they were. And then all of my [foster] homes were non-Native, so they tried to beat that out of me. I remember, I think that's when my life changed. When I became angry. Because up until that point in my life, it didn't matter. All of a sudden it does matter.

Littledrum talks about being "an Indian", his father referring to himself as an Indian, because that was how they were referred to especially in the urban settings where he grew up. Like my own grandmother's experience, in urban Winnipeg in the 1950s, being identified as an Indian or Cree was not welcoming or even safe. Littledrum explains he was surprised at being verbally attacked because of his race by his peers. He learned early in elementary schools in the city how to negotiate various social activities where being different, being Indigenous was a significant aspect of his identity. Speaking of his journey into young adulthood, when he began bringing cultural practices and ways to his life guided by Elders, especially during his recovery, pride in his Indigeneity replaced the racism and shame. He is in a good place today. He speaks of health, spirituality, and his relationships with others, in loving positive ways. He attributes his outlook on life by reconciling the injustices of his past through healing on the red road, which many refer to as a cultural-spiritual path, or way of life. When he told me about these experiences, the gravity of its impact was heard in the ebb and flow of his voice.

Littledrum told me of the hardships of being in foster care as a young boy. Foster parents typically saw him as a mere government cheque and an extra body to be put to work around the house. These combined with his general treatment were instances of the abuse and neglect he endured. Around 16 years of age, after running away from foster

care, he went to work, lived with his father for some time, and with his mother for a while. Littledrum soon started to reconnect with extended family.

Some family members in his home community berated him for not knowing his culture, including his mother tongue. He could not speak Cree. Whether intentional or not, Littledrum was excluded from every-day family practices and communications. He felt like an outsider, missing a significant period of personal growth being away from his blood family. He told me, it was very difficult for him to comprehend having been taken away from his loving parents, abused in foster homes, and then ostracized by family members upon his return. Not knowing Nehiyawewin (Cree language), he recounted, "They called me apple: red on the outside, white on the inside." Littledrum shared other stories of this dark period of his life. Following apprehension, he initially lived with his little sister, but she was eventually placed in a different foster home. This happened without warning, without knowledge of where she was going, or whether he would see her again. It is worth noting that Aboriginal children subjected to the wide-scale apprehension by government child-welfare agencies, have had similar life impacts as those who survived apprehension into the Indian Residential Schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Despite this painful experience, Littledrum found a degree of peace in his athletic abilities. He enjoyed running and many other sports while growing up. His athleticism allowed him to escape temporarily from the pain and bullying of being that "Indian kid." This became his identity. Excelling in sports allowed him to be a kid and take a break from the burden of being a child swept up in the "Sixties Scoop", lost from his own people, marginalized by his caretakers, and ultimately not belonging in either world. Through the many tribulations that came from being a ward of the state, he managed to leave the child welfare system. He stayed with his father for a short time, until he could make his own way. Littledrum talked about how he and his father rekindled their relationship.

His father was a Cree World War II Veteran. Some of the stories growing up were sad stories, while some were very humorous. He shared memories of living with his parents and little sisters, and visiting his aunt and uncle's farm, surrounded by cousins, and playing in the barn loft. Littledrum distinctly remembers following his Dad on the powwow trail and to Sun Dances, hearing him sing and drum, and talking with others. He attributes this foundational connection to culture and family as something that stayed with

him through his apprehension and placement into the foster care system, his involvement with the criminal justice system, and his struggles with addiction and substance abuse.

Littledrum took great privilege in caring for his father in his later years, who was eventually confined to a wheelchair. One of his fondest and most beautiful memories after foster care included picking berries and spending time with his father, when still a young adult.

My dad and I, you know after we got to talk, yeah we became quite close. We'd go berry picking, well he was in a wheel chair, so he'd call me and say "what are you doing today," and I said "Well nothing Dad what's up"; "Well I think we should go pick Saskatoons," and I'd said "What do you mean we?," That's what he'd do sit on the shoulder of the road, and point, "over there, the best berries are over there!" So if it hadn't been for him, I wouldn't know what I know. He taught me more than I realized, I thought they beat that out of me, but the more I'm around ceremony and different things, yeah I've seen that, I don't know where I've seen that, but I have. So my Dad's name was Joe Bear. I love and miss him so much, I still do.

However, life was not without its further challenges. During the many times we sat together, Littledrum reflected and recounted a long history of self-medication, substance abuse, and survival, as he made his journey from Northern Saskatchewan to the Downtown Eastside. One of the most poignant moments he shared with me was that the end of his years of addiction came at the passing of this father. Losing his father served as a key motivator for his recovery. He explains that time when he knew he had to make a change:

Well, a lot of the old guys that I talk to all come from a similar background, the old guys I talked to they were drinking companions when I was out there right, so I've known some of these guys for a long time and it's I think it's all for me it took the death of my dad to turn it around, I believe we all have that ability at some point, no matter how far gone we think we are, you know if we decide we need help and turn to the right people that help will be provided. I think and you're asking has to be sincere, you have to want to change, that's a big thing, you have to want to change. And I was ready to. I was ready for that, in recovery they call it that moment of clarity, where it all, okay, if I don't stop doing what I'm doing it's going to be, you know what I mean, it's either so, yeah and thankfully that day happened and I haven't, there have times that I've kinda thought a beer would help but I never had the desire to actually go out and act upon that thought. I'm grateful and I've come to the understanding that drugs and alcohol, okay, I can go

out and do all of that I want but it's still not going to change whatever it is that's happening inside me, that's what we're doing is we're either, don't want to feel the hurt or the pain or whatever it is that's going on, we just can't deal with it, so the drugs, the alcohol help us cope, we even get to the point with that, it doesn't help us.

We drove to one of Littledrum's personal sites of justice, a place where he completed his first vision quest on the cusp of his recovery. He talked of his time in treatment and was so grateful for finding a path that took him away from substance abuse. He speaks compassionately of the youth who are struggling with issues of abandonment, loss of identity, addictions, homelessness and criminal activity. He feels especially moved by those young people who are looking for a way out of substance abuse and poverty. He often counsels and directs youth as part of working for many years work with the Urban Native Youth Association, which took him, and continues to take him to halfway homes and healing lodges throughout the greater Vancouver area. Littledrum sees these as sites of justice, where a process of change occurs, including the streets of DTES and wherever he encounters those in need.

I've been doing what I've been doing...working with youth all my life, because I went through that, so I have compassion for those kids, I can honestly. A lot of people that work in the social field are people that go to school and become psychologists whatever, and they learn what they learn a lot of it is, it's what they read and shown, it's not so much what they've experienced, and I think for me that's what gives me a little bit of an advantage with youth is that I've been there, I've done there, been to foster care, been beat up, abused as well, my parents were alcoholics, you know, we have so much in common so it's easy for them to relate, because some of them I've talked to, like said that to me, talking to somebody that's never been there, they say like I understand, some of the kids have said to me "they don't understand," or they say they don't but how can you unless you've been there.

Elder Littledrum explains how the teachings through his father and others helped him deal with addictions, and in this way, is able to personalize and assist those who seek healing.

I've been able to heal, but because, like I said to Lee Brown, his book *Sacred Tree* brought me back to where I was or where I should be. Like my father planted all that stuff in me. And because of the foster care I wasn't, I was taken away from it, and then I was active in my addiction, so that kept me away from it took, it took, sadly it took the death of my dad to kinda make me realize I shouldn't be doing this, I know better.

Littledrum has for over two decades followed a path that incorporates cultural practices and ceremony into his life and has been engaged in many urban justice initiatives. He has worked with many Aboriginal youths in care. He pointed out that effective 'guides' are those who have experienced a similar path. He sees it as a calling to be a caregiver for these young people who need help getting through the child welfare and criminal justice system. The Elder in the Northern Direction has been a friend to people of all 'walks of life', and gives culture the credit of saving many lives, including his own. He talks about culture allowing him to be able to find that balance in life, to heal from past trauma, and practice spiritual beliefs in Cree ways from his parents, grandparents and ancestors. He watches current events involving each level of government and encouraged me to think critically about the issues. He highlighted the importance of culture at every opportunity, and spoke of one particular initiative, first opening with the critical lens and then ending on his own healing experience through culture.

You know there's AA and stuff like that. But they say they've moved more into our traditional ways, but as long as the people [non-Indigenous, non-traditionalists] that are running the system, are running the system, it will never change, like it's really good window dressing. It looks really good to somebody. And the sad thing is, if we want to reach these people [community members in need], we have to do it their way. Try to keep it as much our way [culturally responsive], but we have to figure out a way to adapt it to their [needs]. I don't think the system understands the importance...there is a movement going on now, in Vancouver, *Cultures Saves Lives*. And I believe that. Like I've been in recovering for 22 years and if it hadn't been for my culture and the ceremonies that I've learned and that I recall from when I was a boy, I don't think I'd be where I am today. Early in recovery I read that *Sacred Tree* and I had a couple of Elders that were hard on me, early in recovery and I needed that, I needed somebody to tell me enough is enough.

Littledrum is a highly respected and valuable resource in the community and has been my guide into the Indigenous community of Vancouver. He bestows his teachings upon the community providing knowledge from his unique Cree worldview, informed by the teachings he carries from his Elders and his personal experiences. Littledrum acts as a liaison to those who have been displaced, marginalized and 'lost'. He is able to show youth where cultural sites of justice are located and provide connections to other Elders in the complex urban setting web. He adopts many people into his ceremonial family, and regularly discusses how to implement healing within the community. Littledrum cites a

book authored by several local Elders, including Dr. Phil Lane Jr, called *Sacred Tree* (Bopp and Bopp, 1989) as an important cultural and spiritual source guide. He has used *Sacred Tree* as a teaching tool to show how the teachings and culture saves lives, including his own. This cultural awakening has worked in his own life and, over the decades, believes it has helped better the life of the urban community in which he lives, works and contributes.

Littledrum spent time explaining this experience of cultural awakening and identity reclamation, influenced by Indigenous Elders and sacred teachings especially important during his early work healing from incarceration and drug abuse. Littledrum, an Elder whose gifts include human compassion, provides important morsels of wisdom about the human condition. He explains that despite all the different ways people enter this world, and eventually leave this physical world, we are all human. Each person is a member of the human family. Race or ethnicity just happens to be the package we come with and ancestral teachings we all carry from time immemorial are the ways we relate to one another. He offers a spiritual view on how we experience our world, and the gift of being human.

And another thing that I've come to learn is there's nothing, like sometimes you get the feeling, like you're so overwhelmed, there's no end or help, and everybody gets to that point in your life somehow, I just come to learn that you know it's life, it's a lesson. I've come to appreciate and understand that my spirit chose this body and this life, like when it's done with this body, my spirit will return to the buffalo. Return to the buffalo where it was. And I really believe that. If it was to happen today I'm ready because I believe that's where I'm going no matter what happens between now and then that's where I'll be. I believe that with all my heart. The Creator has provided my spirit with the body and being allowed to be human and experience the things humans experience like feelings and all the different things, it's a gift. It's a gift. One of his greatest gifts actually, the ability to be human.

I include the teaching above, the ability to be human, as it is the foundation of life, showing that regardless of our different paths, we all share the 'human experience'. Many Elders who I have encountered during this research discussed justice issues from a cultural Indigenous perspective or worldview, but most have returned to this human experience as something that binds us instead of divides us. Throughout my time with Littledrum, he was trying to advocate a state of openness and learning from one another as the way to achieve justice.

Little drum is a symbol of Aboriginal action. He has walked from Vancouver to Ottawa with the Idle No More movement signalling the rise of the warrior spirit of Aboriginal people across Canada and their commitment to no longer idly let injustice be the status quo. He participated in the Walk for Justice - Highway of Tears for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), seeking justice for Aboriginal women, their families, their communities and their nations. He has been part of many peaceful protests raising awareness of the injustices and poverty facing the DTES. In 2009, he served as a medicine holder for the DTES Sacred Smudge Ceremony, organized by Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), a non-profit organization that has been providing sexual assault support services to women 14 years of age and older in Greater Vancouver for well over two decades. At this historical event, hundreds of the DTES and International Village community members along with the surrounding streets and buildings were cleansed with smoke from the burning sage, sweetgrass and other medicines intended to provide healing from injustices.

I have been fortunate to attend many events with Little drum, that promote social justice in the urban Aboriginal context, including the MMIW Memorial March and the National Aboriginal Veterans' Day Celebration. I have accompanied him to other social justice events into the Chinese and Japanese communities that border on DTES, recognizing a parallel history of injustice at the hands of the colonized society. Each community seeks social justice, healing and development that will benefit all people.

Little drum is an Elder who has demonstrated perseverance, resiliency, healing, and joy in culture. He expressed, many times over, the power of healing, which helped him survive injustice of many forms. He acknowledged that we are always in a process of life-long learning, and teaching. Little drum has an unending willingness to guide youth by passing on sacred teachings. He does not shy away from the hot button political events and current issues affecting Indigenous people in need of serious attention. Little drum is a strong advocate for a healing lodge in the DTES. He has a vision that one day the Downtown Eastside as a community will be alive with regular sacred sweat lodge ceremonies, Elders advising community members, with many cultural and ceremonial resources to bring the people to life and bring justice to a place where many only know injustice. On reflection of his own life, he said:

I'm content with where I'm at. I don't owe anybody anything. My life is simple. I don't have any demons, the demons in the closet will stay in the closet, and I am okay with where I'm at. I get angry because I still see the injustice, our youth are dying, far too alarming rates, twice the national average, nobody seems to care.

Over the course of my interviews and conversations with Littledrum, he sprinkled his stories with sage advice on living and lowering stress and anxiety. He emphasized the central teaching of maintaining good relationships with others and with oneself as the key. Littledrum encouraged me to approach other Elders in the community for ways to be engaged in the community, involved in the traditions and ceremony, and simply become all those things that create Aboriginal justice daily. Littledrum, Elder in the Northern Direction, is young-at-heart. He attributes his energy to the youth, who have connected with him, and have given him a rejuvenation allowing him to live a grateful and peaceful existence. He has talked about the role of family throughout his life, and that the most nurturing family has been those who have adopted him especially an Elder, Uncle, and for some Mosom (Grandfather, Cree language).

The main themes that I garnered from the Elder in the Northern Direction, are: (1) culture is healing; (2) healing is justice; (3) family and relationships are at the cornerstone of justice; (4) re-claiming identity is justice; (5) individual responsibility, action and accountability is justice; (6) honouring the red path is justice; and (7) honouring the teachings, for someone like Littledrum, who has endured so much injustice, and living the seven grandfather teachings of love, respect, honesty, truth, courage, humility and wisdom, day in and day out, is justice. I am honoured to have had this Elder's perspective as it truly completes and complements the other Elder stories, teachings and views on Aboriginal justice.

The themes of each of the four Elders were placed on a Medicine wheel (Appendix E: In the Words of Urban Coast Salish Community Elders)

Chapter 5.

Learners in the center of the medicine wheel

Women have always been a beacon of hope for me. Mothers and grandmothers in the lives of our children, and in the survival of our communities, must be recognized and supported. The justified rage we all feel and share today must be turned into instruments of transformation of our hearts and our souls, clearing the ground for respect, love, honesty, humility, wisdom and truth. We owe it to all those who suffered, and we owe it to the children of today and tomorrow. May this day and the days ahead bring us peace and justice.

–Patsy George, TRC Honorary Witness, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Vancouver, British Columbia, September 21, 2013 (TRC, 2015, 12).

5.1. Medicine wheel helper: Teachings on the fire within

In recognizing our mothers and grandmothers, we are honouring life. As stated by TRC Honorary Witness, Patsy George, as a way forward from the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, we must find a way to transform and strive for peace and justice. She emphasizes that we must find the will to live with respect, love, honesty, humility, wisdom and truth. One way is to turn to the teaching of the center of the Medicine wheel. According to some Elders, the center represents our fire within and will. We are reminded that we have gifts that we bring into this world; but we must balance each aspect of the self; mental, physical, emotional and spiritual, to realize our full potential. In my opinion, the teachings of the Medicine wheel are inherently sites of justice, wherever they occur. The teachings show us how to be right and one with the Creator and our Ancestors in the spirit world, who help us, balance our wellness wheel. The center of the wheel is where the four sacred directions come together. The integration of these four directions, the four seasons, the four winds the four sacred medicines and four lifecycles (childhood, young adulthood, adulthood and Elderhood) is our life journey. I have been fortunate to be given these teachings, which have made the information gathered during my research more easily understood from the context of historical and contemporary issues surrounding justice.

Before reviewing the teachings and words on justice from the Elders, I would like to suggest that the teachings are open for interpretation. The one-on-one interviews offered an opportunity to reflect carefully on the knowledge presented by each Elder. The teachings, if delivered in a different context, for example with a group of Elders, could have allowed these narratives to create other knowledge, and even make way different lines of inquiry and discovery. My principal objective was to be open to whatever truth would unfold. In this regard, many lines of inquiry that I initially had gave way to a process of listening, gathering, attending to nuances and process, and observing keenly how and what knowledge was presented. *Truth* one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, is described as uncovering an “overarching picture as we try to understand both the past and the present.” (Baskin, McPherson, and Strike, 2012).

5.2. Wisdom from the Elders on Unceded Coast Salish Territory

I am a witness
I am inspired by the earth's response to her desecration
A tsunami cleanses the earth
A hurricane re-arranges rivers
An earthquake is an objection
And we will all have to face ourselves,
Face our sense of justice
To include all life
We will need to nourish our imagination
To include a new equality
And summon our souls, our hearts and our minds to a justice,
which includes all life.

The concluding verses from the poem “Blind justice” by Stó:lō author Lee Maracle. (Maracle, 2003).

To understand the complex subject of justice, I turned to those respected Elders who have cultural knowledge on this topic, and listened intently to their words. The word of Stó:lō author, Lee Maracle’s is another voice from the Unceded Coast Salish Territory provides here some important words to begin this chapter. The events that change our environment, act as catalysts for change and adaptation. Like these natural events, she encourages us to face ourselves and the ways we have become, define what justice is, and put into action a reimagined justice. I know there is no one way of knowing or

understanding justice, and it may seem too lofty a goal to say we must reimagine, or rejuvenate justice. At which point do we acknowledge serious problems respecting Indigenous peoples and justice issues, and create real change. I now offer not necessarily a summary of the findings, but the messages that I took away from each Elder's words.

5.2.1. Elder in the Eastern Direction

Elder in the Eastern Direction has a life-long career of facilitating programs to Aboriginal offenders in various correctional institutions. She teaches an Indigenous studies course in Vancouver and is still active as an addictions worker. Through her extensive description of what she has done to effect change in the lives of both Aboriginal men and women who have been in prisons, I was able to hear about the positive outcomes of having culture integrated into the rehabilitation programs in which she was involved. She was also generous in providing a second interview to elaborate on main themes on Aboriginal justice and even specific solutions. This Elder cites healing lodges, treatment centres, and halfway houses as true sites of justice for individuals released from institutions, as they are safe places in which they can continue their healing journey. These too have been effective in lowering recidivism rates among Aboriginal offenders, at least, for those fortunate enough to be granted an early conditional release. Within her narrative, I was able to explore the processes and resources most often used when working with this population. There appears to be support for healing lodges and treatment centres with culturally relevant content with Elder involvement and engagement. She was also of the strong belief that education serves to bring knowledge to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people so justice issues can be understood and resolved.

5.2.2. Elder in the Southern Direction

The Elder in the Southern Direction began by explaining what is available to Aboriginal offenders in terms of rehabilitation programs that may lower recidivism rates. These programs include culturally responsive substance abuse treatment cultural teachings, visiting programs, Elder services, and support for reintegrating into the community upon release. These were all seen as providing offenders with the traditional teachings and values to position themselves for success. Yet, I heard of the need for more

healing lodges, halfway houses and addiction rehabilitation centres aimed at Aboriginal offenders and those at high risk including children and women. The Elder in the Southern Direction painted a unique picture of implementing Aboriginal justice in the urban context. His narrative presented some challenges especially around community engagement. The Elder in the Southern Direction left me with a distinct impression that community engagement will not be easy as there are many voices, perspectives and even approaches.

5.2.3. Elder in the Western Direction

The Elder in the Western Direction, Leonard George, took me back to the Inlet, and the land. The Story of the Salmon People was a powerful story about the need for care and protection of Mother Earth. The Elder saw this as an on-going quest for justice. We cannot expect to heal people in need, without also healing the land, which provides each one of us essential resources to live. An essential component of cultural ceremony and of spirituality is the land. Gaining a sense of oneness with the environment, not because it is spiritual journey, but because what we do to the land, we do to ourselves. The message was clear and direct. The metaphor of the land also allowed me to consider how we want to be treated. Do we wish to be treated with respect and dignity, and, if so, what actions are respectful, how does one live with dignity, and what relationship do we wish to have with others. These are questions fundamental to justice.

In the earlier years of planning this research, and conducting a literature review regarding identity and the criminal justice system, I did not pay much attention to environmental justice and injustices of multi-national corporations. This thesis has allowed me to explore how our structural relationships, from a Nation-to-Nation perspective, has shaped our environment, our history, our misguided policies around Aboriginal people, and the damage of residential schools, the child welfare system, reserves, and systems of dependency. All of these have had a long-lasting impact on Aboriginal people and their lives. The message I carried away on preserving the health of self and the environment provides the foundation for justice, which can be situated in all our communities, including the Vancouver Metro area.

5.2.4. Elder in the Northern Direction

The Elder in the Northern Direction became my mentor and guide, unlocking the core of the Downtown Eastside. By spending considerable time with Littledrum, I was able to observe, first hand, a side of society that I could not have ordinarily as a graduate student from small-town East Coast. Although I had some knowledge around mental health and addictions through studies, I had not previously witnessed a setting quite like the Downtown Eastside. Through special events and attending ceremonies with Littledrum, I was able to see a side of this community not many consider. I was able to gain a sense of responsibility, guided by Elders and community members. I have had to rethink my views of oppression and the oppressed. I can now begin to see harm, trauma and healing from an Indigenous perspective. I was fortunate to have been guided by numerous Elders throughout this study, not solely by those interviewed for this study. Most importantly, I was able to experience sites of justice that would never have been considered locations where justice was practiced, taught, lived and honoured.

Much of what I heard from Littledrum on the topic of justice was from a perspective of a deep sense of morality, what is right, respecting others, respecting the Elders and the Ancestors and respecting the land, what Mother Earth provides. He placed emphasis on the grandfather teachings of love, respect, humility, honour with courage, truth, honesty and wisdom. When I sought guidance, he applied a simple teaching. He often shrugged after the teaching as if to say, "it is simple." He also expressed, in regards to the sacred teachings, "to live otherwise, what would be the point?"

Individually, each Elder presents a very important lesson on justice. Each Elder presented their own story, teaching and view. Despite an anxiousness to examine what their collective words or voice would sound like, I was more than aware that a sample of four Elders was small, and may not produce a holistic message that would resonate. The next section summarizes what I heard, saw, and sensed, not only from my field notes; but also from the transcriptions, as a whole, and what their collective voice was presenting.

5.3. The collective voice

I am conscious of the worldview of cyclical integration, in that everything flows in a circular motion, and everything is connected. When I was first analyzing my findings, by dissecting the information from each interview and isolating themes, I wanted to honour both traditional teachings and the value that comes from a more analytic and scientific method of understanding. Utilizing mainly a narrative approach to present and discuss the Elder themes, the use of the four directions of the medicine wheel works perfectly to look at the collective voice of my Elders. Reflecting on their teachings and words, and visualizing the overarching themes on a medicine wheel, the holistic message was clear. As well, I saw the themes in each of the four directions, and found each theme was an elaboration or continuation of the last. The East and the West connect, as does the South with the North, and each direction adjacent to it, so there is a recognizable cycle created. The Elders speak about interconnectedness so this approach was clearly honouring the traditional or Indigenous way of seeing and knowing.

The four central themes that emerged in this study are: (1) the importance of the Elders' role; (2) culture and values; (3) healing as a traditional justice approach; and (4) community and holistic solutions, all inherently related, and those most often discussed (See Appendix F: The Elders' Collective Voice).

Additionally, Each Elder interviewed placed a strong emphasis on a sense of personal responsibility, and for living simply and harmoniously with others in a caring community. Community was spoken about in terms of being an essential way how one could most easily access practices and ways of living justice, or gaining a sense of justice. This state cannot be achieved alone, and accountability for one's actions is central to how the communities function according to the Elders. Being a part of community, having family members to rely upon in need, having neighbours and friends with whom one interacts on a daily basis, provides the stability and the structural processes by which accountability works. Elders are key members of a community as knowledge holders and teachers, and are, as stated in a number of places, administrators of justice.

The role of an Elder was described in various ways. Some depicted the Elder as a grandparent of a family who was both loving and wise, whose advice was to be respected.

All of those interviewed saw the Elders of the community as ones to make sure everyone is accountable, accounted for, and learning valuable life lessons. Conflict was seen as inevitable, and when people are not getting along, the Elders are the first to intervene and have conversations with each person involved in the disagreement to begin the process of resolution. This is the simplest form of justice, practiced within traditional communities, and recounted by the Elders I interviewed and highlighted in the literature.

Elders bring with them a toolkit of cultural knowledge, values, principles, experiences and approaches to problems. The tools they provide to others, are also culturally relevant to their community, and are meant to help restore balance in relationships. Often times, and seen as a collective movement of Indigenous people across Turtle Island in the last two decades, guided by spiritual principles, Grandfather teachings and values, is a healing from past trauma. Only when the opportunity for healing is presented, can resolution of the trauma occur and people can begin to restore themselves and communities. Elders serve not only to bring cultural knowledge and spiritual practices to the people; but, they literally hold the community together, ensuring healthy and helping relationships continue and each person is empowered and is accountable.

The Elders I spoke with did not discuss punishment or retribution. The Elders talked about what is inherently empowering, right, and doing good. The Elders spoke quite frequently about managing one's own well-being, and staying healthy and contributing to the community. This exercise of writing about justice in a broad sense has given me the space and opportunity to contribute to the very important discussion, one that will surely be discussed at length in a new climate of relationship building, dialogue and action.

Culturally relevant solutions were often recommended as the only way to bridge the gap between the two justice systems – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. These culturally responsive programs and services are the “lifeblood” of Aboriginal organizations, who must, as stated by one Elder, must work more closely together. It is my interpretation that culturally relevant programs and services are inherently spiritual in nature and provide the sacred instructions for living a good life. Not only is it healing for Indigenous people, but it serves to teach children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and extended family members about ways to exercise justice. Children of this generation must be provided the

proper instruction if we are to improve the dismal state of the child welfare and criminal justice system as it relates to Aboriginal people.

5.4. Teachings linked to other scholarly works

In many ways, this research echoes the findings of research previously conducted. Nearly 16 years ago, Dr. Wenona Victor (2001), in her Master's thesis, brought forth the four truths of Stó:lō justice and worldviews. The four essential components to justice according to the Elders and community are Elders, family, teachings and spirituality. The four themes I have uncovered from my own research - Elder's role, community and holistic solutions, healing as justice, and values and culture run parallel to Dr. Victor's findings. In addition, we find in each an emphasis on the importance of individual accountability to one's family and one's community. The community-based examination of Victor highlights the importance of community working together to cultivate cultural ways that nourish the spirits of those harmed, as victim or offender.

The literature that I reviewed also echoes many of the same findings that I report, even though the context may vary geographically, regionally, or whether on reserve or in an urban context. The common themes have no boundaries, and are neither time nor peoples sensitive.

As a visitor to the Unceded Coast Salish Territory it is important that I pay homage to the scholars with deep roots here, especially Dr. Victor who has pioneered justice in many ways not only by supporting justice activism in her community; but by being Fraser Valley University's first Indigenous professor. There are countless others, but I mention Dr. Victor as her work was one of the reasons I was able to proceed more confidently with my research study.

5.5. Sites of justice

If the academy is concerned about not only protecting and maintaining Indigenous interline but revitalizing it on indigenous terms as a form of restitution for its history and contemporary role as a colonizing force (of which I see no evidence), the academy must make a conscious decision to become a decolonizing force in the intellectual lives of Indigenous peoples by joining us in dismantling settler colonialism and activity protecting the source of our knowledge

-Leanne Simpson (In 2014, Land as pedagogy, 22)

In some ways, SFU has begun to evolve and begin to decolonize some aspects of the school, educational opportunities and student programs. Regarding the 'sites of colonization' aspect of this passage, I have noticed a great deal of description of what colonization is, I have grown to recognize what this means and how might I be decolonizing my thinking, writing, the way I live. Sites of justice are what I refer to as any place where Indigenous people gather to continue a dialogue, share culture and ceremony. Attending sites of justice is one way I balance my medicine wheel; this work has pushed me to expand on a personal level, by energizing my emotional and spiritual aspects. These sites have also engaged my mental aspect. All sites of justice have required me to sacrifice my rigid physical state as a student and office employee, requiring me to walk, dance, drum, or sit on the ground with awareness of my mental, emotional, spiritual and physical place on the Earth. When the Elders speak at these sites of justice, I am compelled to silently listen, and reflect on their message many times over days, weeks and months after, as sacred instructions for living and for my Indigenous justice education. The efforts I take to collect knowledge for the intent to write a thesis and graduate with a degree, is simultaneously for personal (mental, emotional and spiritual) enhancement; to become a better person, a more whole Indigenous woman, a more conscious caretaker of the land and friend to each person and spirit.

The sites of justice, in which I was engaged to one degree or another included Aboriginal Friendship Centres, pow wows, gatherings, peaceful protests, marches, workshops, prayer circles, and art exhibits. One site of justice which has been invaluable to me, has been the sacred sweat lodge at a drug rehabilitation and treatment centre in Surrey. My Elder-mentor introduced me to the Elder who leads that sweat lodge every Sunday morning. Many times, I have offered tobacco and entered the lodge, with mostly

men and a few women of all different cultural backgrounds, to pray and heal, and to pray for the healing of others. This powerful experience has been a special way of interacting with people who are living at a treatment centre, although not all who come to the lodge do, but many individuals have gone through the criminal justice system and talk about their experiences, and how the lodge is a significant place of healing. At this lodge site, I have been made a helper. One late spring morning, I joined a small group of the sweat lodge family, and helped rebuild the women's lodge frame beside the existing lodge in Surrey, which is a huge honour to now have some teachings around that. Any place of healing is a site of justice.

Whether picking medicine with my Elder-mentor, participating in ceremonies, attending special Aboriginal gatherings with a focus on reconciliation (i.e.: SFU Walk for Reconciliation, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada functions in Halifax and Vancouver), attending pow wows (i.e.: Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI Pow Wow; Lennox Island Pow Wow; Kamloopa Pow Wow; DTES Honouring Our Elders Pow Wow; Hobiye Nisga'a New Year; and UBC First Nations Student Association); or volunteering for Indigenous community causes in the Greater Vancouver area, all have been part of my acquisition of knowledge around traditional healing, reconciliation, finding voice, being courageous and humble, while experiencing justice on the personal level. In attending many sacred events over the past three years of my study including ceremonies, and the building of a woman's sacred sweat lodge, these have been important venues for me to see and experience first-hand traditional healing and justice in action. I was able to listen to many personal stories of addictions, struggle, pain and recovery through traditional healing. The personal stories have permitted me to transform Aboriginal justice as a concept to one that is real.

Highly influential in this process was the work of a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar and artist, Dr. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, member of Alderville First Nation. In Simpson's (2008) in-depth discussion of Indigenous Knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge from her Nishnaabeg perspective, she also encourages universities and students to make the sincere efforts to include and honour Elders, because "Our knowledge Holders teach us of a radically different way of relating to the land and of being in this world." She also writes,

For the large part, knowledge ultimately originates in the spirit world, and it is controlled in a very specific and intricate ways in Aboriginal lifeways. The process of learning, or of gaining new knowledge is focused around learning more about oneself in relation to the land, the spirits and all of our relations. Although Elders are expected to share their knowledge with younger members, this sharing follows cultural protocols, and individuals must be ready to accept full responsibilities to use the knowledge they receive in a good way. (Simpson, 2001, 143)

I have learned that the honourable opportunities to practice ceremony vary based on where one is situated in life, mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. An individual may be ready to heal, commit to a healing journey or follow a traditional approach, only when the time, place and connections including one's social network are aligned. Opportunities seemingly come at times when least expected. They aren't necessarily planned for. I cite the example of offenders who land in prison. They did not plan to go to jail to become reconnected to a traditional healing path. Numerous individuals who I listened to during their course of sharing echoed this theme. Healing was simply a positive outcome of being convicted and sentenced. A gift from the Creator, and facilitated by Elders. Likewise, although I had been exposed to traditional ceremonies and healing processes before, I did not necessarily plan for a good portion of my exploration of Aboriginal justice for my thesis to take me down a path of examining sites of Indigenous healing and justice in unlikely places. Yet, I took the opportunity to commit to engagement in the process so I could apply an Indigenous research approach. Accordingly, I took the necessary steps, like others engaged in learning traditional ways, to prepare myself physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually for each event, outing or ceremony.

Once I made a commitment to ceremony, allowing the process to guide my exploration, I have attended different kinds of ceremonies to understand traditions and healing, as well to understand the role of Elder in these contexts. It became an honour to be able to listen and be guided by someone whose knowledge and experience around justice is so rich. Likewise, it was an honour to attend prayer circles with community members, leaders and other Elders.

Before I became more involved in ceremony, I was actively seeking out justice-related events in my community, through SFU and the Downtown Eastside community. I attended two marches, peaceful protests and testament hearings in honour of murdered

and missing Indigenous women. I attended the Walk for Reconciliation hosted by SFU in conjunction with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2013. In the fall of 2013, I attended a two-day conference where I had the opportunity to hear a number of talks by the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Cindy Blackstock of Gitksan First Nation. The conference was held at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University campuses in downtown Vancouver. Dr. Blackstock, a leader and advocate in First Nations welfare policy, spoke about the ill treatment and care of First Nations children in Canada. Although at times profound, disturbing and overwhelming, her down-to-earth approach was aimed to ensure the difficult dialogue was not avoided. She approached the subject matter as a call to action, and most everyone in attendance felt the urgency around the issue, inspired and ready to take action.

The history and current state of the child welfare system is largely seen by the international community, as a crisis with urgent measures being required (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, 138). While I will not explore this topic as it is a subject that deserves its own separate review, Dr. Blackstock, like many activists-scholars, and my Elder-participants, has shown how this ill treatment has played a prominent role in the lives of Indigenous people in relation to the justice system. I consider this a site of justice as it was a forum for many individuals including academics, advocates, social justice practitioners, government and non-government leaders, and those who have a lived experience of the system, to come together to understand and seek remedies for this injustice.

It is a great honour to have met her and have a conversation with Dr. Blackstock because; in 2007, she launched a human rights complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal against the federal government. This complaint was in response to the discriminatory treatment of over 160,000 First Nations children in the child welfare system. A true crusader, she launched the “I Am a Witness” campaign to publicize this issue and invite people to attend the tribunal hearings, bringing in over 6,300 witnesses to the injustice against First Nations children apprehended into the welfare system. On January 26, 2016, the final ruling revealed Canada does in fact discriminate against children living in First Nation communities (Monchalin, 2016).

The sites of justice add another level of understanding to my examination of Indigenous justice in the urban context. What was most profound was that sites of justice, particularly those that speak to Indigenous people, are all around us. Indigenous-owned businesses and educators, art work and cultural practices, which uplifts our people, are places where Indigenous people seek justice. Therefore, our understanding of where justice can be found is quite limited if we think in Western terms of a courthouse, a mediation meeting, or even a sentencing circle, which attempts to hybrid the Western way and the Indigenous way of doing justice. The place where one picks medicines, or the shore where an Elder recounts a story of the Salmon People, or chants during a sacred sweat ceremony, where people are smudged, brushed with cedar, and anywhere where Indigenous people are being heard, are sites of justice to which we all need to pay close attention, and participate with an open heart.

5.6. Limitations of the study

There is a multitude of ways to filter and examine Indigenous views about justice. For instance, the ways in which Indigenous Aboriginal families are trying to keep children within their community when faced with the apprehension of these children by the child welfare system, is one lens that focuses on those impacted. Injustices towards Indigenous Aboriginal children and women from a systemic perspective must be better understood, and certainly from the urban community context. There are as many lenses as there are issues. Another issue, which deserves its own separate examination, is the gender disparity among the over-represented Aboriginal offender population. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine this issue, it is certainly an area needing to be addressed. Additionally, the lack of early consideration of land-based perspectives could have also helped situate the discussions and examination in an important way. I now have a much greater appreciation, thanks to Leonard George, about the role environment plays in the lives of Aboriginal people especially in this region of the country. I did not ask enough questions about or conduct a review of the literature on environmental justice issues, which now is an area of personal interest. Fortunately, this is a separate area of examination by a growing number of academics. The importance of meaningful Nation-to-Nation relationships must also be discussed, as justice concerns not only Indigenous Aboriginal people and their Nations; but also all levels of government coming together to

resolve long-standing disputes. Again, this too was beyond the scope of this paper but extremely important.

Probably the greatest limitation of this study was a human one; the time to conduct such a study was much greater than anticipated. As I mentioned earlier in the paper, I suffered a setback when the assistance of one of the organizations I was hoping to work with and gain access to their Elders, did not materialize. Looking back, I would have to say it could have been the result of the need for a researcher, especially working with Elders, to cultivate that important relationship, and to spend as much time and energy as possible to open the door. Yet, undeterred, I conducted my own recruitment, and took the time to cultivate a genuine and trust based relationship with four of the most outstanding Elders who I have had the honour and privilege to meet and spend time with so I could learn about justice from Indigenous perspectives in the urban context. I would not have done anything different; but, for those contemplating such a research project, I would offer my advice of positioning oneself not necessarily on a strict timeline when the research demands such attention to the process rather than on pure data collection. In short, application of the Indigenous research paradigm could not be rushed.

Another limitation was that I did not spend nearly enough time with Indigenous teachers, organizations such as the Indigenous Student Association (SFU), and those teaching Indigenous justice issues. Although full-time work entered into the equation during my thesis journey, not the ideal, the experience of working the First Nations Health Authority of British Columbia was extremely valuable.

One of my grievances with the academy, especially graduate studies, is that more time be allocated to examination of Indigenous concepts and viewpoints, and engaging in discussions with other students on this important topic. However, moving this discussion beyond the classroom was an exceptional gift. I was able to spend time with amazing teachers. I participated in ceremony guided by Elders, listened to their talks at gatherings, and gained many answers along the way. I was able to reflect on their words, and know that I am continually receiving what I needed to know; all in very authentic, informal, and fluid ways. I learned from Elders in the most open, thoughtful, and respectful discussions of Indigenous ways of living justly.

5.7. Recommendations

Even though I would consider myself a novice of action-oriented research, this thesis invites researchers, who wish to advance justice services developed with, by and for Indigenous Aboriginal people, to work from an Indigenous perspective. For those who are working to implement projects with Indigenous justice principles guided by Elders, it is essential to engage partners with similar interests in justice, crime prevention, policing, employment, and corrections, and non-traditional justice partners that may have been highlighted in this paper. Additionally, I see value in justice initiatives organizing an Elder summit or gathering so that the continued dialogue around justice can continue and relationship building can begin. In one conversation, I became aware of tensions and long-standing disputes between Indigenous justice providers who have a similar mandate. The Elders being versed in dispute resolution could potentially bring these groups together. Moreover, Elders with their keen sense of commitment to families and communities equipped with culturally relevant dispute settlement approaches could serve to resolve problems and issues before they begin.

As several of the Elders suggested, additional safe, low-income housing must be available to Indigenous families in the urban centres of the Lower Mainland. It was further suggested that long-term addiction treatment centres with culturally relevant content including regular access to Elders and ceremonies be established without delay. Littledrum often shared a wish for a traditional healing lodge located in the Downtown Eastside, as both a health centre and place of prayer. I would like to see such a healing lodge built for the DTES community offering ceremonies lead by trained, ethical Elders, free traditional medicines and teachings open to all, regardless of origin. This healing place could also incorporate Western medicine functions as well, where appropriate, developed and delivered by the urban Indigenous community. Littledrum has encouraged me to write letters to government leaders to inspire their thought on Indigenous issues where more attention and meaningful relations is required. The possibilities are endless, and action-oriented research can help bridge the gap between our diverse communities.

At the time of writing this report, two Canadian universities are implementing a mandatory Indigenous perspectives course. Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario and the University of Winnipeg, in Manitoba are taking the TRC recommendations

seriously by offering over 20 different courses across all disciplines and incorporating Indigenous perspectives (Deerchild, 2016). SFU has shown a commitment to reconciliation, notably by hosting the TRC events in 2013. However, it is within the school's capabilities to raise the standard for quality, holistic education by embracing the call to action around Indigenous curricula. Inviting Elders into the classroom, requiring all students, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, in all disciplines, to take an Indigenous perspectives course to earn their degree, therefore having Indigenous voices heard, particularly around justice issues, would be an excellent way for the university to be a champion of reconciliation. After all, Simon Fraser University's slogan is "Engaging the world."

A clear and concrete recommendation for me is to continue to spread the knowledge I have gained during this journey, listen to the frequencies of the land, take care of the Elders, and learn Niheyawewin, Mi'kmaq and any Indigenous language I am faced with the opportunity to engage with.

5.8. Personal reflections and growth

As a researcher, operating within an Indigenous research paradigm, participating in cultural practices as participant-observer, becomes a means by which Indigenous knowledge, processes, relationships, and teachings are understood. While I have been respectful not to report on spiritual ceremonies or the individual experiences of those with whom I participated in these sacred ceremonies, my own experiences through this research project has allowed me to navigate and see the urban Aboriginal community of Vancouver from a lens not possible had I detached from the experience. Greater access to the community, subsequent teachings and experiences, and additional data has permitted this research to align itself with the Indigenous research paradigm described earlier in this paper. The Indigenous research paradigm opened a door to be fully engaged, honouring all people, places, and all relations. If there was a drawback, if I can call it that, the process took much longer than initially planned.

My commitment to ceremony is for personal healing and growth. Yet, my research and ceremonial participation are interconnected as increased knowledge is healing.

Engaging and balancing the four domains of self, the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual self, strengthens a person. There is an immediate sense of wellness, which helps the other aspects of self, including clarity in seeing, hearing and understanding. While there are many different ways to achieving wellness and balance, traditional processes resonate in many ways. Through the teachings of Elders, ceremonial leaders, and peers, the experiences continue to reveal truths about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations, justice, healing, and myself.

Connection to the land is healing. One of the ways I attempted to understand this connection was to attend the seventh and eighth Annual International Indigenous Leadership Gathering on St'át'imc Territory (June 2015 and June 2016), hosted by Chief Darrell Bob in the mountainous community of Xaxli'p (Fountain). Attending the Gathering two years in a row, afforded me the opportunities to continue my spiritual training. The focus of the Gathering was to listen to the Elders and their teachings on life, traditional protocols, and different forms of ceremonies such as the sacred sweat lodge, pipe, and gifting. The Gathering is a demonstration about living harmoniously with each person in attendance, with emphasis on prayer and honouring the diversity and richness of traditions. The Gathering elevated my learning in four areas. These were: (1) honouring and serving the Elders by helping with food preparation; (2) living on the land without modern technology; (3) learning about traditional teachings, prophecies and ceremonial protocols; and (4) decolonizing my education, as I attempted to understand my research in the context traditions and perspectives of Indigenous people. This Gathering was also a site of justice where ancestral teachings and the value of a nurturing community, healing, and being of service to others are relearned. One of the many important lessons learned was the strength and power of relationships, particularly with Elders whose words of advice on how to live a good life is not only reserved for those who may have broken a law, but anyone wanting to live in a respectful and honoring way.

Throughout my study, I was reminded how welcoming Indigenous people are. I was moved when one of my Elders in this study told me that Elders, from his perspective, are truly grateful to be asked for help, especially by the youth. Asking an Elder for their advice, teachings and counsel, makes them feel valued and needed. For many Elders, those who have been impacted by the residential school experience or other forms of cultural destruction, this act of being acknowledged is part of their healing journey. I also

learned that Elders welcome all questions and participation; no matter how inexperienced a person may be about the history, practices and lives of Indigenous people. A person is always welcomed without judgement. They soon become a member of the cultural family, and are safely guided and directed. The teaching of humility is an important lesson for anyone who wishes to understand about truth, justice, and healing through the lens of Indigenous culture. Understanding and applying these concepts are, for me, more than an intellectual exercise or a mere research endeavour, it requires a new paradigm, which combines knowledge and perspective rooted in Indigenous land belief systems with previously established methodologies. It begins first by fully understanding how Indigenous ways of knowing can illuminate new thought and action, new relationships, and new methods to resolve long-standing issues facing Aboriginal peoples. Secondly, with this paradigm, the pathway to genuine reconciliation can occur including how justice should be applied. From what I gleaned from my review of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), reconciliation is not about “closing a sad chapter of Canada’s past,” but about opening new healing pathways of reconciliation that are forged in truth and justice.

By visiting the sites of justice and speaking with peers and Elders on unceded Coast Salish Territory, a common notion is Indigenous youth are not going to put up with the same injustices that our Elders endured. Our Elders do not want to see youth and the next generation suffer as they had. Injustice against Indigenous people, broken treaties, and strained relationships haunt all Canadians. Listening to our Elders and working together for positive change is justice. Let this thesis be my contribution and my commitment to seeing justice served.

5.9. Grandfather Sun rises again

One of the countless Medicine wheel teachings is that when we go in the circle, we humbly return to our starting point, and the sun never fails to rise. We are seeing signs of Grandfather Sun rising again with the federal government’s recent decision to amend sex-discriminating language within the *Indian Act*. We finally see the long called for Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls underway. We see the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Final Report recommendations and call to action

accepted by the Government of Canada including the many justice related issues facing Indigenous people. We see a demanding voice among Indigenous people and leaders for immediate action to address deplorable living conditions, extreme poverty, unacceptable education, employment, and income rates, and the over-representation of the original inhabitants of this land in Canada's criminal justice system including prisons. While Indigenous people living in the urban context, principally Vancouver, may have their own circumstance and unique conditions under which they live and thrive, we find the issue of justice is of particular concern to all Indigenous people in one way or another. Grandfather Sun rises again, and it is an honour to be a part of that new history, despite the current backdrop it illuminates.

All my relations.

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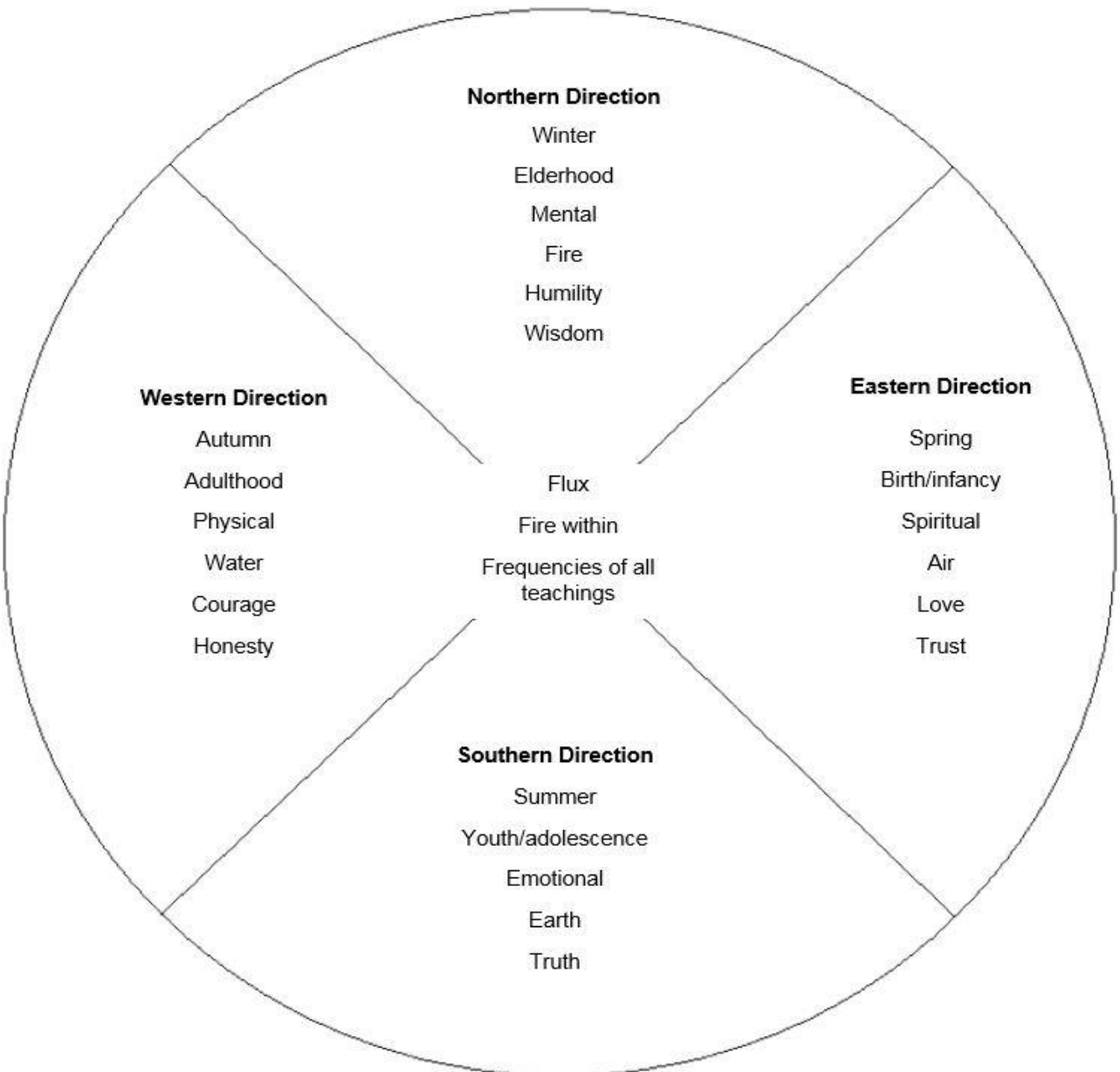
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Appendix A. Medicine wheel Helper

There are many other components and arrangements of Medicine wheel teachings which vary from Nation to Nation. Some Nations and cultures do not refer to the Medicine wheel. Every Nation and family teachings are different. However, similar gifts may be shared across Turtle Island. This is a simplified version of teachings I have been gifted from family and Elders to help me.



Appendix B. Letter of Intent



Graduate Program - School of Criminology
Saywell Hall 10125
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6

The Voices of Our Elders: A First Nations Perspective on Urban Identity and Justice

Master of Arts Thesis

My name is **Morgan Varis from Epekwitk (Prince Edward Island)**. I moved to the Coast Salish territory in August of 2012 to pursue the **Master of Arts** degree from the **School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University**. From a young age, I have been involved in First Nations theatre arts focusing on traditional and contemporary First Nations dance, song and storytelling. During my undergraduate years I discovered a deep passion for social justice issues and researched many aspects of the topic. I now have this tremendous opportunity to further explore social justice issues from a First Nations perspective under the supervision of **Dr. Ted Palys** and the support of **Christine Martin, Executive Director** of the Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society (VATJSS).

My thesis project will present **First Nations Elder views of how First Nations' justice, both traditional and contemporary, functions in an urban context**. My proposed thesis will explore experiences and what has already been written about First Nations peoples in relation to justice involvement, and **a vision of urban First Nations justice by collecting the perspectives of our Elders**, those individuals who represent their respective communities and can elaborate on a vision of First Nations justice based on traditional knowledge.

Elder participation

I humbly **seek Elder participation in this project**. I cannot think of a more appropriate starting point of studying First Nations identity and urban justice than by listening to our Elders, and **giving them**

voice to such a critical topic. The information will be gathered either through individual interviews or a traditional sharing circle depending on Elder wishes and the number of participants. All information collected throughout this research process will remain **confidential and stored securely**. The final manuscript will serve not only as my thesis, but also be a written record to be used by those managing Aboriginal Justice Services and those who are looking to advance their knowledge and understanding of the topics that will be explored in this research.

Interviews and Sharing Circles will be conducted **during the period** from **August 1, 2015 to September 15, 2015**.

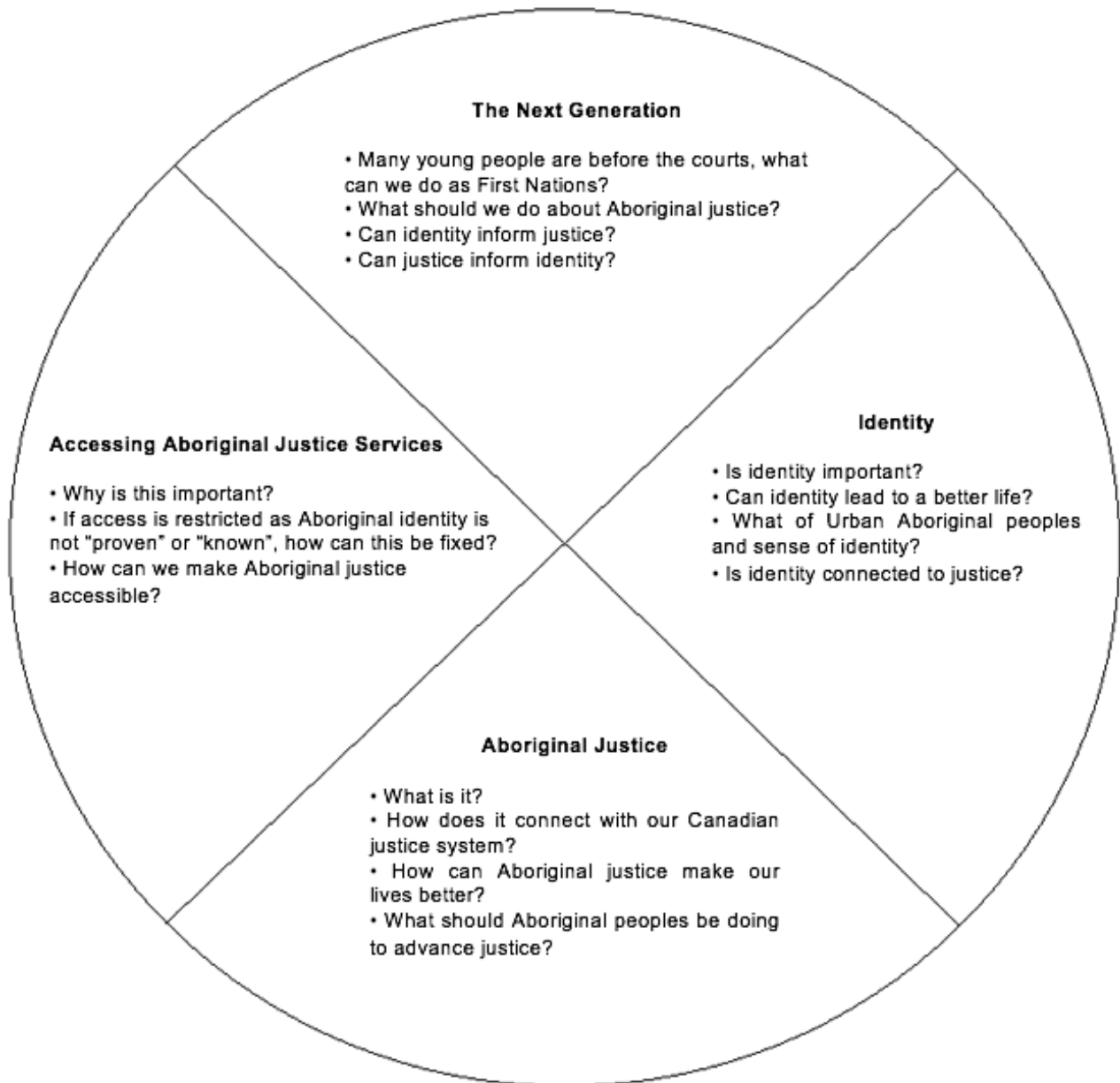
Those wishing to participate should contact: **Morgan Varis**, BA and M.A. Graduate student by e-mail at ████████@sfu.ca or telephone at 778-████████

Thank you, for taking the time to support this research project.

Respectfully,

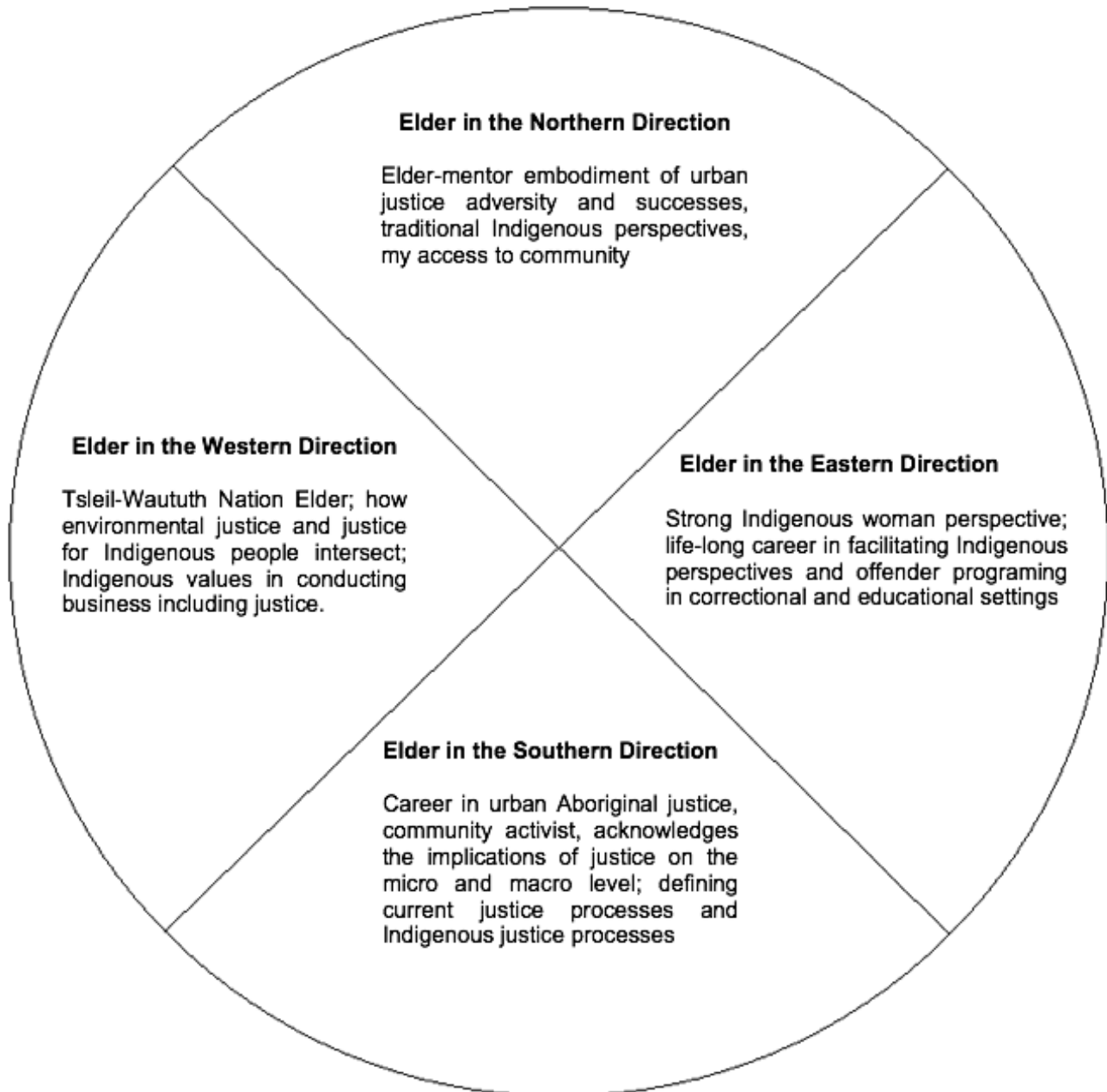
Morgan Varis

Appendix C. Medicine wheel Interview Guide



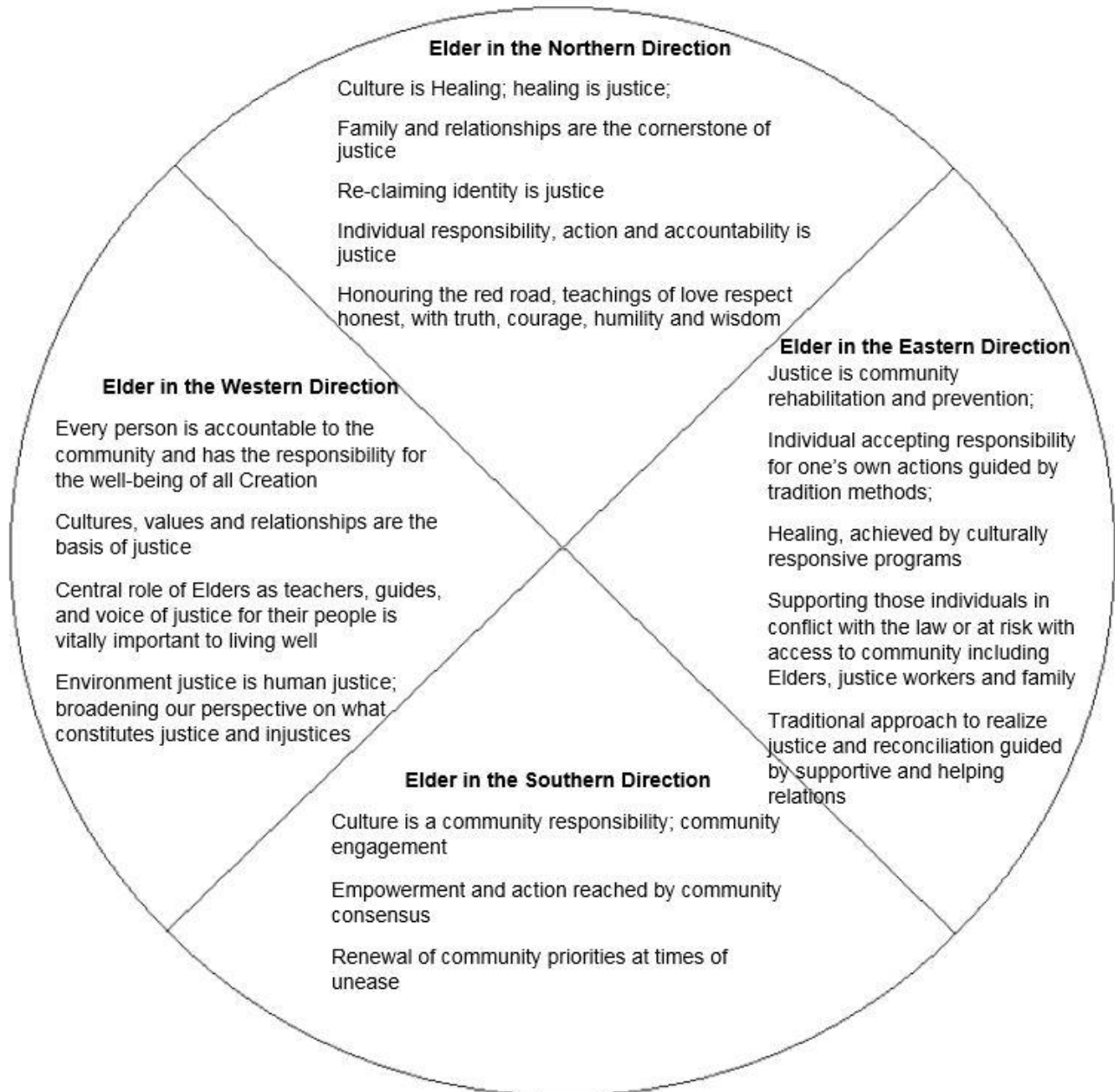
Appendix D. Elders in Each Direction

Each Elder interview came to the urban unceded Coast Salish territory from various Nations both near and far from Vancouver. They are introduced by their respective direction.



Appendix E. In the Words of Urban Coast Salish Community Elders

The main themes for each Elder are presented.



Appendix F. The Elders' Collective Voice

The main themes of Elders as a collective voice are presented.

