Indigenous men’s views on Masculinity after being involved in a Gang and/or Criminal System

by

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A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science
In Couple and Family Therapy
Program

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT

INDIGENOUS MEN’S VIEWS ON MASCULINITY AFTER BEING INVOLVED IN A GANG AND/OR CRIMINAL SYSTEM

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University of Guelph, 2014

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This thesis is an investigation of how Indigenous males view masculinity after being involved in a gang and/or the criminal system. The documentation of Indigenous men being over-represented within criminal system has been well-documented, but the men’s experiences of being a man within the criminal system are not. As part of a larger study (Biidwewidam Indigenous Masculinities) that are looking at various forms of Indigenous masculinity, this study was completed through individual and focus group interviews with men who identified as Indigenous and had been involved in a gang and/or the criminal system. Through these discussions, it became clear how the impacts of colonization have affected these men and how men are (re)creating masculine identities within a social and contemporary world.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without all the Indigenous men who were brave enough to share their stories with me. To all of you, I am grateful and humbled by your strength and courage to share your stories of pain, loss and resiliency. Thank you! I would also like to thank my advisors, Kim Anderson and Carla Rice. Without you Kim, this project would not have been funded and might not have happened. It was also nice to have a role model to look up to who has been through this process, and to have your unfailing support and kind words. To Carla, thank you for being my sounding board and continuing to help me find my ground in places that I did not always feel comfortable (or want to be in!) I am truly thankful for both of you being involved in this project.

To my family and friends, I love all of you for your unending support and questions about how my work was going or to remind me of the importance of what I’m doing when I was starting to question it. All of you seemed to know that I was going to succeed without flying colours and your faith helped me remind myself that I could. And last but not least, to J who has been my greatest support and rock. One day. It has finally come!
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2004 and 2005, men represented 95% of admissions to prisons: 95% of federal jails, 90% of provincial jails, and 89% of remand admissions\(^1\) in Canada (Comack, 2008). Prisoners are thus overwhelmingly male, and of this population, Indigenous men are over-represented which has been well documented (Aylward, 2001). Indigenous males accounted for 3% of the population in 2004 and 2005 but accounted for 22% of admissions to provincial jails and 17% of admissions to federal jails (Comack, 2008). In spite of the disproportionate number of Indigenous men in prison, there is a gap in the literature regarding their experiences. As sociologist Elizabeth Comack (2008) argues, there is a misunderstanding among the general public about what happens in prison and there is no voice given to male prisoners involved in the criminal system about what they experience.

In this thesis, I will review theories and current research regarding Indigenous\(^2\) men’s masculinities and discuss the study I conducted on conceptions of masculinity among Indigenous men involved in the criminal system.\(^3\) A rationale for the study, statement of the research question, and the methodology and data analysis for the study will follow. Along with the discussion of my findings, trustworthiness, rigor, and significance of this research will also be addressed. I will conclude with a brief discussion of the potential significance of the work for further research, policy, and practice.

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1 Remand refers to those who have been released on bail or in custody while a trial is adjourned.
2 The term Indigenous (a word that includes First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples) will be used, unless an author identifies the participants in their study specifically otherwise. Participants’ communities may not occupy the same geographical space where I conducted my research, so having place-based terminology may not fit. Some key informants also consider Aboriginal to be an oppressive term that was introduced by non-Indigenous peoples.
3 The terms criminal system will be used instead of the more commonplace phrase, the criminal justice system. I am doing this because of my experiences of working with people who have been involved with Canada’s criminal system have taught me that Indigenous people in conflict with the law find little justice within this system.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Currently there is a dearth of published work about Indigenous men and masculinities. Through research, I found only 60 research-based articles that focused specifically on Indigenous men and masculinity. This literature review will look at legacies of colonialism; social constructions of masculinity; “doing” Indigenous masculinity; and gendered and raced representations of Indigenous masculinity in popular media.

Legacies of colonization

In the section that follows, I briefly outline the major post-contact and colonial processes and practices that have impacted Indigenous identities, communities, and nations. Due to the specific focus of my project and to space constraints, I cannot cover all forms and means implemented by settler society to assimilate Indigenous people. The federal government was both relentless and imaginative in the ways that it set out to assimilate the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

According to Stanley (1983), at first contact Indigenous peoples were dismissed as having no past because they did not seem to value or have written records. Miller (2000) and other historians have documented the change in European views of Indigenous cultures in formal histories written after the first contact between Europeans and Indigenous people. When the Indigenous peoples were of use to Europeans -- for survival in an unfamiliar world, as military allies, and for economical matters such as the fur trade -- the dominant image was of the "noble savage" (Fisher, 1992). Interactions during the early contact period both included and were respectful of, Indigenous peoples (Trigger, 1988).
By the early 1800s, and after survival was no longer a pressing concern, new struggles arose as European settlers began to create an agricultural base and establish who owned the land. As the struggle of ownership of the land unfolded, the images of Indigenous peoples began to change. Where Indigenous peoples had once been seen as helpful and useful, they were now perceived as an obstacle to European visions of progress. The “noble savage” became merely “savage”; the same “Indians” who were once seen as knowledgeable, brave, and loyal, were now portrayed as ignorant, cruel, treacherous, bloodthirsty, dirty, and immoral (Fisher, 1992; Francis, 1992; Trigger, 1988; Walker, 1983). Certainly this shift in how Indigenous people were portrayed helped to justify colonial policies, which emerged at the time. These policies had a strong focus on the interests of European civilization and notions of progress being served.

One of the foundational policies put under settler government control was in the Indian Act. The Indian Act was created in order to define who was an “Indian” and consequently who was not. A patriarchal lineage was put in place by the federal government to define who could be considered a Status Indian. Indigenous men who married non-Indigenous women remained “Indian,” while Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men lost their “Indian” status, as did their children. This reflected European patriarchy, and also established lineages that conflicted with the system of matrilineal descent practiced by many Indigenous cultures (Joseph, 1991; Wilson, 1985). Egalitarian social relations among Indigenous men and women degenerated over several generations due to the colonial policies that supported this imposed patriarchy (Monture-Okanee & Turpel, 1992; Payne, 1992). In many Indigenous societies, women traditionally inherited titles and responsibilities through matrilineage, so these exclusionary “citizenship” rules that stripped Indigenous women who married whites of their
Indian status, ripped into the heart of Indigenous cultures (Greschner, 1992; Joseph, 1991; Wilson, 1985).

In addition to having European patriarchy imposed through the Indian Act, many generations Indigenous communities and nations have also been subjected to the coercive cultural assimilation of children and youth in government-administered or church-run residential schools. Hundreds of these “total institutions” were established throughout North America beginning in the late 1800s, enrolling tens of thousands of Indigenous pupils over the course of the 20th century (Gone, 2009). Residential schools subjected the students (some as young as four years) to colonial subjugation through pedagogical and punitive concepts and practices such as rote learning, inadequate nutrition, manual labor, Christian indoctrination, cultural assimilation, military-style comportment, and brutal corporal punishment (Gone, 2009).

One Canadian study of the impact of residential schools on former students concluded that these schools were set up to overload the students with activities more appropriate to a correctional institution as opposed to an educational institution (Cariboo Tribal Council, 1991). The study also suggested that residential schools could not be considered suitable to promote the learning, growth, and personal fulfillment among the students who attended them. Thus the training provided in schools throughout students’ early years likely prepared them for the punitive rituals and routines found in the criminal system. Furthermore, the stripping of Indigenous students’ cultural identity has been found to have a detrimental impact on their self-determination and overall sense of identity (Cariboo Tribal Council, 1991; Gone, 2009).

There has been some research exploring how experiences of schooling, particularly boarding or residential schools, affects the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous males
create their masculinities (Bloom, 2000; Martino, 2003; Simpson et. al, 2001). Studies conducted within both populations have found that all-boys’ schools tend to be more violent than mixed gendered schools (Simpson et. al, 2001). In the context of residential schools, male students did find spaces in which to resist the imposition of a negative identity. For example, Bloom’s (2000) work looks at how sports at Indigenous boarding schools were important to both the males and females who participated in these activities. Based on recollections from former students, this work highlights how competitive sports at these schools helped the children find opportunities that were otherwise denied to them through the school: a sense of community, dignity and accomplishment. At the same time, Martino’s (2003) work highlights the racism that Indigenous athletes often confronted, which was apparent in school sports competitions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous teams. This idea will be explored further under the theme “doing masculinity” and the work done by Hokowhitu in New Zealand.

Some work has also been done on the effects of intergenerational trauma on homeless Aboriginal men. In particular, Menzies (2006), through researching the cumulative impact of government policies on Indigenous peoples has found that the state’s policies of forced assimilation have severed children’s community and family ties, thus forcing many into a homeless state. This has left a legacy of traumatized individuals dependent on social institutions that are unable to address their needs. Dependency on such institutions may leave Indigenous men particularly susceptible to enter the criminal system.
Social Constructions of Masculinities

Humans are social beings. As such, they often act in response to particular situations that are socially created. The idea that gender and masculinity may be “socially constructed” has its roots in early psychoanalytic theory and in psychological notions of the “male sex role” (Connell, 2002). Contemporary gender researchers, such as Raewyn Connell (2002), have emphasized that studying masculinity as well as men is important as the gender positions that society constructs for men may not reflect what men are, desire to be, or what they actually want to do.

Constructionist researchers have used a range of social-scientific methods to explore gender as a social construction (Connell, 2002). One important insight of social constructionists like Connell (2002) is that masculinities are multiple, meaning that there is no one pattern of masculinity found everywhere. As such, masculinity is constructed differently in different cultures and different periods of history. For example, some cultures idolize soldiers and view violence as the ultimate test of masculinity while others look at soldiers with scorn and regard violence as disgraceful (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994). Equally important is the insight that some forms of masculinity are more honored than others. This is important to keep in mind, as many Indigenous cultures teach younger generations to respect their elders and warriors. Furthermore it has been theorized that more than one kind of masculinity can be found within a given cultural setting. Therefore, within the same cultural group, there are likely to be different understandings of masculinity and different ways of “doing” masculinity (Connell, 2002).

The term “hegemonic masculinity” was first introduced to provide an explanation for the most prized expression (but does not mean total dominance) of masculinity in relation to the various forms of masculine identities that co-exist alongside it. Here hegemonic masculinity
refers to the form of masculinity that is culturally dominant in a given setting and signifies a position of cultural authority and leadership. In addition, the hegemonic form may not always be the most common expression of masculinity but is the most highly visible and highly valued (Connell, 2002).

According to Connell, institutions can also play a vital role in how gender is constructed. These can include, but are not limited to the government, the workplace, and schools. Within institutions, gender relations may be understood as operating at two different levels, gender regimes and gender orders. Gender regimes refer to the play of gender relations in smaller, local settings while broader societal gender orders cut across and help to structure (but not determine) local gender regimes. There are times when gender regimes follow the overall gender order, but there may be times that they deviate from the gender order (Connell, 2002). It is implicit in Connell’s theory that gender regimes and gender orders are historical projects subject to change throughout history. Therefore, it follows that gender is connected with the most important historical change in modern world history: the process of expansion, colonization, and conquest. It is increasingly recognized that these types of historical transformations have been critical for the making of masculinities, both in the colonizing powers and among the colonized (Connell, 2002).

Representations of non-European cultures as patriarchal and of Indigenous men as aggressively hypermasculine have been used to cast Indigenous cultures as unenlightened. Manufacturing these different images of masculinities reaffirms the superiority and power of the West and of European masculinity (Connell, 1995). In recent times, Western masculinities have purportedly enjoyed an androgynous fluidity associated with new masculine identities, while
Other masculinities have continuously been constructed as untransformed and frozen in time (Hokowhitu, 2008). This encourages acceptance of the common misconception that dominant, Western masculinities are superior while masculinities rooted in different epistemologies are objectionable. Thus, white men retain their power; power which is inherently seen to be rational and egalitarian (Hokowhitu, 2008).

“Doing” Indigenous Masculinity

As a result of the dominance of Eurocentric ways of knowing, it is difficult to find research about Indigenous people conducted by and for Indigenous people. One research-informed resource that emerged through gathering articles for this literature review was a guide created for and with Indigenous men focused on healing from colonial trauma. Warrior-Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men (Mussell, 2005) is unique as it remains one of the few works about Indigenous men in Canada that is both scholarly and community based. Based on interviews with Indigenous males and Indigenous service providers, it highlights important insights they shared such as working on aspects of healing (e.g. grief), strengthening a larger community of care, and sharing traditional knowledge in the hopes that this might aid in Indigenous peoples’ healing. This was one of a small number of studies I came across that focus on various ways Indigenous males have begun to reclaim “doing” masculinity as a way of dealing with the traumas of colonization. I organized these studies into the following categories: Indigenous men finding alternative masculinities through engaging in Indigenous activities coded by colonizers as “masculine” (e.g. hunting); Indigenous men finding alternative masculinities through embracing cultural traditions and worldviews (embracing collectivist
rather than individualist notions of self); Indigenous men re-claiming their traditional roles as caregivers (such as through fathering); Indigenous males enacting gender roles in gendered spaces such as prison to find a sense of identity; and Indigenous males reclaiming Indigenous masculinity through sports that have constructed an “acceptable” form of non-Indigenous masculinity. In what follows, each of these themes will be discussed more thoroughly.

The first category of research articles I gathered look at how Indigenous males express alternative masculinities through engaging in Indigenous activities that are coded by colonizers as “masculine.” For example, Loo (2001) discusses how the representations of hunting in the earlier 1900s portrayed white hunters as masculine and bourgeois through completing dangerous acts and bringing home trophies, such as antlers, to show for their effort. According to Loo, by the early 20th century many non-Indigenous men felt that they had become “over civilized” and that civilization had rendered them unable to express their masculinity. Viewed as lacking aggression, courage, and the capacity to show mastery over nature, the “over civilized” man was no longer a man, but a woman. Furthermore, as larger numbers of White men took up hunting to affirm their masculinity, Indigenous males were increasingly deemed to be inferior race/gender.

Even though Indigenous hunters were positioned as inferior to white game hunters (who perceived themselves as brave, skilled and chivalrous), the former typically acted as guides for the latter during hunting excursions. Yet despite their marginalization, Indigenous men used such experiences to create alternative masculinities inspired by stories of the trickster. The figure of the trickster offered another identity position, one that gave room for Indigenous males to show disapproval about their unsatisfactory wages without directly confronting their employers (Loo, 2001). In an example offered by Loo (2001), Indigenous guides who were aware of a depletion
of animals available to hunt, did not disclose their knowledge to their “customers.” Instead, they told their White clients that they would be better hunters (and therefore better men) if they could successfully hunt an animal, even though they knew the animals they were tracking were not currently located where they were hunting.

Equally important to the reclaiming of “doing” masculinity is research on embracing traditional teachings and worldviews from Indigenous cultures in North America to aid in the healing process, and on how Indigenous men can benefit from these teachings. Certain research has begun to focus on the role of Indigenous males in traditional healing practices (Krech, 2002; Restoule, 2003, 2005, 2006). Indigenous males have historically been important to their communities (Krech, 2002). However, the overly high value placed on individuality within Euro-western worldviews has lead to the devaluing of interconnectivity, the Indigenous value of being connected to other beings. Therefore Indigenous males who value the idea of being connected with others and with the natural world may feel a sense of hopelessness by living in self-imposed isolation with no tradition or direction (Anderson, Innes & Swift, forthcoming). Krech’s work (2002) highlights how traditional ways of healing may help Indigenous men to rebuild a “self” rooted in a greater sense of interconnectedness with others in the community. Ceremonies are also found to help build linkages between heritage, roles, and community connection (Krech, 2002). The idea of ceremonies being important is also stressed in Restoule’s work (2003, 2005, 2006), which focuses on how healing through a circle of care and Indigenous teachings can foster Indigenous identities even in colonized settings.

Tengan’s *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawaii* (2008) also focuses on the importance of ceremony to offset the effects of discrimination on Indigenous
males. This work stands out as a critique that examines Indigenous masculinities through the Hawaiian men’s movement. Hawaiian men created a men’s movement to challenge the claims of racialized citizenship and gendered belonging that were established through colonization practices via militarism. Through practices of militarism, groups of “successful” or “proper” Hawaiian men were created based on Euro-centric standards. This division imposed by “settler-tourists” allowed for in-race discrimination as these “proper” men were inferior in terms of gender, race, or social class. Through Tengan’s (2008) research, a collective remembering of Hawaiian masculinities has helped to counter the negative labels faced by Hawaiian men due to this division and has given a new space to allow them to a recover through ceremonies that are geared towards men’s healing.

The third theme found in the literature is how Indigenous males are re-claiming traditional roles as caregivers. This research theme includes an examination of how traumatic socio-historical conditions can affect the ways that Indigenous men parent. Hammill (2001) is one of the earliest researchers investigating cultures of masculinities in an Australian context, with a specific focus on how trauma experienced by fathers may influence child socialization. According to Hammill, if the father figure was not present and/or able to provide protection, there was an increased chance that other men in the child’s life would abuse them thus continuing the cycle of abuse from father to son. This theme is also present in Jessica Ball’s community-based scholarly work on Indigenous fathers in Canada (Ball, 2009, 2010; Ball and George, 2006), which begins to address the gap in research regarding Indigenous men and how they perform Indigenous masculinity in relationships such as fathering. Ball (2010) illuminates the socio-historical conditions -- such as poverty, low quality housing, low education and high
unemployment -- that have helped to shape Indigenous men’s experiences of learning to be a father, which is typically fraught with difficulties. This research also points to cultural strength and resilience that is largely unseen by Euro-western perspectives but that could help to shape research and community programs, such as the strength these men show as they begin to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of trauma through fathering.

The fourth theme I found in the research focuses on how Indigenous men are “doing” masculinity in gendered spaces such as prisons or gangs as part of their search for an acceptable identity. Comack (2008) has written a book on men’s experiences in the criminal system, which highlights how men of all racial and ethnic backgrounds attempt to “do” masculinity in ways that differ from non-incarcerated men. Prison is described as a gendered space in which violence is a systemic feature, and the pressures for men to “do” masculinity in violent ways are even more pronounced (Comack, 2008).

Comack’s analysis has been supported by Ogilvie & Van Zyl (2004), who discuss how male youth involved in custody engage in rites of passage that replace traditional rites in their communities. For example, initiation into a gang may provide an adolescent with a ritual that marks their transition to adulthood, even though this rite of passage is not compatible with dominant ideas of how youth should transition into adulthood (i.e. receiving their first car, going to university). Research in this area also suggests that incarcerated men’s sense of masculine identity may be influenced by traditional teachings and be transformed while in the prison system or after being released.

Research looking at former Indigenous gang members also suggests that histories of colonization and forced assimilation have left young Indigenous men with an unclear sense of
identity. Former Indigenous gang members report on the burden of discrimination and labeling based on race, and on the lack of opportunity as causal factors to gang involvement (Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson, 2008). Disadvantaged, disillusioned, and often encouraged by gang-involved family and friends, Indigenous youth turn to gangs for a sense of identity and purpose. Indigenous youth’s risk factors (individual, familial, school and community) are then further compounded by a physical separation from mainstream society (like living on reserve), cultural loss, and a lack of cultural identity (Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson, 2008). Often, the circumstances through which Indigenous males create their identities come from the intergenerational effects of residential school experiences that foster feelings of cultural loss; loss of cultural identity; and discrimination based on lack of opportunities. Being unable to adequately heal from these past traumas only adds to the complexity of creating stable and positive masculine identities.

Finally, the theme of Indigenous males “doing” masculinity through sport is also present in the literature. Brendan Hokowhitu has contributed substantively to sports scholarship with his work on Maori men, masculinity and male dominated sports, with a particular focus on rugby (2003, 2004, 2005, 2007a, 2007a, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). His work demonstrates a need to question the dominant stereotypes around men who play rugby and consider the ways in which the dominant vocabulary molds how people know each other. In the New Zealand context, rugby works to legitimize and maintain settler stereotypes that Maori men are brute and child-like through visual cues such as the ritual of completing the Haka prior to every game. Hokowhitu’s substantive work in this area has given room for Indigenous men to question the discourse that was created to limit, homogenize, and reproduce an “acceptable” masculinity. Some Canadian
research has also begun to discuss how settler/colonizer historical interpretations of First Nations masculinities have influenced Canada’s sport heritage (Robidoux, 2006).

**Representations of Indigenous Masculinities in Popular Media**

It is important to note that both the degree and nature of interest in Indigenous cultures varies throughout time within the Euro-American culture. A variety of scholars have examined European representations of Indigenous people throughout history, though they have often ignored gender variances. Specifically, little to no attention has been granted to the almost exclusively male images of Indigenous people in popular media (Rogers, 2007). The fascination with images of pre-contact Aboriginal manhood has been attributed to the settler belief that images of Indigenous women could not accurately or adequately portray Indigenous peoples’ ancient wisdom and spiritual knowledge (Bird, 2001).

Bird (2001) identifies two predominant images of Indigenous men within dominant culture that have helped to shape Western society’s view of Indigenous cultures. The first image is of the “doomed warrior” who represents Indigenous males as sexually dangerous savages who exude sexual appeal through bravery and physicality. The second image of Indigenous men prominent in popular media is that of the “wise elder.” This man is not the object or subject of sexual desire but rather an image that represents wisdom and spirituality, as well as one that places an emphasis of Indigenous people being environmentally conscious peoples (Bird, 2001).

Images of Indigenous masculinities that have a recursive nature in popular media are important to keep in mind, as Indigenous men may be more willing to accept them as opposed to others since they are readily available. Because gender identities are socially constructed, these
popular images may have a meaningful impact on men whether they are consciously incorporated into their masculine identities or not.

Furthermore, as a result of colonial subjugation and cultural assimilation, many Indigenous people are still struggling to detach themselves from colonial legacies that have constructed a discourse portraying Indigenous communities as “primitive” or “traditional.” The popular discourse stands in strong opposition to the discourse portraying the colonizing Western, “modern” culture as enlightened and liberal (Hokowhitu, 2008). In addition, Western ideologies regarding Indigenous cultures often locate Indigenous cultures and Western cultures within a shifting set of binary oppositions. Placing Indigenous cultures in this binary structure allows Western societies to project both desirable and undesirable traits upon more “primitive” cultures (Rogers, 2007). Rogers (2007) outlines that in dominant, Western societies, the idea of the primitive “other” imposed on Indigenous cultures symbolizes what is desired (yet forbidden), what is repulsive (yet attractive) and what is lost (but yearned for). Therefore, a detailed examination of these ideas of “primitive” versus “civilized” can lead to insights into cultural dynamics to reveal how the ideas of “primitive” versus “civilized” can be seen as fluid instead of fixed (Rogers, 2007). In summary, scholarship on Indigenous men demonstrates that it is crucial to keep in mind the importance of colonialism to the construction of Indigenous masculinities, both in the past and present (Jolly, 2008).
Critique of Literature Review

The last twenty years have seen steady growth in publications on masculinities, but much of this literature has only addressed the issues and needs of populations that have not been marginalized, i.e. heterosexual, white and first world men (Pease, 2005; Traister, 2000). African American scholars have challenged the “whiteness” of the field (Pease, p. 121) but there is more theoretical work to be done (Murphy, 2004 p. 16).

Research that has been done on post-colonial masculinities can offer insights to scholars interested in Indigenous masculinities, particularly when it comes to positing the relationship between gender, imperialism, and colonization (Connell, 2005; Morrell, 2005; Stanovsky, 2007). However, Indigenous feminist scholars have made the point that post-colonial theories do not always address the distinct or gender-related histories and concerns of Indigenous people in North America (Moreton-Robinson, 2002; Lawrence and Dua, 2009; Altamirano-Jimanez, 2009). Anthropology offers another option for studying gender, but there are few works that investigate Indigenous men in North America. Furthermore, ethnographic studies of masculinities lag behind those focused on women (Guttmann, 1997).

For Indigenous scholars such as Hokowhitu (2008), it is imperative to not always focus on representations from some ancient, pre-colonial past, but to remember and reconstruct Indigenous masculinities in the present. Referencing the film Whale Rider (Caro, 2002), Hokowhitu argues that Māori culture within the film and the post contact colonial imaginary is seen as frozen; patriarchal male dominance is embodied in Koro, but is challenged by Paikea, the young girl who represents the future (Hokowhitu, 2008). In this example, an old, seemingly “traditional” story is told about the oppressiveness of traditional Maori patriarchy and the
promises of enlightened modernity, which expunge the realities of Western patriarchy and falsely mythologize enduring gendered inequalities among the Maoris (Jolly, 2008). Furthermore, the readiness of Western audiences to accept this representation of Maori culture as authentic is unsurprising, given that it is synonymous with the dominant discourse surrounding Indigenous cultures in general (Hokowhitu, 2008). This discussion underscores that all representations of Indigenous masculinities must be seen through a historical lens, that highlights their colonial relation with settler masculinities; exploring how this relation produces a configuration of hierarchy and hegemony among Indigenous populations (Jolly, 2008).

Anderson (2000) has written about a four-part process of identity reconstruction among Indigenous women. This process involves resisting negative definitions of being; reclaiming Indigenous tradition; constructing a positive identity by incorporating tradition into contemporary context; and acting on the reconstructed identity. There have been anecdotal reports from projects such as the larger project in which this project was embedded, discussed below, that many Indigenous men are now resisting negative identities based on male dominance and Euro-western patriarchy, but that they are lacking in resources as to what to reclaim in terms of tradition, how to incorporate meanings and practices into their contemporary lives, and how to act on their reconstructed identities.
Chapter 3: Rationale for this study

This study was a part of a larger study, Biidwewidam Indigenous Masculinities. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded the larger project for a three-year period. The first year was spent talking to Elders in various communities and contacting all the organizations in Canada who service Indigenous men, in order to create a program scan document. *Mino bimaadiziwin*, an Ojibway phrase meaning the good life or the way of a good life, served as the theoretical lens in which to understand how programs were assisting Indigenous men to re/gain positive lifestyles (Restoule, 2003). The aim for the second year of this project was to complete seven focus groups and 20 key informant interviews with various males in Indigenous communities to gain insight about men’s experiences with achieving minobimaadiziwin. The third year in this project was aimed at coding and analyzing the data, and creating policy-oriented and community-based documents. The third year also looked at preparing for additional funding and what Indigenous men felt needed to be created to help them achieve minobimaadiziwin.

Research has demonstrated strong links between Indigenous identity recovery, social well-being, and de-colonization (Chandler, 1998; Chandler and Lalonde, 2003, 2008; Wesley-Esquimaux, 2009). Nestled in the larger Biidwewidam Indigenous Masculinities project, the objective of this study has been to explore the experiences of men who have been involved within the criminal system, particularly those who were or who have been a part of a gang, and to examine how they have achieved or plan to achieve minobimaadiziwin.
Three concepts inform and frame my research exploring Indigenous men’s perceptions of Indigenous masculinities: 1) Decolonizing methodologies; 2) Minobimaadiziwin; and 3) Reciprocity- Indigenous informed knowledge exchange.

1) Decolonizing methodologies: Scholars of Indigenous masculinities need to address distinct theoretical and practical issues in order to create bodies of literature as well as other resources that can address community-based needs. For example, theories that are critical of essentialist notions of gender can cause offense or be detrimental in some Indigenous contexts where gender roles are valued and form the core of identity, recovery, and healing.

2) Minobimaadiziwin: The notion of minobimaadiziwin is a central concept for Anishinaabe and Cree people that acts to guide peoples’ interactions (Gross, 2007, 2003, 2002; Hart, 2002; Peacock, 2002; Rheault, 1999), centering on the roles and responsibilities of kinship relations (Andersson and Nehwegahbow, 2010; Innes, 2010; LaBoucane-Benson, 2009). Achieving minobimaadiziwin or “the good life,” involves physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Indigenous men have much to gain and learn from an examination of Indigenous masculinities and identities in order to achieve minobimaadiziwin.

3) Reciprocity – Indigenous-informed knowledge exchange: The terms of knowledge exchange and translation are often terms used to articulate how results stemming from research are communicated among the researchers and users. The larger project, Biidwewidam Indigenous Masculinities, has acknowledged a need to build partnerships and networks between various facets of those working to improve Indigenous males’ lives. These include, but are not limited to academic researchers, social policy analysts, Indigenous Elders and front-line services providers. The larger project identified this need in order to bridge the gap between traditional
knowledge and historical perspectives and what exists in terms of research and programing on Indigenous masculinities, identities, and achieving minobimaadiziwin. One goal for the larger project was to develop user-friendly resources, make policy recommendations and develop a proposal for future research to address the needs of Indigenous masculinity.

**Research Perspective**

As an Indigenous woman from Northwestern Ontario, I originally developed this research study idea while working with Indigenous men and women after their incarceration to help them reintegrate back into society. Through discussions with the men after their jail time, I got a sense that prison experiences helped to shape or reshape their current masculine identities. As an emerging Indigenous female scholar I am interested in researching this further to gain an understanding of the process through which the men (re)gained a new identity and the kinds of supports that others experiencing these transitions could utilize.
Research Questions

This research asks: How do Indigenous males who identify as former gang members and have been involved in the criminal system create a sense of minobimaadiziwin?

To answer this question, I ask three specific research questions:

- How does engagement or interaction with the criminal system change Indigenous males’ stories of themselves?
- Do the circumstances in which Indigenous men become involved in the criminal system change their sense of masculinity and identity?
- Do Indigenous males call upon certain values, practices or beliefs related to a particular Indigenous culture during difficult times in their lives and how do they apply this information to their lives (e.g. specific rites of passage, ceremonies, etc.)?
Chapter 4: Method

Participants and Recruitment

Data was obtained by speaking to eleven men; I spoke to six through semi-structured individual interviews and through one semi-structured focus group with Indigenous men across Canada, ages 18 through 75 (Appendix A). The sampling attempted to include men from a variety of places of origin, including urban centres, rural communities and Indigenous communities. All interviews were conducted in Ontario, Canada. Some of the men were identified through the program scan during year two of the larger project and others were recruited through personal contacts of the larger project team members or through social networking sites. The individual interviews ran from February 2012 to September 2012. Each of the participants identified as Indigenous and their Indigenous communities were in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Ontario, Canada. In most cases of the individual interviews, these participants were contacted by phone. Key stakeholders, who were largely frontline workers, were not compensated. In most cases, these individual interviews were completed by telephone. Tobacco was given to those that I interviewed in person; a traditional ritual used when asking another person to share their knowledge that they have.

In addition to individual interviews, I held one focus group with former gang members who had previously come together as a group to support each other. The Crazy Indians Brotherhood was established six years ago to help Indigenous males involved in gangs and in the criminal system in Canada to get the support needed to successfully leave gang life. The purpose of conducting a focus group was to gain insight from community members who identified as former gang members about Indigenous men’s needs related to minobimaadiziwin. All focus
group participants were fed during the group and were given $20 cash for their participation, which was funded by the larger project.

Each of the eleven research participants shared information about their involvement in the criminal system. The participants had a range of work experiences and experiences with Western educational systems. Six men shared that they had achieved a post-secondary education through university or college, while others shared that they struggled with elementary school. Six men stated that at the time of our meeting, they were employed full time. One participant identified working within a gang prevention program; five identified working with youth; one identified working within the healing movement and did so by public speaking and visiting communities; one worked within the jail system as an inmate liaison; one identified as an Elder; and the remaining two did not identify working with Indigenous males but had experience within a gang and/or the criminal system. Nine of the eleven participants reported that they had spent time in jail from a night to over three years.

Data was recorded using a digital recorder. Permission to be recorded was asked and given prior to the recorder being turned on. Details about how their private information would be protected and remain confidential were reviewed and each man was given an opportunity to ask questions about this process (Appendix B). Every participant signed an agreement to participate (Appendix C). I transcribed all interviews and each participant was given a verbatim copy of the transcript to review. After receiving the transcription of our interview, one participant requested that part of his interview be taken out and requested that other information be changed. The participant was allowed to edit the document as he saw fit and then sent it back to me before coding.
**Trustworthiness, Rigor and Quality**

Because of the co-construction of meaning within qualitative studies such as this one, it is important for researchers to remain aware of the quality and trustworthiness of the research they are conducting, both in their interpretation and analysis. In qualitative research, where there is no set way to determine reliability and validity, there is discussion around trustworthiness, rigor, and quality (Golafshani, 2003). In narrative analysis, the researcher can ensure these qualities by considering situated truths, persuasiveness/plausibility, and coherence (Riessman, 2008).

Situated truths are communicated to the reader through the researcher’s writing by contextualizing the results based on the time, space, and social meanings in which the data are analyzed (Daly, 2007; Riessman, 2008). Persuasiveness and/or plausibility of the data can help the reader to believe the researcher’s finding by making strong connections between theoretical claims and the interpreted data (Riessman, 2008). Coherence is related to the researcher’s ability to consistently link the participants’ narratives and their interpretation across the data (Riessman, 2008).

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity allows researchers to keep track of their thoughts and ideas in order to be accountable for the decisions they make throughout the process of research and analysis (Daly, 2007). Lynch (2000) has outlined three reasons why reflexivity is important for qualitative research: 1) to keep track and control personal biases through reflexivity and memo writing; 2) to be reflective about their values and opinions; and 3) to achieve a greater awareness in order to minimize distortion of thinking and interpretation.
Due to the research being conducted from a subjectivist epistemology and based on my past personal and professional conversations with Indigenous men about their experiences in the criminal system and in gangs, I engaged in reflexive writing throughout data collection and analysis to keep track of my thoughts and possible biases. By keeping a record of my interpretations and considerations, I aimed to strengthen the trustworthiness, rigor and quality of this research. Throughout this research I was very aware that I was a female researcher interviewing men. I often wondered and wrote about how this difference impacted data collection while I conducted this research. Through reflection, I came to feel that my social location played a part in how willing or unwilling the men were to discuss certain topics (e.g. emotions); in influencing the content of our conversations in ways that I did not anticipate or intend (e.g. the men talking about how women turn to their female relatives for assistance); and possibly, in causing them to avoid raising certain masculinity-related issues such as sexuality that are particularly charged conversations for men and women. Due to my social location as an Indigenous scholar, I was also aware that I did not always question things that were already known to me (e.g. cultural practices like the sweatlodge) and instead took a knowing stance about Indigenous experiences that the participants were describing. As a researcher, I was constantly trying to bracket what I knew and what I thought I knew about Indigenous culture, masculinity, and these men's stories.
Data Collection

All primary data interviews were done with an informal, conversational approach that followed a general outline. All five interviews and the focus group were transcribed verbatim using Expresscribe, which is software that plays back audio tracks and allows the transcriber to pause or rewind at any point in the track.

In the current study, I find it important to take an approach that does not use colonizer research methods but instead values the storytelling traditions of Indigenous cultures. From the vantage of the colonized, the term “research” is indivisibly linked to European colonialism as described above in the literature review. In the colonized peoples’ view, research is regarded as being in the domain of experts who have the educational qualifications, specifications and skills.

Indigenous research approaches assume that people know and can reflect upon their own lives, have questions and priorities of their own, and have the skills to answer these questions (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). This may leave the reader wondering then, what an Indigenous epistemology is. In my view, an Indigenous epistemology includes a way of knowing that is fluid and experiential. This notion of knowledge is derived from teachings that are transmitted from generation to generation through storytelling that allows for each story to become alive with the nuances and wisdom of the storyteller. Knowledge also emerges from traditional languages that place emphasis on verbs, not nouns (Kovach, 2005). If I were to draw upon broader European terms for epistemological stances and paradigms, I would suggest that this study was framed by a subjectivist epistemological stance and an interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist perspective is based on the assumption that there are multiple realities or meanings that are co-constructed through interaction (Charmez, 2003).
With the above ideas in mind, I viewed data collection as a means of collecting stories about how Indigenous males view themselves in the context of the criminal system. Stories among Indigenous people can be cultural, traditional, educational, spiritual and political. They may also be able to highlight resistance to colonialism through actions initiated by the storyteller to create change (Thomas, 2005).

To analyze the data I collected, I used constructivist grounded theory methods outlined by Charmaz (2003). In this study, it was my goal to follow these methods as a template but not to replicate this methodology in its entirety. Grounded theory methodology was first proposed in order to challenge the belief that quantitative research was the only way to achieve systematic inquiry in social science (Charmaz, 2003).

This methodology focuses on creating a theory that is generated from structured inductive inquiry. Charmaz (2003) outlines five key strategies of grounded theory and a methodology that she refers to as constructivist grounded theory. First is the simultaneous collection and analysis of data. Second is a two-step data coding process that involves line-by-line coding and focused coding. Third is the use of comparison. The comparison can be between concepts, categories, or sub categories that emerge from data analysis. Fourth is the use of memo writing for the purpose of conceptual analysis. As the study is based on the idea that all human interactions are transactional processes, the premise is that the researcher’s assumptions and values are able to shape emergent descriptions within interviews involved in this study (Carter & Little, 2007). Furthermore, from this epistemological stance, the researcher is an active part of the research that helps to mold results through discussions with participants and through my analysis (Daly, 1991). Fifth is that all data collection and sampling is aimed at theory development.
I was also drawn to the idea of utilizing a constructivist grounded theory methodology as I have come to understand that this can be an inductive and deductive process. This methodology is viewed as one that can be characterized by a constant back-and-forth between data collection and data analysis. This characterization allows the researcher to refine the theory before the completion of the study. With that in mind, I did the following for data collection with the six completed interviews. Following the first step outlined by Charmaz (2003) outlined above, data was collected by completing the first two in-depth interviews with key informants, and was analyzed utilizing what can be described as thematic analysis that can be found in narrative methodology (Riessman, 2008). Under the narrative structure that views analysis as “case centered,” preserving more sentences allows for richer details to emerge from the data. As this project was a part of larger study, a small team of the group that worked with the raw data met on a weekly basis to discuss coding. This team consisted of Kim Anderson, Co-lead on the SSHRC grant; John Swift, Research Coordinator; and myself. We began with a skeleton of large codes we were seeing across the data (e.g. assimilation, alcohol and drugs, and culture). We then began coding our respective materials. Second, the concepts collected were compared across the two interviews to group the concepts into categories and subcategories. Third, I went back to data collection from a focus group and another key informant interview and coded them selectively with the already created categories and subcategories held as references. During this process I also paid attention to concepts that arose during selective coding that did not seem to fit with the categories that I created, or categories that were brought forward during the larger team’s weekly coding meetings. I continued to collect data from interviews until I felt that I had recreated inclusive categories and had reached saturation. Finally, I considered the specific
context in which the stories were told and how the current categories reflect this context (Riessman, 2008). Depending on the context in which these stories are told, the context and content of the stories may vary.
Chapter 5: Results

This study asked six specific questions to each of the participants, posed both in the focus group and in the key informant interviews. The questions asked to the participants are as follows:

1. What does being a man mean in the Indigenous culture(s) that you come from? What did you learn growing up?
2. What does masculinity mean in your life now, and in the communities you are a part of?
3. Can you share anything you know or have learned about Indigenous men’s traditional roles and responsibilities?
4. What do you think happened to Indigenous men’s identities and well-being throughout our history?
5. How is what is valued above changed or altered after being involved in a gang or the criminal system?
6. What are some of the needs you see for our boys and men in terms of achieving minobimaadiziwin (the good life)? Where do we need to go next?

The major themes that resulted from the conversations with the participants are presented within this section. These are as follows: learning to be a man by recognizing and resisting the legacy of colonization; learning from dominant mainstream and traditional Indigenous community ways of being a man; learning from experiences of fathering and/or of becoming a father; doing masculinity by doing time in the criminal system; learning to connect to and share emotions by de-colonizing institutions; learning to be a man by learning how to be a brother; learning to be a
man by achieving sobriety; and reclaiming Indigenous masculinity as part of achieving minobimaadiziwin.

Learning to be a man by recognizing and resisting the legacy of colonization

Not surprisingly, all of the participants identified and recognized that practices of assimilation and colonization as a detrimental influence on Indigenous men's identities throughout history. One participant described colonization as when "our whole culture took a nosedive." Other men described this as how men lost their warrior spirit: "The warriors who were, you know the protectors and the gatherers, they feel inadequate as the fathers because they cannot protect their children. They feel completely powerless." Three of the eleven men disclosed that either they or their immediate family members had been sexually abused and they attributed their abuse to the cultural disruption that came from the violence of colonization and the subsequent transmission of intergenerational trauma.

Some of the men also disclosed facing racist stereotypes throughout their lives and talked about how this had negatively impacted their identities as Indigenous men. One man stated how his feelings of self-esteem were negative "because I was told I was stupid, worthless, that I’d never amount to anything. A lot of things that our people are told, you know?" Another man shared how common stereotypes about Indigenous men that negatively influenced his identity also led to criminalization:

The other end of that is what I went through where violence and anger becomes an option. Because you have no other outlet you know? And then, of course the way European
society works you get the pissed off and angry, drunk Native that goes and hurts somebody, put them in jail.

Many of the men also cited beginning to resist some of the assimilative and colonized practices within their daily lives and had found an abundance of resources by reconnecting with their culture. A man of mixed descent (African American, German and Ojibway) described how he did not need "the government to give me a little plastic card with my picture on it to me that I’m Indian, that I’m Native...It’s not your bloodline or your status card or your car, or your job as chief or whatever." He also went on to describe that Indigenous people have "earned the right to be Native people" and that it's okay to "exercise that right. Exercise that perspective." Other participants also talked about how they were resisting the negative societal messages about Indigenous masculinity. One man shared how he "didn't put up with the racism" in the town that he grew up in, which was predominantly White. He shared a story of how he began to influence what he described as the "Nazis" who frequented the only gym in town in order to stop the racist stereotypes they had promoted prior to him joining the gym (e.g. the “drunk Native”). This is an example of how this man had begun to resist negative masculine identities that were being imposed on him by non-Indigenous men.
Learning from dominant mainstream and traditional Indigenous community ways of being a man

The men shared the varying Indigenous and non-Indigenous male (or men’s) roles and responsibilities that they had learned as well as where they learned these lessons. The two main roles and responsibilities that the men cited learning were to be a “provider” and a “tough guy,” with “warrior” and “protector” coming in closely behind. Significantly, being a “provider” meant more than providing for the family as it involved providing for the community as well, suggesting that the roles and responsibilities described by the men emerged from a mixture of both dominant mainstream and Indigenous cultures.

The theme of being a "tough guy" was also prominent. The men shared that it was through this trope that they learned that it wasn't okay for men to cry and that they had to meet their responsibilities (e.g. like going to work) before attending to their emotional needs. They also talked about how being a "tough guy" enabled them to perform masculinity and be involved in criminal activities such as carrying weapons and selling drugs.

The roles and responsibilities of "warrior" and "protector" were not explicitly defined. Many of the men hinted at what these roles would allow them to do (e.g. not be afraid to show emotions) or alluded to the fact that these roles were important to their identities as Indigenous men (e.g. “having the warrior spirit within them”).

The men who were formerly involved in gangs cited that they were taught to suppress particular emotions by their peers or other gang members. The men described these negative mentors as causing them to "lose their way." One man stated that while he was "growing up on the street and [doing] the bullshit that I was doing, it was always you got to be hard. You can’t be
crying, you can’t be showing any emotion.” Another man talked about how he too, learned how
to not show any emotions. However, he discussed how the emotions inevitably came out in other
ways:

Yeah and you have no way of getting rid of the pain that’s inside of you. So you find a
way to either mask it. Whether it’s sex, relationships, drugs, alcohol, violence, whatever.
You find a way to push that down or cover it up. And violence is cheap.

This connection, suppressing emotions other than anger and the violence that often came
with it was one that was discussed in detail among all the participants, "because it’s easier for
men to express anger and it’s more socially acceptable for men to express themselves through
anger then to express those core emotions like sadness or fear." Learning to connect to and share
these emotions was another theme brought up by the participants, discussed below.

As discussed above, the men shared that during their youth they often had interpretations
of what it meant to be a man, but did not have the teachings to challenge these ideas. Many of the
men stated that their teachings about traditional roles and responsibilities did not begin until after
they started their healing path and began to (re)connect to their culture, speak with elders and
participate in ceremonies, which is discussed in another theme below.
Learning from experiences of being fathered and/or of becoming a father

Being taught by their fathers was a resounding theme when it came to discussing where the men learned how to become a man and what a man should be. This theme could be further broken into three subcategories: implicitly learning by observing their fathers and the other men in their lives; not wanting to father like they had been fathered; and directly being told how men taking up the role of father should behave.

Implicit Learning

The men discussed how their fathers implicitly portrayed or modeled what a man was and described how they embodied these teachings. As one participant who had been involved in foster care stated: "Everything is interpretations that I took in growing up. Nobody said 'this is what a man is. You have to do this.'" This was echoed by other participants who offered insights such as "that was my experience with men was you know, seeing what he did" or "The same the thing that was happening when I grew up, I accepted that life, the partying life and being surrounded by all that. Nobody ever taught me to be a man."

Fathering differently than the way they were fathered

Ten out of the eleven men stated that fatherhood had become an important part of their masculine identity, and many shared the rewards of fathering that they have experienced, as well as the rewards of being positive role models. One man described how he gained his affirmation as a man through good fathering, striving to embody a positive idea of Indigenous manhood, and through establishing an intimate relationship with his son: "to be a man, it’s something that my
son is the one that really gave me the highest compliment. [He] said, 'you're my hero.' That's a compliment." Other men described how they are now fathering in order to pass on teachings to their children. One man stated, "I hope that I’ve done [a good job]. See my son hasn’t seen me drink or do drugs and he’s what, 25 or something like that. And he’s never seen me that way."

One participant also identified that perhaps his father was unaware about what he was passing on to his children due to his own experiences of trauma and abuse:

Well, [a] teaching could mean by what they live and what they do. ‘Cause he might not have even believed in what he was teaching or what he was doing. He was just affected by what he went through and he carried it and he brought it out onto my mom and eleven children.

The participant who shared this insight also shared how his realization led him to another realization: that he did not want to father the way that he had been fathered. After he had this insight, the participant went through a process of learning what he wanted to pass on to his own children by attending role-playing therapy so he could understand a son’s experience of his fathering and practice fathering in a different way then he had been fathered. Multiple participants, who stated that they learned how to be fathers by fathering differently than their own father, echoed this idea. These men shared that they recognized that the way that their fathers parented did not sit well with them, and that they developed this deeper understanding as they got older. For example, one participant shared that his father taught him to be angry at non-Indigenous people and this teaching is one that he is still trying to untangle from his own way of
being. He recognized that his anger has not always been justified but it has been a hard teaching to unlearn. These participants were at the same time very clear in stating that they did not want to discredit the teachings they received from their upbringing and their own experiences as sons, as these helped them to become the men they are today.

Explicit Learning

When it came to discussing what their fathers explicitly taught them, much of the discussion revolved around learning to be “tough.” One participant described how his father always told him that he needed “the experience” to be ready for everything:

I used to ride around in a vehicle and he’s always tell me that when I grow up there’s going to be somebody bigger than me and stronger than me and they’re going to be tougher than me. And you’re going to meet that guy one day and you’re going to have to be ready. In life, you always have to be ready. He always told me that I have to have more experience.

Another participant described how his father’s schooling of him to be “tough” through teaching him to engage in lateral racism and through physically abusing him, later contributed to his feelings of intense anger and his lack of caring for others as a young man: "But the way that he taught me created all this anger and hate for everybody. I didn’t care about nothing, my life, anything. I could care less." The theme of anger resounded across conversations and resurfaces throughout the themes emerging from these interviews.
The above themes supports the first step in Indigenous identity development as outlined by Anderson (2000), a step which she describes as resisting negative definitions of being. All of the participants shared that they learned to form negative identity through the ways that processes of colonization affected their fathers’ capacities to father well. The men also shared how they had begun to resist these notions of father and manhood in re-constructing their own sense of masculinity.

**Doing time, doing masculinity**

Not surprisingly, the men stated that while they were involved in gangs, they had participated in abusing drugs and alcohol, knowingly committing criminal acts, and engaging in various forms of violent behavior. As a result, all but one of those interviewed reported spending time in jail, ranging from one night to three and a half years inside a federal penitentiary. The men also described how they adopted what they had learned about being a man as boys (being tough, suppressing emotions, taking on certain versions of men’s traditional roles and responsibilities distorted by processes of colonization) and strove to embody these while they were in gangs. One man eloquently expressed his views on his masculine identity while he was involved in a gang:

So, I’m a strong man because I can rob, I can steal I can do all these different things. I can protect my homies, you know pull a gun on somebody. I can have a gun stuck in my face and not feel fear. Like all that stuff. You know what I mean? I’m a strong man.
It became increasingly clear throughout my discussions with the participants that these men created and sustained an identity as a man built upon their upbringing and specifically on the models and images of Indigenous men made available to them in childhood. When the discussion turned to leaving the gang life, the men stated that they struggled with creating a new kind of masculine identity. One man who works within an anti-gang initiative stated that after exiting a gang, many former gang members "feel like a nobody." He went on to explain how he has come to this understanding:

[If] they go back to selling drugs and stuff at least they’re in their comfort zone and at least people know that they won’t judge them. As well, they feel important because their reputation was built upon what they built up. It’s hard for them to disassociate themselves from that.

**Learning to connect to and share emotions by de-colonizing institutions**

Reflecting on their experiences as men today, many of the participants stated that they have learned that emotions play a big factor in their lives. Many men shared that they have had to learn how to identify emotions beyond anger and how to share those feelings with others in their lives. Participants reported that after beginning to engage in their healing process, they discovered that they had other emotions, which they had not allowed themselves to feel. Many shared experiences of losing people close to them, either blood relatives or chosen family they formed by being on the street. One of the most powerful emotions that surfaced during the
healing process was grief. As one participant put it, "There was a lot of unresolved grief in my life. We didn’t talk about it, it was something unheard of."

Surprisingly, all of the men stated that it was their involvement with the criminal system that helped them to reconnect to their culture and begin their own healing process. Participants shared that connecting with their culture was the most vital tool for healing, and they talked about the significance of learning Indigenous teachings around acceptance, humility and self-acceptance. The men stated that this learning was done through receiving Gladue reports, through following mandated court expectations, or by attending programming while in prison.

Among the participants, two men stated that while involved in the criminal system, the court recommended that a Gladue report be done for them. Both men stated that this report enabled them to begin their healing path: "And so they got a Gladue report and included it in the pre-sentence report and that pre-sentencing report became the basis of my healing. It was crazy, the Gladue report." The other participant shared how getting a Gladue report enabled him to have his criminal record “cleared” and he saw this as a second chance.

Some men stated that their healing process began with court-mandated expectations that clearly outlined they would return to jail if they did not comply. All of the men reported going to therapy and three of the participants relayed that they went to therapy because it was court-mandated. One participant stated, "So instead of being specific about what I could do, [my condition] was to attend counseling." He mentioned that he was able to create a holistic model of

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4 A Gladue report is a type of pre-sentencing and/or bail hearing report that a Canadian court can request when considering the sentencing of someone of Indigenous descent. The Gladue report was introduced in order to promote an understanding of Indigenous circumstances that may have impacted Indigenous people to become criminalized (Legal Services Society of BC, 2011).
healing for himself because of these conditions: "I had a holistic model that I lived to according to every week. It involved sweatlodges, it involved AA and NA, it involved a sponsor, it involved anger management." Further to this idea, one of key informants from a gang prevention program who I interviewed relayed that a large majority of their programming revolved around the participants attending therapy in order to "work on themselves." This program is set up so that the men who leave gang life are employed in a manner that allows them to live a healthier lifestyle. When they enter the program they are offered employment on specific terms, depending on where the man is in his healing process. An individual’s program may be set up so that the majority of the time in the beginning is spent in therapy, addictions counseling, anger management and working out any ongoing justice issues (e.g. bail hearings or volunteer hours). The program then changes to align with and support the healing process of each Indigenous man who is served, such as by shifting to offering the man only one hour of therapy in an eight hour shift, with the other seven hours being focused on him honing his education or employment skills.

Some men stated that it was through programming within the criminal system and connecting with employees of that system that they were able to begin their healing journey and as a result, re-construct their identities as Indigenous men. One man reported that a female guard was someone who "believed in me no matter what. That person was willing to hold my hand and helped me when I pushed her away." Another man expressed how he got involved within the Native brotherhood while incarcerated: "It’s a place for men to come together and they do drumming, they do the sweatlodges, they do the different teachings, they do arts and crafts, they do painting. It’s really good. And a lot of people benefit from it in the institutions." This same man also earned his GED within this sentence, which he attributed to fostering a sense of
empowerment and positive self esteem within, which he did not get growing up: “I realized I wasn’t stupid; I had some intelligence and my confidence in who I was started to increase, being a Native person.” Within this participant’s prison sentence, it enabled him to reframe his masculine identity that lead to the realization that this "was a pivotal point in my life when I realized that I wanted more. I wanted more than just to continue on in the corrections system. So I started making my way out."

All of the participants described engaging in some sort of therapy in order to learn skills that helped them to identify their emotions, express those emotions, and then share their feelings with others. One man described "getting to the core emotions and gaining the tools I used so it didn’t come out sideways all the time" as something he found important to incorporate into his life. Other men shared that men could get involved in non-traditional therapies to help them work with their emotions. One man described how he actively participates in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and how he reaches out to youth at the gym through this activity. Another man suggested a number of means for self-expression and the expression of emotion: "Hip hop or poetry. Through art to heal. To get involved in different sports. To connect. To go for a swim. There’s so many different ways that we can express our emotions that can benefit them."

The themes discussed above (doing time, doing masculinity and learning to be a man by connecting and sharing emotions) are the two themes that would support the second step in Indigenous identity development outlined by Anderson (2000). This step looks at how Indigenous males start to reclaim Indigenous traditions and expressions of masculinity and maleness.
**Learning to be a man by learning how to be a brother**

Within the focus group I completed with the Crazy Indians Brotherhood, participants shared a resounding story about learning how to be a man by learning how to be a brother. The Crazy Indians Brotherhood started as a grassroots group by gang members who wanted a better life and created this change by coming together. As part of initiation into the brotherhood, each man has to go through a stage to determine that they are worthy of the cuts (a leather vest without sleeves) that the men in the group wear proudly. What does it take to make the “cut”? Each man has to make a commitment to be clean of drugs and alcohol, maintain healthy relationships with his partner and child(ren), and be working or upgrading their educations and skills. Each member is also expected to participate in the community in a positive way. During the focus group with the Crazy Indians Brotherhood, many of the men stated that the Brotherhood was a positive and meaningful source of masculine identity for them, one that did not involve criminal involvement. One participant stated:

> For me, and what I think everybody should have is this club. My brothers right here, and my actually family brothers are the largest male influence in my life. I model my life and the way that I live my life from them. They’re my biggest teachers right now.

Other men shared how being involved in the club had helped them to continue living minobimaadiziwin because of the club's code to remain clean of substances, be a positive and active part of the communities, and be involved in and accountable to each other. One man in this group shared how "I just hope that this brotherhood here, that’s part of our agenda is to try to
reach out. Reach out and help, maybe we can influence another man and that man can bring in another man and we can all grow together. That’s really [one of] our hopes."

**Learning to be a man by achieving sobriety**

Every man that I interviewed shared that they struggled with alcohol and drug misuse. Not surprisingly, the use of drugs and alcohol came with being involved in a gang. Many of the participants shared that while they were in a gang, they had used and distributed substances in order to make money.

However, many men later learned and acknowledged that their drug and alcohol use enabled them to escape painful memories that they had carried around. For example, one man I interviewed was a residential school survivor who shared how many of the memories from residential school were too painful to cope with and that the main avenues open to him to achieve sobriety also brought him back to his traumatic school experiences: "I tried religion. I tried that religious stuff and it always brought me back to residential school. And being reminded [of the pain], so I always got drunk again. I always back into trouble, drugs, and getting into trouble and everything." Another man shared how he was aware he was using drugs and alcohol to cover up the pain he carried but that he didn't "really want to deal with all this pain and stuff that I’m dealing with so it’s okay to cover it up again."

Along with the struggles with sobriety, each man shared that after repeated attempts they were able to stay clean from drugs and alcohol. Among the participants, one was still actively struggling with alcohol misuse. However, the other participants each shared their triumphs of maintaining sobriety, some of them for up to thirty-five years. During the discussion on sobriety,
some of the men shared how living a sober life changed their perceptions about what it meant to be a man. One participant stated that "ever since I sobered up, my outlook on life, my look on what my responsibilities are as a family member, as a community member and as a man are totally different then what they used to be." When asked what had changed, he reported that he was now responsible for his actions and was making an effort to acknowledge other people in his life. He shared a story about how he made a decision to walk away from his sacred bundle when he was using drugs and alcohol, telling people that he "lost it." He stated that actions such as these that deflected his responsibility to others were examples of what had changed in his life since achieving sobriety. Another man reported learning who "those true friends are" and gaining "security [with others] without being involved in all those things I had to be involved in."

Learning to be a man by being a brother and learning to be a man by achieving sobriety are the two themes that support the identity development model proposed by Anderson (2000). These themes highlight the third step in this process: identity (re)creation by incorporating tradition in a contemporary context.

**Reclaiming Indigenous masculinity as part of achieving minobimaadiziwin**

Many of the men interviewed cited that in order to achieve minobimaadiziwin, the focus needed to shift helping the future generations. A key informant stated that "First thing start at home. [To pass on that you are] loved. That you’re special. You can go into the cultural and the spiritual stuff but if you don’t get that from the get go in your home, it’s not a good start." Out of the eleven participants, six stated that being involved with youth, particularly at risk youth, was
imperative to continue the healing process. A man who is now involved with the Crazy Indians Brotherhood emphasized the importance of influencing the youth in a positive way: "If you’re young you can still be influenced. I mean, you can be influenced at any time in your life. But the young, it’s not that you CAN be influenced it’s you SHOULD be influenced." This was echoed by another key informant who believes that "you have to connect with them before they get set in their ways and start believing in everything that’s passed on to them" and that "it’s a lot easier to get a youth on your side then to get a grown man on your side."

In order to facilitate this sort of connection, one participant stated that it would be important to create a shift within Indigenous communities and families that honours and incorporates "traditional perspectives on the male role in caregiving." This participant mentioned that this needed to be done because of the trauma Indigenous peoples, families, communities, and nations have experienced and the stereotypes surrounding masculinity that circulate both within contemporary Indigenous and settler cultures, especially “the fathering stereotypes.”

The men also shared the vital importance of Indigenous men connecting back to cultural roots as they start healing. "I think that as Aboriginal men we have to go back to our roots, go back to our original ways of thinking, back to our positive influence and positive surroundings." This was echoed by another participant who said "It’s not until we go back and reconnect or to heal that disruption that we ultimately - and I don’t like this term - but solve the problem." Many of the men reported gaining a sense of peace and understanding when they reconnected to their culture: "It was like I had come home." The men in this study also shared that connecting with elders had been vital in terms of them initiating their processes of healing, whether they met those elders in treatment centers, jails, or somewhere else on their healing path.
The last topic that the men raised as a significant step to helping Indigenous men to heal from the traumas of colonial violence and forced assimilation was the importance of an Indigenized and de-colonized education. Many of the men talked about struggles with education throughout their lives. Some reported dropping out of school to become a gang member while others shared their struggles with grades and relationships with peers. All reported going back into the public education system in order to facilitate their healing process. Two of the eleven participants shared that they did not learn about Indigenous history until attending a post-secondary institution. One man shared how learning about the history of colonialism and policies of forced assimilation was pivotal to his healing process as it helped him understand the factors contributing to his loss of identity: "The humiliation of residential schools, the humiliation of colonization, first contact, and the treaties. Once I started to understand all that too, things started to click and make sense. In reading about other people’s experiences and having to be able to talk to, it was also healing for me too."

This theme supports the last step in the process of Indigenous identity development outlined by Anderson (2000) as it highlights how the men in this study are acting on their reconstructed identity.
Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications for future research

As stated previously, this research study was guided by three larger questions, which will be analyzed in this section. As a reminder, the questions were as follows:

1. How does engagement or interaction with the criminal system change Indigenous males’ stories of themselves?

2. Do the circumstances in which Indigenous men become involved in the criminal system change their sense of masculinity and identity?

3. Do Indigenous males call upon certain values, practices or beliefs to a particular Indigenous culture during difficult times in their lives and how do they apply this information into their lives (e.g. specific rites of passage, ceremonies, etc.)

Although the men in this study shared that their time in the criminal system was a negative experience, they also expressed that being involved in the criminal system allowed for positive and pivotal changes in their lives. However, they also shared that getting to the point of viewing these experiences as positive was a process they had to undertake that involved healing and learning Indigenous history. The dominant story from these men was that prior to involvement in the criminal system, their sense of masculinity was one based on teachings they had received in childhood and adolescence. The trope of the “tough guy” who suppressed his emotions while protecting and providing for those he cared about was something they shared that they had strove to emulate.

As discussed earlier, the men in this study attributed that these negative identity constructions available to them were due to colonization and assimilation processes such as
residential schools. Residential schools subjected the men I interviewed as well as their families to colonial subjugation through punitive pedagogical concepts such as rote learning, cultural assimilation, military-style comportment, Christian indoctrination and to abusive practices including inadequate nutrition, manual labor, and brutal corporal punishment (Gone, 2009). A study conducted by the Cariboo Tribal Council (1991) on the impact of residential schools on students concluded that these schools were set up to overload the students with activities more appropriate to a correctional institution than an educational institution (Cariboo Tribal Council, 1991). The study’s authors also suggested that residential schools could not be considered suitable to promote the learning, growth, and personal fulfillment within the students who attended them. Thus the training provided within schools in students’ early years likely prepared them for the punitive rituals and routines found in the criminal system.

All of the men shared how processes of colonization and assimilation helped to produce these negative expressions of Indigenous masculinity and helped to ensure that they enacted the forms of masculinity that were available to them. These included western patriarchal norms of masculinity and gendered power relations historically imposed on Indigenous men, families, and communities along with the imposition of notions of Indigenous men as inferior to white male settlers. Many of the men shared that they had learned how to be a man by observing the forms and expressions of masculinity offered by their fathers. Those whose fathers and grandfathers attended residential schools may have unconsciously taught their sons and grandsons, including those men who I interviewed, many of the ways of being a man similar to those learned and practiced within correctional institutions such as residential schools. Thus, it could be argued that histories and legacies of colonization put on offer a type of confined, disciplined, or penalized
masculinity as one of few limited ways of being a man presented to the Indigenous men participating in this study.

Menzies (2006) argues that violent colonial practices such as forced removal from families and communities and forced confinement in residential schools have left a legacy of traumatized individuals dependent on social institutions, including homeless shelters, substance abuse treatment centers and child welfare agencies, which are not equipped to address their needs, rights, or interests. Men in this study indicated that as a result of this history, they have experienced criminalization, racism, poverty, various types of abuse, struggles with Western education, and the loss of relationship skills so important to Indigenous cultural values. This study has shown that dependency on mainstream institutions coupled with these experiences has left Indigenous men particularly susceptible to enter the criminal system. The men I interviewed talked about many ways that they were not supported in exiting various systems such as the criminal system. However, they also indicated that some de-colonized and indigenized programs within mainstream institutions helped them to break the cycle of dependency, which in turn has enabled them to do the difficult work of transforming their identities. Some of these indigenized and decolonized programs and approaches included: a focus on positive programming for youth; the availability of positive role models to emulate; a focus on fostering an environment for Indigenous men to become fathers and to be supported in fathering well; an emphasis on reconnecting to Indigenous cultures; and an awareness of the importance of balancing Western and traditional forms of education.
The second question I posed in this study was: do the circumstances in which Indigenous men become involved in the criminal system change their sense of masculinity and identity? This question came from my involvement in an organization that focused on helping people re-integrate back into society after being involved in the criminal system. This pondering was initially sparked when time after time, I heard Indigenous men, in particular, discuss how the circumstance of their arrest had affected them. For example, many men shared that after a domestic dispute, they experienced a variety of conflicting and powerful emotions. Frustration was common; as males they were the ones who were often removed from the home and charged. Confusion and sadness were also common as the men shared that they felt that the women in their lives had a lot of control over them.

In this study, the question of how the circumstances of arrest affected informants’ masculine identity was left largely unanswered. As this study progressed, I realized that it was asked naively, which I discuss further in the limitations section. Many of the men did not describe the circumstances that led them to becoming involved in the criminal system and it became increasingly clear through our discussions that the impacts of colonization were still present for these men (e.g. the fear of being criminalized further), and why I felt uncomfortable directly asking the above question. Although this question is still unanswered, I am left wondering whether men’s involvement in the criminal system and the forms of masculinity they found prior to and during their time in jail were structured by the narrow range of options available to them within post contact Indigenous and settler societies, which may have shaped their involvement in the criminal system. This could support the word done by Bird (2001), who has identified two predominant images of Indigenous men that have helped to shape Western society’s view of
Indigenous cultures. The image of the “doomed warrior” is one who represents Indigenous males as sexually dangerous savages who exude sexual appeal through bravery and physicality. This representation would serve Western neo-colonial interests in ways that are discussed below.

This study also supports the work done by Krech (2002), who has argued that many Indigenous men begin to receive help and healing through tragedy, namely through cops, courts and corrections. Not surprisingly, all of the men in this study began their healing journey through tragedy. As a researcher, I was left wondering why these Indigenous men had to go to an extreme place in order to begin receiving services and to learn about other possibilities for masculine identities that were not connected to hegemonic forms in Western society? The following questions came to mind while analyzing the data gathered: was the reason why the men went to this extreme place because of the dominant discourse that Western hegemonic masculinity is superior and thus anything that does not fit under this trope can be deemed as a “risk”? Was it because the image of the “doomed warrior” has become so widespread that contemporary Western society feels the need to confine these men for safety reasons? Or was it due to the fact that identity is socially constructed, and as such these Indigenous men needed to be around other Indigenous males in order to enter into and sustain a dialogue around Indigenous masculinity? These are questions that warrant further exploration as well, as I note within the concluding remarks.

Some men shared that due to cultural assimilation and disruption, they did not have a positive sense of masculinity prior to becoming involved in the criminal system and that this negative identity, in some cases, was further perpetrated within the criminal system. This is supported by work done Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson (2008) in which former Indigenous gang
members cited cultural disruption, a lack of opportunities within their communities, and colonial government laws and policies that geographically separate Indigenous peoples from mainstream society (the reserve system) as some of the reasons why they joined a gang. The men in the Grekul and LaBoucane-Benson study also shared that gang life provided them with a sense of identity that they were lacking (Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson, 2008). The participants within this study shared similar insights, describing how their identities as men frequently revolved around the teachings they received about being a “tough guy” and suppressing their emotions in order to remain “hard.” A few also shared how they incorporated traditional Indigenous men’s roles and responsibilities into their identities as gang members. For example, the men indicated that they felt that they were embodying the roles of “protector” and “provider” by engaging in criminal activities because this proved that they were “men.” Comack (2008) discusses this idea in her study on violence as a systemic feature within the gendered space of prison. She attributes the gendering of this space to increasing the pressures for men to “do” masculinity in violent ways. Future research within this area might seek to understand whether the circumstances surrounding Indigenous men’s involvement in the criminal system shapes, or is shaped by, their sense of masculinity and identity.

The last question I posed in this study looked at whether Indigenous males call upon certain values, practices or beliefs related to a particular Indigenous culture during difficult times in their lives and how they apply this information to their current lives (e.g. specific rites of passage, ceremonies, etc.). All of the participants shared that connecting with their culture was a significant healing tool for them individually, and in some cases, as a collective. Krech (2002) argues that a majority of Indigenous males have undergone many negative experiences and
confronted cultural disruptions and as a result, have turned to addictive behavior to help them cope with their feelings and the conditions of their lives.

The men indicated that the teachings they gained around acceptance, humility and self-acceptance were of particular importance in breaking the cycle of addictions and in re-assigning responsibility for the difficulties that they have faced. Over half of the participants shared that they valued going to a sweatlodge during difficult times in their lives. A handful of participants shared the importance of sundance in their lives. The return to traditional knowledge is discussed in other work that highlights how traditional ways of healing may help Indigenous men to rebuild a sense of “self” through creating linkages between heritage and current roles, and through making community connections (Krech, 2002). Restoule’s work (2003, 2005, 2006) has also stressed the importance of ceremonies, and particularly ceremonies that focus on healing through the creation of a circle of care and the sharing of traditional teachings. In this way, ceremonies promote Indigenous identities in the larger context living in (often hostile) colonized settings. Future research might help to identify how connecting to ceremonies is helpful for Indigenous men to achieve minobimaadiziwin.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

As discussed in the literature review, Indigenous scholars such as Hokowhitu (2008) have highlighted the fact that Western men who have access to privileged forms of masculinity have enjoyed an androgynous fluidity that is associated with new masculine identities. However, Othered masculinities, those of Indigenous men particularly, have been placed on the non-privileged underside of a forced binary, constructing the latter as untransformed and frozen in time (Hokowhitu, 2008). Imagery of the “noble savage” to the “savage” that have circulated since the introduction of colonization and have served to uphold notions of European progress and civilization may still be active today, particularly when those very notions are being threatened (Fisher, 1992; Francis, 1992; Trigger, 1988; Walker, 1983). Highlighting differences between modern fluid western masculinities and frozen, stuck-in-the-past, Indigenous masculinities reaffirms the superiority of white western men and ensures that Indigenous men conform to the norms set out by the hegemonic gender orders (Connell, 1995).

One criticism of social identity theory, including theories of gender and racial identity formation is that the focus is mostly on individuals (and sometimes families), but not on the larger social contexts and group relationships that shape people’s identities (Rigazio-DiGilio, 1997). Suyemoto (2002) has started a dialogue about these matters, arguing that social identity is created when individuals recognize similarities between themselves and a larger group and are recognized as belonging by the group. This realization then causes them to define themselves in relationship to, and to integrate the group’s co-constructed identity into themselves. She posits that individuals may also define themselves in opposition to others as a way of determining what they are not (e.g. the opposition of “I am not White” may lead to creating a definition of “I am
Indigenous.”) This identity creation based upon relationship, inherently includes other people to help one understand and construct parts of one’s personal and social identities. This idea can be seen to operate in this study, both when the Indigenous males were involved in a gang and when they began to leave and re-create their identity in another group such as the Crazy Indian Brotherhood.

This research follows on the work done by Anderson (2000), which outlines a four-part process of identity reconstruction among Indigenous women. This process involves resisting negative definitions of being; reclaiming Indigenous tradition; constructing a positive identity by incorporating tradition into contemporary context; and acting on the reconstructed identity. Through reporting on and analyzing interviews and focus groups with eleven Indigenous men, I have shown that Indigenous males are engaging in a similar process. As discussed in the results section, many Indigenous males in this study shared that they are resisting negative definitions of being either implicitly or explicitly. The men also shared how they are reclaiming Indigenous traditions by re-connecting with Elders and their culture, and how they are incorporating these teachings into a positive identity within a contemporary context. In particular, the Crazy Indians Brotherhood shared that they are also acting on their new reconstructed identity by providing support to other Indigenous men to begin their healing process.
Limitations to study

A large limitation to this study was the recruitment and retention of participants. The larger study completed a program scan that identified men who had experienced either working or living in the criminal system. However, many Indigenous men declined being interviewed or had very specific requests that needed to be met before they gave consent for interviews (e.g. meet in person, ensure anonymity or confidentiality, and receive confirmation that I was not involved in the criminal system). Many of the men attributed this to their distrust of systems that they have been involved in and reluctance to show vulnerability to a stranger. I have also wondered if this was an example of the term “research” having a negative influence on data gathering, although this was not named as such by any of the participants. Given the small sample size of Indigenous males interviewed, the results of these findings may not be representative of all Indigenous men, but rather may be reflective of the particular men who were interviewed, where they were within their own healing paths, and the insight that they may have gained to date. It is also important to note that these men were confident and have achieved success in their healing journey. I suspect that not all men who have had experience in the criminal system would be willing or confident to share their stories. Future researchers working with this population will have to be mindful about how their own biases and presentation of themselves may affect recruitment and retention of participants because of the aforementioned limitations. Many of the men shared that they had gained a “sixth sense” that they have come to rely on to determine if a person is genuine or not.

As I am an Indigenous woman, I am also aware that there may have been cultural biases at play that I was not completely cognizant of. Although I participated in ongoing bracketing and
writing memos after each interview, there may have been gaps in each of these methods. For example, I did not investigate the participants’ meanings of “ceremonies” in this study and assumed, based on the knowledge that I have, what this might have meant to the participants. Although this can be viewed as a limitation, I also feel that it helped put some of the participants at ease. It may be helpful for future research to examine how cultural biases can either positively or negatively impact research when examining common ideas.

**Significance of study**

As stated earlier, there is a dearth of scholarly work around Indigenous masculinities. Policy work and programming for Indigenous men are typically connected to recovery from addictions or violence, and are often mandated and/or limited in participation. The men in this study shared that they are eager to learn about how they can place their (re)connection to their culture as they attempt to (re)build their identities away from the violence and confusion produced by colonialism. To date, most of the work around the healing process within Indigenous communities has been led by and for women. Therefore, the rebuilding of culture-based identities for men that relate to achieving minobimaadiziwin is scarcely raised as an issue or seemingly, not one that is acceptable to discuss openly. Resources, policy work and program development for Indigenous men will be both timely and effective as a next step in the decolonization and healing movement for Indigenous men.
Appendix A: Questions for interviews

1. What does being a man mean in the Indigenous culture(s) that you come from? What did you learn growing up?
2. What does masculinity mean in your life now, and in the communities you are a part of?
3. Can you share anything you know or have learned about Indigenous men’s traditional roles and responsibilities?
4. What do you think happened to Indigenous men’s identities and well-being throughout our history?
5. How is what is valued above changed or altered after being involved in a gang or the criminal system?
6. What are some of the needs you see for our boys and men in terms of achieving mino-bimaadiziwin (the good life)? Where do we need to go next?
Appendix B: Script for Informed Consent

KEY STAKEHOLDER & FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Project Information

Bidgewidam Indigenous Masculinities

Background to the Project
We are a group of policy/program workers and researchers with an interest in Native men’s identities. We have set up a project to explore how identity influences Native men’s health and wellness. In this project, we will:

• interview Elders, front-line workers, and community members and conduct focus groups to gather thoughts on Native masculinities and identities;
• produce documents and other resources that examine roles and identities of Native men; discuss what happened to Native men’s identities as a result of colonization; and envision what we can do to rebuild healthy identities;
• develop a network of researchers, program and policy workers, and community members who are interested in Indigenous masculinities and identities;
• talk about what we can do next as researchers, policy makers, front line workers and community members to contribute to Native men’s health and wellness.

Partner Organization and Team Members

This project is funded by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The Native Youth Sexual Health Network is a partner in the project. The project is led by a team of people who have expertise in research, policy and program work in Indigenous communities.

The members of the team are:

• Sylvia Maracle (Executive Director, OFIFC)
• Katherine Minich (Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy Manager, OFIFC)
• Magda Smolewski, (Research Director, OFIFC)
• Jessica Danforth (Executive Director, Native Youth Sexual Health Network)
• Wil Campbell (Elder)
• Kim Anderson (Wilfrid Laurier University)
• Robert Innes (University of Saskatchewan)
• John Swift (University of Saskatchewan)
• Sasha Sky (University of Guelph)
Your Involvement as a Project Participant

As a project participant, you are invited to take part in a one-on-one interview. The purpose of these interviews overall is to gain insight from front-line workers, policy makers and community members about needs relating to Native men and mno-bimaadiziwin.

The questions we will be asking will (generally) be:

1.) What does being a man mean in the Native culture(s) that you come from? What did you learn growing up?

2.) What does masculinity mean in your life now, and in the communities you are a part of?

3.) Can you share anything you know or have learned about Native men’s traditional roles and responsibilities?

4.) What do you think happened to Native men’s identities and well-being throughout our history?

5.) What are some of the needs you see for our boys and men in terms of achieving mno-bimaadiziwin (the good life)? Where do we need to go next?

Participation in the project is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point. We intend to publish articles and resource documents from the material. We will also use the information to inform policy and programming for Native men and boys. We will keep all comments confidential and anonymous UNLESS you tell us that you wish to be named. You can withdraw your comments any time prior to publication. All of the interview material will be kept confidential and will only be seen by the researchers. If you have questions about the project you may contact the following:
This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact:

Paul Barnard, Compliance Officer; or Dr. Robert Basso, Chair, Research Ethics Board
Wilfrid Laurier University, Alumni Hall AH231, 75 University Avenue West, Waterloo, ON, N2L 3C5, Phone: 519.884.0710 x3689, Fax: 519.884.7670
Appendix C: Consent form

CONSENT FORM
Indigenous Masculinities, Identities and Achieving Bimaadiziwin
(Biidwendam Indigenous Masculinities)

I, ______________________________________, have agreed to participate voluntarily in this research project.

☐ I agree to be quoted and to be identified by name in materials produced by the “Indigenous Masculinities, Identities and Achieving Bimaadiziwin” Research Project Team.

OR

☐ I wish to be quoted anonymously in materials produced by the “Indigenous Masculinities, Identities and Achieving Bimaadiziwin” Research Project Team. All personally identifying information shall be removed or changed and contents of the quote shall not reveal my identity.

Participant signature ___________________________ Date __________________________

Researcher’s signature ___________________________ Date __________________________

References

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