

STORIES OF SUCCESS IN CAREER DECISION-MAKING:

LISTENING TO INDIGENOUS WOMEN

by

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Abstract

In an era of globalization, moving and disappearing borders mean a changing world of career. In the midst of such transformation marginalized peoples' differences are at risk of being excised in a global shift towards sameness. Indigenous people in Canada are underemployed and experience higher rates of poverty, higher risk of health concerns and lower levels of educational attainment. To date, limited research has examined the experiences of Indigenous women who have been successful in career decision-making despite this social context. This study sought to address the gap in the literature. The research question was, *How do Indigenous women describe their success in career decision-making?* Through the use of a qualitative narrative approach, in-depth unstructured interviews were conducted with four Indigenous women between the ages of 27 and 36, for the purpose of learning about their experiences and the significance of their career decision-making histories. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using Braun & Clark's (2006) thematic content analysis. An overarching theme of the women *Learning to have Confidence in Their Own Intuition* encompassed six other themes which emerged, including: *Having Healthy Relationships, Maintaining a Balanced Life Style, Participating in Education, Practicing Lived Engagement, Having Access to Financial Resources, Encountering Mentors.* The research findings are presented and discussed within the context of the existing literature on career theory, Indigenous epistemology and social setting. These findings help to improve understandings of Indigenous women's experiences of career decision-making and will hopefully help counsellors and institutions better meet the call of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2012) which asked for conversations between Canadian government and Aboriginal people to co-create strategies to eliminate the disparity in education and employment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Lay Summary

Indigenous women navigate career amid higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of poverty, higher risk of health concerns, and lower rates of educational attainment. Despite this context, many Indigenous women do well in career. In this study, four women who identified as doing well in career choices participated in interviews to share their experiences. Examining the resulting narratives led to the emergence of an overarching theme of each participant *Learning to have Confidence in Her Own Intuition*, which encompassed six other themes: *Having Healthy Relationships, Maintaining a Balanced Life Style, Participating in Education, Practicing Lived Engagement, Having Access to Financial Resources, and Encountering Mentors*. These findings improve understanding of Indigenous women's career decision-making, and enable counsellors and institutions to better respond to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2012) which requires Canadian government and Aboriginal people to co-create strategies to eliminate disparity in education and employment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Preface

This thesis is the realization of an idea conceived by the author, Jessica Lenny, in collaboration with research entitled, “Cultural Infusions and Shifting Sands: How Indigenous and Immigrant Youth Make Career Decisions.” Jessica Lenny completed all work, including design, participant recruitment, data collection, transcription, analysis, and manuscript write-up. My research supervisor, Dr. Marla Buchanan provided methodological and editorial guidance and review.

This research received ethics approval from the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The certificate number of the ethics certification obtained for this study was H15-01935 (Shifting Sands), using the project title “Cultural Infusions and Shifting Sands: How Indigenous and Immigrant Youth Make Career Decisions.”

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Lay Summary	iv
Preface.....	v
Table of Contents	vi
Acknowledgements	x
CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	1
Statement of The Problem	1
Definitions.....	6
Purpose and Rationale.....	6
Research Question	7
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review	8
Indigenous Ways of Knowing	8
Accessibility of Knowledge.....	9
Spirituality.....	11
Experiential Knowing.....	11
Connection	12
History of Vocational Psychology.....	12
Trait and Factor Career Theory.....	12
Developmental Career Theory.....	13
Postmodern Career Theory.....	13
Multicultural Career Theory.....	16
Indigenous Youth and Career Decision-Making	17
Social Context of Career Decision-Making.....	19

Educational Inequity	19
Colonialism and Violence.....	22
Systemic Healthcare Inequality	22
Summary	25
CHAPTER 3: Method	27
Narrative Inquiry.....	27
Social Constructionism	29
Narrative Methods with Indigenous Participation	30
Research Design for Narrative Interviews.....	31
Participants.....	31
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	31
Determining Potential Risk.....	31
Minimizing Potential Risk to Participants.	32
Recruitment.....	33
Contacting Potential Participants.....	33
Informed Consent.....	33
The Interview	34
Transcription	34
Data Analysis	35
Trustworthiness of Findings	37
Cultural Positioning and Ethics	39
CHAPTER 4: Findings.....	43
Ruth.....	44
Definition of Career and Success in Career Decision-Making.....	44

Ruth's Narrative.....	44
Harriet	54
Definition of Career and Success in Career Decision-Making.....	54
Harriet's Narrative	54
Sam	66
Definition of Career and Success in Career Decision-Making.....	66
Sam's Narrative	66
Kim	78
Definition of Career and Success in Career Decision-Making.....	78
Kim's Narrative	79
Thematic Analysis of the Narratives.....	92
Diagram of Findings from Thematic Analysis	94
Learning to Trust Her Intuition.....	95
Having Healthy Relationships	96
Maintaining a Balanced Lifestyle.....	98
Participating in Education.....	103
Practicing Lived Engagement.....	106
Access to Financial Support.....	111
Encountering Mentors.....	111
CHAPTER 5: Discussion.....	118
Researcher's Reflections.....	118
Importance of the Findings	119
Comparison with Extant Literature.....	119
<i>Trusting Intuition.</i>	119

<i>Finding Healthy Relationships</i>	121
<i>Maintaining a Balanced Lifestyle</i>	121
<i>Participating in Education</i>	122
<i>Practicing Lived Engagement</i>	124
<i>Having Access to Financial Resources</i>	125
<i>Encountering Mentors</i>	125
Novel Contributions.....	126
Implications for Counselling Practice and Government Programming.....	127
Limitations and Future Research	129
References	131
Appendices	143
Appendix A: Recruitment Poster	143
Appendix B: Consent Form	144
Appendix C: Interview Guide.....	147
Appendix D: Steps for Narrative Analysis	150

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

In chapter one, I will summarize the problem this study addresses. The chapter includes the purpose, the rationale and the guiding research question.

Statement of The Problem

The term ‘millennials’ inundates news sources as people attempt to identify the differences between this new generation of adults and the larger, older population of ‘baby boomers.’ Millennials, named as the generation born between approximately 1982 and 2000, face a world different from their parents’ or grandparents’ generation. Young adults in Canada are making career decisions within the context of a shifting labour market, containing new cultural, social, economic barriers and opportunities (Bezanson, Hopkins, & Neault, 2016). The landscape of work has transformed due to increased mobility of individuals, families and capital across borders. Globalization, combined with the evolution of technology and its impact on economy, has created a new level of competition among workers and companies. As well, globalization may emphasize commonalities among peoples, erasing differences across cultures (Young, Marshall & Valach, 2007). In Canada career responsibility has shifted from the federal to the provincial realm with no centralized approach or programming (Bezanson et al., 2016). There is a need for collaborative creativity in career development practices to support more vulnerable populations in these times of social and economic related changes (Savickas, 2011). The current changing economic and social landscape challenges the career development of all Canadians and especially those who are younger and/or who may be from disadvantaged or marginalized groups (Bezanson et al., 2016). The shifts also highlight a need for career interventions that are created in response to a new generation’s experiences. In David L. Blustein’s (2011) research on the future of vocational psychology, he bluntly asks the profession, “Do we want to continue to develop theories, assessment tools, and practice guidelines for

middle class populations or do we want to expand our portfolio to encompass the rest of the population?” (p. 317). He goes on to argue that career counsellors and researchers must return to a consideration of how we may enter into the conversation discussing poverty, unemployment and other social problems that limit the lives of many around the globe.

Presently, both unemployment and underemployment levels among Indigenous youth in Canada are higher than the national average (Bezanson et al., 2016; Centre for the Study of Living Standards, 2012). Although there is currently population growth among Indigenous peoples in Canada, and Canada’s Indigenous population is younger—with a median age of 26 versus 41 for the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2011)—the opportunities available for Indigenous young people to benefit from the economic growth of Canada remain very low. A knowledge synthesis of peer-reviewed research concentrating on Canada’s workforce named youth and Aboriginal populations as underutilized in the workforce (McDaniel, Watt-Malcolm, & Wong, 2013). The unemployment rate amongst Canada’s Indigenous population living off reserve has increased in recent years from 12.8% in 2008 to 16.8% in 2011, compared to 6% to 7.3% for non-Aboriginal populations (Centre for the Study of Living Standards, 2012). There is ongoing disparity between the lives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people living in Canada. Statistics Canada (2015) reported that a 2011 census found nearly 4% of Aboriginal children were foster children compared to 0.3% of non-Aboriginal children; 33% of Aboriginal adults aged 25 to 54 had less than a high school education compared to less than 13% of the non-Aboriginal population; the median total income of the Aboriginal population aged 25 to 54 in 2005 was just over \$22,000, compared to over \$33,000 for the non-Aboriginal population in the same age group. The 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) found that Aboriginal people were three times more likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to have been violently victimized (Statistics Canada, 2015). Indigenous women were reported as

experiencing higher rates of violence than non-Indigenous women, including being six times more likely to be murdered (Statistics Canada, 2016). In Canada, Indigenous women earn less on average than Indigenous men, non-Indigenous men and non-Indigenous women. The variance between Canada's non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations highlights the ongoing racism and obstacles faced by Indigenous peoples.

Hargreaves (2017) discussed the ongoing negative impact of Canada's colonial history, including the 1876 Indian Act. The Indian Act sought to define and legislate who was and who was not "Indian." She described the Indian Act as the result of past colonial efforts to subjugate and erase "Indigenous modes of governance, nationhood and belonging," (p. 10). She described how the Indian Act gave certain rights to Indigenous people, such as the right to live on a reserve; its aim, however, was to assimilate Indigenous people. The Act particularly harmed Indigenous women and children as it denied women access to societal resources and political participation if they married a "non-status Indian." This wording which excluded women was changed in 1985, but the legislation continues to classify and control who has status and what level of status. The Indian Act served to undermine traditional matrilineal patterns and isolate women from community resources. Residential schools accomplished a related assimilation in their removal of children from their families in order to "re-educate" them. These schools functioned between the 1890s and 1996 and over 150 000 Indigenous children were isolated from their families, their communities and their traditions and placed in schools with the express purpose of assimilation (Hargreaves, 2017). Canada's education system is rooted in such imperialistic practices going back to before confederation. Such traditions of violence and colonization continued into the 1960s and what is referred to as the "60's Scoop" when thousands of First Nations children were removed from their homes and placed in non-Aboriginal environments. Though the numbers of Aboriginal children removed from their homes

by the federal government decreased in the decades following, children are still apprehended from their homes for reasons such as poverty, lack of access to housing and healthcare, and guardian substance misuse which may be linked to Canada's history of colonialism including the system of residential schools (Trocme, Fallon, et al., 2005; Trocmé, McLaurin et al., 2005). In response to a significant case in the Canadian Human Rights tribunal, the Canadian government is moving towards creating legislation and funding that "allows Indigenous communities to ensure adequate care for their children in a way that incorporates traditional knowledge, recognizes the ongoing impact of historical wrongs, and builds on the strengths of Indigenous communities in their service delivery" (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017, p. 9). During the tribunal, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations won a human rights complaint. The results were that the overrepresentation of First Nations children was a direct result of the federal government's inadequate funding to the child welfare agencies that serve children ordinarily residing on-reserve. (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). McDaniel, Watt-Malcolm, and Wong (2013) highlight the ongoing lower educational achievement for Aboriginal students compared to non-Aboriginal students in Canada. They suggested that efforts to reduce early school leaving have high returns for disadvantaged youth. They recommend continual and rigorous efforts to connect Indigenous students to education and employment.

The continuing legacy of colonialism, the Indian Act and Residential schools impacts individual health, as well as social systems. Reading (2009) discussed the social factors that impact the health of Aboriginal populations in Canada. He names determinants as proximal, intermediate and distal. Included in his description of proximal factors contributing to the disparity in health between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations are employment, education and income. Reading (2009) articulates how the exclusion of Aboriginal peoples from

the rest of Canadian social and political systems has resulted in a two-tiered society. Aboriginal people experience marginalization in education, employment, housing, healthcare and other services. The author calls for the eradication of poverty as the most important determinant of health, and quotes the Senate Subcommittee on Population Health (2008): “The Subcommittee believes it is unacceptable for a privileged country like Canada to continue to tolerate such disparities in health” (as cited in Reading, 2009, p. A-3). As seen in reports on violence, health and income from Statistics Canada, it is women who suffer even more disproportionately.

European settlers’ colonization of what is now called Canada began with systemic violence and subjugation of Indigenous peoples. These practices have continued through the Indian Act, Residential schools and removing Indigenous children from their homes. It is ongoing as seen in current child welfare practices discussed in the recent Canadian human rights tribunal and in the disparity of access to healthcare resources.

Literature discussing vocational psychology is filled with theories exploring and explaining how individuals make career decisions within an ever-changing social world. These theories have developed and shifted in attempts to meet the needs of an evolving world, with shifting economic, social and occupational landscapes. These models have been used to form research, public policy, and vocational programming (Bezanson et al., 2016). However, there is little research, leading to little theory and few practices, which focuses on the career decision-making experiences of Indigenous women in Canada. As lower socioeconomic status has been associated with higher rates of depression (Reading, 2009) and greater violence against Indigenous women (Hargreaves, 2017), there is an economic and social impetus to improve vocational development for Indigenous women. There is an opportunity to develop the literature with focused attention on how Indigenous women who identify as successful in their career decision-making describe their experiences.

Definitions

Terms that must be operationally defined for clarity within this thesis are "Indigenous" and "Aboriginal". For the purpose of this research, Indigenous and Aboriginal will include all peoples under the terms of: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Individual participants may use alternate terminology to describe self and family, including Native or Indian. The term "Indigenous" signifies a connection to the land upon which the research is being conducted. I acknowledge that the land on which I gathered research is the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, specifically the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil- Waututh) Nations. Hargreaves (2017) posits that Indigenous is a term which acknowledges connections across nations to original peoples, whereas Aboriginal is a legal and social construction of the Canadian state.

Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative study was to listen to and analyse the stories of young Indigenous women who identify as having success in career decision-making. By naming factors which contributed to these women's career successes there is opportunity for greater understanding of the contextual and personal constructs associated with career decision-making for this population that is under-represented in career counselling research. This project regards the stories of its participants as important sources of knowing and feeling that are necessary to the evolution of counselling theory and practice. There is the hope of shaping future career research, theory, practices and discussions to further opportunities for Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous females, to identify as being successful in their careers. I am particularly hopeful about shifting career counselling practices in British Columbia high schools to better meet the needs of Indigenous students and to impact the disparity in current graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (McDaniel et al., 2013). The purpose and

rationale of this study are in accordance with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action (2012) which ask for conversations between Canadian government and Aboriginal people to co-create strategies to eliminate the disparity in education and employment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Research Question

This research study began by asking the participants to define “career” and define “doing well in career decision-making.” The following was the research question for this study: *How do Indigenous women describe their success in career decision-making?*

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I review literature on Indigenous epistemology and seek an understanding of common elements of Indigenous ways of knowing. Necessarily, I also review career theory, categorized into several areas: trait and factor, developmental, post-modern and multicultural. I have included a section for career counselling theory that specifically addresses the needs of Indigenous populations. The gaps in the literature, including the exclusion of key elements of Indigenous epistemology were reviewed. Furthermore, I consider the social context in which Indigenous women are making career decisions, including education, safety, employment and health. There was a lack of literature that explored the experiences of Indigenous women in a positive context and very few related to career and counselling psychology. My goal was to understand gaps in capacity in current career models at facilitating the career advancement of Indigenous youth and young women.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Much of the literature on this topic explores the chasm between traditional, European systems in higher-level academic institutions and local, specific Indigenous ways of knowing. The majority of the articles in this section are theoretical and do not use a specific research method. They reflect the experiences of the authors, giving value to ideas beyond what can be proved with research. The authors discussed name the differences to highlight how Indigenous knowledge has been excluded from knowledge production in Canadian systems, including universities which inform government policy. The valuing of the spirit world in Indigenous Epistemology, in particular, has been used as a means to justify racism and dominance in Canada's colonial history. As Europeans encountered Aboriginal peoples, Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest rationalized systems of supremacy (Kovach, 2009). The fact that Aboriginal peoples did not divide reason and spirit meant that they were viewed as superstitious,

and therefore uncivilized and beneath Western colonizers (Kovach, 2009). Indigenous acceptance of knowledge as being founded in both the physical and metaphysical, this acceptance and valuation of intuition,(Hatcher, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Porr & Bell, 2012, Steinhauer, 2002) has excluded Indigenous epistemology from power, including institutions of higher learning, for 150 years in Canada.

It is difficult to summarize an entire complex multifaceted epistemology. The word epistemology is a relatively new word, based on the Greek, *episteme*, meaning knowledge, with a rather vague history: it is traced back to German and then French with phrases meaning “theory of knowledge,” but without a specific definition (Suchting, 2006). Suchting (2006) suggested that there is a relation between the subject as the knower, and his/her interpretation of the object. Kovach (2009) described epistemology as an acknowledgement of the Self in relation to the Object being studied. Discussing epistemology raises questions including: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge? Who holds knowledge? What is its structure, and what are its limits? Which knowledge counts? (Kovach, 2009; Roy, 2014). Considering epistemology means considering how a belief is justified and who validates justification. Epistemology, or the study of knowledge, is concerned with who creates, and who disseminates knowledge. Indigenous epistemology understands the world and relationships differently from ways of knowing which have been valued in Canadian academic institutions. As a settler-researcher wishing to engage with Indigenous participants, it was important that I sought an understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing prior to engaging in research in order to respect my participants, and also to be able to see themes outside of my historical way of knowing (Kovach, 2009). Furthermore, this portion of the literature reviewed revealed gaps in understanding in current career theories.

Accessibility of Knowledge. Indigenous epistemology may be more inclusive or

comprehensive than European ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledge includes more people and sources as knowledge. In historical European science, the positivist tradition—science removed from art and religion—has been highly valued (Roy, 2014; Steinhauer, 2002). Knowledge creation and dissemination has been held by the academic elite. Kovach (2009) wrote, “Much of what dominant society considers legitimate knowledge is generated by a rather small, homogenous group of people in institutions of higher learning” (p. 79). Western knowledge production has often been contained to specific processes and specific people. In contrast to European colonizers’ emphasis on positivism and the premise that scientific method of inquiry in which external evidence is tested with a system of rules in order to *create* knowledge (Polkinghorne, 2017), Indigenous epistemology flows from many sources in many ways to many people. While rational secularist science is exclusive, protecting knowledge, Indigenous epistemology’s knowledge creation may happen anywhere in any person. Rather than being limited to the special few in a particular environment, knowledge creation is “woven tightly with a personal identity that shifts over a lifetime” (Kovach, 2009, p. 55). Knowledge resides in the lived experiences of the person, rather than in institutions. Cree scholar, Michael Hart (2009), in a letter reflecting on Indigenous Epistemology purports that knowledge is what helps people “move forward in their lives” (as cited in Kovach, 2009, p. 72). Indigenous knowledge may be entirely personal and is judged on the consequences, the forward progress. The person’s life is a reflection of the knowledge. Therefore, in contrast to the aim of quantitative research which is to control in order to generalize, Hart values knowledge which may impact only a single person. There is not more value in knowledge that can be generalized—some might say simplified—to enclose more people. And yet, the knowledge Hart describes is also beyond that one person since each individual connects with the “sacred world.” Since an Indigenous worldview is less human-centric, each knowledge contribution has value

beyond the number of people impacted; the realm of impact is beyond the single human.

Spirituality. Discussion of the sacred world highlights a second major difference between positivistic empiricism and Indigenous epistemology: an acknowledgement of spirituality. Indigenous knowledge systems value a holistic understanding of the universe, which includes the physical and metaphysical. (Hoffman, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Romm, 2015)

Knowledge is held in more than just the rational mind. Steinhauer (2002) argues that knowledge may be taught and empirical but may also be found through revelations, such as visions or dreams; it may be intuitive, which he calls part of a person's cellular memory. Battiste (1988) describes this as a world "beyond...imagination from which knowledge, power or medicine is derived" (as cited in Hoffman, 2012, p. 191). These components of knowing are not viewed as a binary to rationality; they transcend familiar European divisions between the hierarchical ways a person may know (Hoffman, 2012).

Experiential Knowing. A third component of Indigenous epistemology is a focus on experiential knowing. Not only can knowledge be personal and still valuable, not only can knowledge be spiritual as well as rational, but knowing comes through lived engagement with the world (Hoffman, 2012; Steinhauer, 2002). Hoffman (2015) described experiential learning processes as those gained through observation, as well as through the spiritual realm. This knowledge is holistic, involving the mind, the body, the heart and spirit. Porr and Bell (2012) discuss the importance of valuing experience to make discussions of knowledge more inclusive and allow space for voices other than those recognized with degrees and titles. Hatcher (2012) supports this interpretation, citing Eurocentric knowledge as "packaged in books," while historical Indigenous knowledge is "creative, participatory" (p. 346). The experiential aspect of Indigenous epistemology is closely entwined with the historical orality of sharing knowledge. When knowledge is shared orally, the learner and the teacher are active participants and the

knowledge is shaped to the readiness of the learner. Traditional ceremonies are one way in which a learner may fully participate in and experience collective knowledge.

Connection. Underlining each aspect of Indigenous knowledge is a foundation based on relationships. Hoffman (2012), Kovach (2009) and Romm (2015) all emphasized that relationship is so essential to an Indigenous paradigm that it is insufficient to label it as a specific theme; rather, connection to self, others, the earth, the spirit world is an assumed undercurrent which supports each of the themes discussed above.

History of Vocational Psychology

This section offers a brief overview of the history of vocational psychology. There are many other more in-depth overviews that are cited throughout my own summary. For this thesis, I have focused greater attention on current career theory specifically those described as post-modern or multicultural or those related to Indigenous epistemology.

Trait and Factor Career Theory. Vocational psychology's roots are generally attributed to Parsons (1909) and his Trait and Factor model in which an individual seeks to understand their/him/herself, understand the surrounding career world, and understand the relationship between the two. This model of finding a correct fit has been used since then (Savickas, 2000) as is seen in the ongoing popularity of The Strong Interest Inventory (SII), which is the most commonly used instrument by vocational psychologists (Watkins, 1994). This assessment tool is based on the pervasive vocational psychologist John Holland's codes (Nauta, 2010), which categorize people's personalities in order to find a good fit with a career (Holland, 1973). These theories and practices rely on a rational way of viewing the world: evidence is gathered, an external, empirical tool is used and a reasonable answer is uncovered. There is little acknowledgement of a person's motivations beyond what can be measured and judged.

Developmental Career Theory. In the 1970s career theorists began to build on Trait and Factor models by including a more expansive perspective of career. Career was seen to encompass life, and that meant career counsellors considered graduations, marriages, traumas and other key events. Donald Super's (1953) theory of career choice and development is a widely-known example of this point in career theory. His later theory, the life-span, life-space approach to careers, acknowledged that people change over time and viewed these changes as somewhat predictable over a person's lifespan (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). In developmental theories, the meaning of life events and particular actions is a key factor of career decision-making.

Postmodern Career Theory. More recent career theorists (Krieshok et al. (2009); Mitchell, Levin and Krumboltz (1999); Owens, Motl, Krieshok, 2016; Savickas, 2000) have pointed out the problems with the Trait and Factor model: today's career world is unstable and participants need to be adaptable. What may have been true for the person and the world at one time, is unlikely to be true at a later date. Career researchers, Gelatt and Gelatt (2003) have highlighted the uncertainty of the career world; in acknowledging uncertainty, rationality is extremely limited, as the factors on which to base a decision are always changing. Mitchell, Levin and Krumboltz (1999) described a shift towards accepting the unknown, and the unexpected and towards accepting indecision. They taught clients to make decisions in the face of the unknown and to consider career counselling as ongoing. Furthermore, they argued that if one waits for certainty, one is unlikely to make any choices; Non-rational concepts such as Positive Uncertainty (Gelatt & Gelatt, 2003) or Planned Happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999) encouraged one to act without knowing all the factors, or even without knowing a specific desired outcome.

In their adaptive, trilateral model of career decision-making Krieshok, Black and McKay

(2009) highlight three components necessary for people to adapt to change, thus succeeding in living satisfying careers: intuition and rationality, which are intertwined, and occupational engagement which acts as both the foundation and limit of the first two pieces. They posit that in today's flexible, transitory, global job market, the role of career education is not to help people make *a* decision, but rather to learn how to make decisions. This model responds to shifting job markets and personal inexperience by promoting an acceptance of chaos and encouraging individual exploration of the world to enhance confidence in decision-making skills.

Enthusiastically engaging with the world is the foundation of the trilateral model, thereby growing the confidence to trust the self as expert. Krieshok et al. (2009) purported that occupational engagement is the “ongoing assignment we can never go wrong prescribing” (p. 284). They report that accumulation of information based on lived experiences nurtures the fecundity necessary for quality decision making. When people have an ongoing, intentional interaction with others and the world, they become experts in their own lives. Krieshok et al. (2009) described occupational engagement as beyond mere career research; it consists of exploration and enrichment. While exploration might be specific to an upcoming decision, enrichment is ongoing, described as more of a trait. Like the difference between dieting and becoming a healthy eater, the shift to enrichment requires a shift of perspective, an acceptance of non-knowing, chaos, and change. Krieshok et al. (2009) suggested that the engagement needed to become an expert involves striving towards increased generalist understanding, life-long learning, flexibility, self-reflection, and an existential/zen perspective which trusts in the universe. By encouraging clients to engage with their worlds, counsellors can help them become more trusting of their own status as expert in their own lives, and their own ability to make decisions.

To make satisfying decisions, people must access their multiple layers of motivations.

Krieshok et al. (2009) argued that values come in two forms: expressed and implied. While implied values may lie latent, they are often more authentic. When a person makes decisions as part of a dominant culture different from their own, there is likely to be more variance between the implied and the expressed value systems. Less powerful groups are less likely to feel safe expressing or accessing their true value systems (Anderson et al., 2012). Daniel Kahneman won the Nobel prize in economics in 2002 for his work in the field of intuition and rationality, specifically around judgement and decision-making amidst uncertainty. While not a cheerleader of intuition, Kahneman opened up space for intuition, in parts by acknowledging its massive, though often unrecognized, role in individual decision making. Kahneman (2003) has categorized the mind into two distinct regions: the conscious and the unconscious, or the rational and the intuitive, or system 2 and system 1. System 1 is described as “habitual, implicit, associative, heuristic, and often emotionally charged” and System 2 is “deliberate, explicit, deterministic, systematic, and not generally subject to emotion” (Krieshok et al., 2009). System 2 is purported by rationality to be the dominant system, yet Kahneman argues that system 1 is actually quite dominant. Haidt (2006) describes this as a rider on an elephant. System 1, intuition, is the elephant; it is large and actually in control, though without language to convey its motivation. System 2, rationality, is the rider who believes him/herself to be in control. Though research is not in agreement on which system is stronger, there is general agreement that intuition plays a large role in judgement, acknowledged or not (Krieshok et al., 2009). Colozzi (2003) reports that using people’s true value systems, what Kahnman names system 1, results in more satisfaction with the ultimate decision: if people ignore their implied values while decision making, they are more likely to be dissatisfied with their choices (as cited in Krieshok et al., 2009). The trilateral model sees occupational engagement as leading to a greater understanding of the self as expert. However, the model does not explicitly discuss multicultural considerations,

and rather loudly ignores a history of feminism and Indigenous epistemology that has valued intuition and occupational engagement, otherwise called experiential learning.

Multicultural Career Theory. Multicultural career counselling theories argue that considering culture is not a particular need of a particular group, but an essential component of all career counselling (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Anderson, Piela-Shuster & Aragon, 2012; Leong, 2011). Chope (2011) has described America's career research as more than ever focused on social justice issues, including multicultural populations, yet continuing to be ineffective in meeting the needs of these populations with value-relevant interventions. Any individual who is not a member of a dominant group faces choosing between assimilation, separation, marginalization, or integration through interaction with the dominant culture (Anderson et al., 2012). Anderson et al. (2012) described the ethical issues of career counsellors working with clients from nondominant populations. They offered two case scenarios of two models: the Ethical Acculturation Model and the Culturally Appropriate Career Counselling Model (CACCM). In their conclusion the authors have recognized that career counsellors must acknowledge and honour the client's culture, but they must also pay constant attention to their own cultural contexts, and how they interact with the client's.

The Culture-Infused Counselling model, considers how societal dynamics position some individuals as less powerful, thereby increasing stigmatization and barriers (Collins & Arthur, 2014). For example, coastal rural youth in BC, mostly Aboriginal, face specific issues of limited career opportunities (fishing, mining, logging) and the ensuing difficulty of choosing between leaving their community and pursuing careers, or keeping their community and facing unemployment (Marshall, 2002). The future of career counselling requires a stronger emphasis on multiculturalism and social justice (Arthur & Collins, 2011; Collins & Arthur, 2014; Leong, 2011).

Indigenous Youth and Career Decision-Making. There is recognition in the literature that traditional career theories are likely disparate from the experience of Indigenous young adults (Young, Marshall, & Valach, 2007). In truth, there are very few career counselling models published in academia which are based upon Indigenous epistemology and which purport to aim at working with Indigenous populations (Bezanson et al., 2016; Kovach, 2009) and few that specifically focus on career decision making with Indigenous youth (Herring, 1990). The Career/Life Planning Model, created by McCormick and Amundson (1997) was designed specifically for use with Indigenous clients and Indigenous youth (McCormick, Neumann, Amundson, & McLean, 1999). The authors use qualitative analysis of a case study to explain their model, which attempts to bridge traditional career counselling theory (trait and factor) with several components of Indigenous ways of being. In recognition of cultural values and processes of some Indigenous peoples, this paradigm acknowledges the importance of inviting family and community members into the counselling process as a means to access support and encouragement; the model asks the career counsellor to work as a facilitator rather than an expert and to offer time and energy to include ceremony and/or spiritual traditions important to the client (McCormick et al., 1999).

Marshall, Young, Stevens, Spence, Deyell, Easterbrook and Brokenleg (2011) used a qualitative action-project method to understand how urban-residing Aboriginal adolescents and their parents constructed projects to facilitate career development. The researchers used interviews, talking circles, and narrative analysis with 17 adolescent-parent dyads to create a final narrative summary. They emphasized the importance of family involvement while acknowledging Canada's history of colonialism and residential schooling which disrupted family and community life during efforts by the Canadian government to eliminate the cultures, traditions and languages of First Nations peoples (Morissette, 1994 as cited in Marshall et al.,

2011). The reported career development joint projects included navigating towards a safe future, even when specific goals between parents and children differed; negotiating school continuance as a step towards occupational success, including a secure income; intergenerational continuity through tradition of care. The study reported that career development for adolescents is much broader than career choice, involving staying in school, gaining related experiences, and dealing with family life. It is important to note that stressors on the family including health issues and poverty may shift the adolescent's attention away from career development.

Harwood, McMahon, O'Shea, Bodkin-Andrews, & Priestly (2015) presented a study of the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME). The authors used survey data and fieldwork to present a case study against the assumption that young people's aspirations are lacking and need improvement. Their study reported significant and positive impacts for Australian Indigenous high school students' aspirations, including finishing high school and continuing to further study, instruction or employment. The paper described how AIME builds upon the rich cultural heritage of participants and strives to inspire participants, not remediate them. The authors describe how AIME focuses on young people's 'windows of aspiration' to positively influence their engagement in current and future academics, instruction and employment.

Social Context of Career Decision-Making

To discuss the career decision making of Indigenous women it is important to consider the context in which decisions take place. This next portion of the literature review summarizes research that reflects upon Indigenous populations' relationships to education, healthcare, and systems of violence in the context of career.

Educational Inequity. Graduating from high school and choosing the next step may be the first time a student makes a significant life-stage decision and is therefore a critical moment. Suldo, Shaunessy, Thalji, Michalowski, and Shaffer (2009) used focus groups and self-report measures to collect data from 162 preparatory school students and 157 general school students in the same building. They found that in both public schools and schools with International Baccalaureate curriculum, student stress was high in relation to upcoming transitions. Current educational systems continue to reflect a Western paradigm and transitions may be considerably more difficult for youth from marginalized populations whose value systems are not reflected in the dominant structure of society (Collins & Arthur, 2014). Blustein (2006) cited that inequities in school resources and training are more damaging to “non-white, ethnic minority students” (p. 272). Indigenous youth are at high risk of being failed by educational inequalities and Western educational views . McDaniel, Watt-Malcolm, and Wong (2013) conducted a synthesis of 219 peer-reviewed articles and reports for inclusion in their study dating from 2000 to 2013. The focus of the articles included: gaps in labour/ skills demand and supply, aging workforce, employment patterns of aging Canadians, the role of immigration and shifting immigration policies, and the role of shifting skills development. The authors reported that Aboriginal youth are found to exit education with lower achievement levels than non-Aboriginal youth. They cited the importance of

finding ways to encourage and support youth through to high school completion. The disparity of educational achievement is especially concerning since career counsellors' views are likely ethnocentric and contradictory to Indigenous clients' (Arthur & Collins, 2011). A high school counsellor is tasked with understanding and providing support for a variety of students, yet available research primarily focuses on white college students.

Hallett, Want, et al., (2008) conducted a quantitative study examining the relationship between school attrition rates and ethnic self-identification for students in B.C. who started grade 7 in 1995. They examined data from 4237 students who had had 10 school opportunities to declare themselves as having Aboriginal ancestry. The results revealed five categories, including students who consistently declared themselves as Aboriginal, and those who subsequently began to declare themselves as Aboriginal. Overall, the authors found the drop-out rate for Aboriginal students to be 55.7% compared to the drop-out rate of 20.8% for non-Aboriginal students; however, they also reported a large difference in school attrition between students who consistently declared (60.70%) and students who subsequently began to declare themselves as Aboriginal (36.36%). Students who declared themselves Aboriginal only once out of ten available opportunities showed a school drop-out rate of 51.95%. The authors conclude that ethnic identification varies through time and that ethnic identification matters.

Offet-Gardner (2011) implemented a method called Aboriginal Research in her qualitative study to analyse the significance of pursuing education to Aboriginal Canadian women. She cited her goal to be to inform stakeholders of the educational and career development needs of this population. Participants used storytelling to describe their experiences of pursuing education despite histories of adverse experiences including abuse, racism, and poverty (Offet-Gardner, 2011). The results present themes of family,

parenting, socioeconomic issues and political influences (Offet-Gardner, 2011). For example, the difficulty inherent to single parenthood and barriers to receiving adequate funding were cited by participants as hampering their pursuit of education (Offet-Gardner, 2011). This study underscored how socioeconomic factors are intertwined to influence educational and career-related pursuits.

Shankar et al. (2013) used an interpretive phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of low-income Indigenous students who were pursuing post-secondary education. The semi-structured interviews revealed several themes, including hope for a better future and being good role models (Shankar et al., 2013). The study identified themes of challenges that included oppressive financial schemes (such as insufficient financial assistance), a negative culture of teaching and learning (such as an emphasis on non-Indigenous teaching methods), and racism, all of which negatively impacted the participants' physical and mental wellbeing.

Canel-Cinarbas and Yohani (2018) examined a particular social issue: racial microaggressions in postsecondary settings. The authors used focus groups and follow-up interviews to understand racial microaggressions—brief commonplace communications which intentionally or not convey hostile, racist views towards Indigenous Canadian university students. They identified seven domains including: overt discrimination; assumption of intellectual inferiority; assumption of criminality; invalidation or denial; second-class citizen; racial segregation; and myth of meritocracy. The authors identify the term “micro” not to minimize the attack, but to represent the individual nature of the attack, in contrast to systemic racism. The qualitative analysis of seven participants at a Canadian university highlights the ongoing racism experienced regularly by Indigenous

students, making it more difficult for Indigenous youth to complete their degrees and maintain well-being.

Colonialism and Violence. In her recent book bringing attention to violence against Indigenous women in Canada, Hargreaves (2017) writes:

I have three main contentions: first, that this violence is systemic in nature and colonial in origin; second, that representation matters to the material history of violence and to its resistance by Indigenous peoples and their allies; and third, that Indigenous women writers contribute vital insights into the analysis of gendered colonial violence while envisioning new, non-violent realities. (p. 1)

She names Canada's identity as intertwined with notions of invasion and colonization. This history continues today and is gendered, targeting women. Government policies have focused on disconnecting women from their land, from housing and from families, resulting in higher rates of violence against Indigenous women, including many missing women: the Native Women's Association of Canada (2016) has independently documented 582 cases, while citing a document from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2014) which reports the number to be 1 181 cases since 1980. Compared to non-Indigenous women, Indigenous women are five times more likely to die due to violence, and are at equal risk of attack from strangers as from intimate partners. However, in the overview of her book, Hargreaves (2017) goes on to say that how this violence is presented matters and that the stories of Indigenous women offer "vital insights" to analysis and also to imagining a future without violence. She argues that the stories of Indigenous women have the power to shift Canada's ongoing violent colonial impact.

Systemic Healthcare Inequality. In the 2015 text, "First Peoples, Second Class Treatment; The Role of Racism in the Health and Well-being of Indigenous Peoples in

Canada,” authors noted that racism and colonialism work together to impact the health of Indigenous peoples (Allan, & Smylie). The document focuses on the resiliency of Indigenous individuals, families, and groups at navigating the impacts of racism and notes that residential schools have contributed to multi-generational trauma through emotional, physical and sexual abuse of children. For example, in the screening of a group of self-identified Indigenous adults in Ontario, researchers identified a population prevalence of 34% for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, using the primary care PTSD screen (Smylie, Firestone, Cochran, Prince, Maracle, Morley, Mayo, Spiller, & McPherson, 2011). Ongoing child welfare practices have separated large numbers of Indigenous children from their families and their culture. In 2016 Indigenous children younger than 14 made up 48% of the children in foster care, despite making up only 7% of the total population under 14 (Turner, 2016). Allan and Smylie (2015) also explore the far-reaching impacts of the 1876 Indian Act, which

- removed Indigenous peoples from their land thereby cutting off access to food and manufacturing resources thereby forcing reliance on colonial authorities.
- granted colonial authorities the power to name people as “Indian” or not.
- obfuscated and denied the sharing of traditional Indigenous knowledge.
- undermined women’s roles in traditional matriarchal lineages.

(Allan, & Smylie, 2015).

The text goes on to cite racism within the healthcare system as preventing Indigenous people from accessing care. The authors instance race-based health policies such as Non-Insured Health Benefits provided for First Nations and Inuit peoples. Furthermore, Brown et al. (2011) related that participants anticipated being identified as Indigenous

and poor and then facing racism. Participants shared how they would strategize to ensure care, while others reported avoiding accessing care altogether (as cited in Allan & Smylie, 2015). The authors highlight that traditional Indigenous systems of community support, including food sharing and extended-family child rearing mitigate the impact of racism in Canada's healthcare system. Canada has implemented several federal, provincial and community structures to combat the recognized inequality in access to health care but these resources are still the exception. The authors describe and recommend an increase in the following systems: health services directed by Indigenous peoples, community directed Indigenous health services, community-based health systems, interventions at the level of mainstream health systems, training for healthcare workers including cultural safety training and trauma-informed care, Indigenous peoples and provincial governments working together.

The disparity of care is even greater for Indigenous women, as traditional midwifery knowledge has been undermined and women from remote communities are expected to travel to receive prenatal care (Allan & Smylie, 2015). Canada has a history of forced sterilization of Indigenous women. The infant mortality rate for Indigenous births was found to be twice as high as for non-Indigenous births (Statistics Canada, 2017). Statistics Canada (2017) identified lack of prenatal care, mothers who were themselves born preterm, the turnover of healthcare professionals working in remote communities, and systemic obstacles to accessing care as likely factors contributing to the disparity. Despite the already shocking disparity, these numbers may be an underestimate. In a systematic literature review, Smylie, J., Fell, D., Ohlsson, A., & Joint Working Group on First Nations, Indian, Inuit, and Métis Infant Mortality of the Canadian Perinatal Surveillance System (2010) found that it is likely that the infant

mortality rate for Inuit, First Nations and Status Indians living off reserve is 1.7 to 4 times higher than the rest of the Canadian population. The authors highlight the gaps in record keeping as many provinces do not record Aboriginal status in deaths.

Nevertheless, many Indigenous young women do well in spite of the obstacles and shifting landscape (Bougie, Kelly-Scott, & Arriagada, 2013). Hart (2015) noted that Indigenous women's writing acknowledges their violent experiences, but also reveals a strength of resistance and perseverance (as cited in Hargreaves, 2017). There is also an increase in Aboriginal people with university degrees between the ages of 15 and 65 (Statistics Canada, 2019). Yet, there is a paucity of research that explores how Indigenous young people, specifically young women, view themselves as successful in the context of career development and goals.

Summary

This review of the literature contains a selective overview of peer-reviewed, theoretical papers on Indigenous epistemology and its placement within university research paradigms. The review of career theory moves through time, but is certainly not expansive. I would recommend reading Bezanson et al. (2016) for a more developed and recent overview of career counselling in Canada. Canada's history of career counselling has shifted many times since its inception with Parsons in 1909; however, it continues to hold a valuation of having a positive impact on communities, with a recent return to a focus on social justice (Bezanson et al., 2016). The next portion collated current, significant research on the social context in which Indigenous women are making career decisions. I have provided an overview of research focused on the impact of education systems, healthcare systems and violent experiences on the career development of Indigenous women. There is still limited research striving to meet the needs of

Indigenous peoples and in particular young Indigenous women in the field of career. There is little research that discusses the spiritual aspect of decision-making as suggested by the overview of Indigenous Epistemology. Furthermore, there is a lack of research based upon Indigenous women's own stories with a positive focus on how they found success. This study strives to fill that gap in the literature.

CHAPTER 3: Method

This qualitative study considered the stories of Indigenous women who identified as doing well in career decision making. The following chapter explains the theoretical framework and rationale for this study's methodology. Following a description of narrative inquiry and social constructionism, there is an overview of the methodological paradigm, including the ethics of conducting research with Indigenous participants. I have included a detailed description of my narrative interview process.

Prior to planning or conducting the research, I researched Indigenous epistemology through reading texts and discussing with people: I met with a speaker from Musqueam willing to discuss culture and worldview. In this way, I strove to consider methods that are commensurate with Indigenous ways of knowing.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research presents the possibility of understanding a participant's experiences and interpretations through the story the researcher and the participant co-construct, thus offering a depth of meaning not available through quantitative measures (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Telling a story is a universal, ordinary act of meaning making. One could say that narrative inquiry began with the first human communications (Riessman, 2008). Narrative theory and research has shifted toward an examination of subjectivity, acknowledging the fluid process of identity formation that occurs through narrative construction (Burr, 1995; Riessman, 2008). In the 1930s, social psychologist George Mead discussed ideas of 'symbolic interactionism.' He described how identities of self are constructed in response to the other in everyday social interactions through taking the position of the other (Mead, 1934 as cited in Riessman, 2008). Berger and Luckmann (1967) first named the concept *social constructionism* and

described how social interactions perpetually construct a sense of the world through a cyclical exchange amongst social actors (as cited in Riessman, 2008) These constructions move beyond the individual to the societal level and are reinforced intergenerationally through culture. Individual participants may not be aware of these socially constructions and could therefore mistake an internalized idea for an essential truth. Social constructionists understand psychology as inseparable from historical and cultural contexts and necessarily challenge positivist assumptions (Riessman, 2008). Post-modern art and literature called into question the existence of any universal truth or singular reality. This postmodern perspective criticized rational assumptions that scientific tools could solve all the problems of human suffering. Narrative research found its footing in the 1980s with contributions by researchers including Bruner (1986), Polkinghorne (1988), Mishler (1991), and Sarbin (1986) (as cited in Riessman, 2008). These contributions valued narrative ways of knowing over positivist and postpositivist epistemological traditions (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Polkinghorne (2017) summarizes this “reformation” as a realization that important components of personal and social experiences could not be investigated within the limitations of traditional positivist standards of evidence and justification of knowledge. Narrative research has continued to find solid ground on which to stand within the social and human science fields, and currently several academic journals are dedicated to narrative research including, Josselson and Lieblich’s *The Narrative Study of Lives* (1999). Though narrative inquiry differs from positivistic research methods, researchers are responsible for following a systematic and coherent method. Researchers are expected to provide a clear description of the processes that have led to the findings (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, Riessman, 2008). Riessman (2008) describes how a story reflects “a

particular actor in a particular place in a particular time” (p. 11). In conducting interviews, the story told is one story of many possible versions. On a different day, with a different interviewer the narrative may shift. Riessman (2008) goes on to explain that stories can have effects beyond the meaning for the storyteller. They may create possibilities for social identities, group belonging, or for collective action. She posits that the voices of marginalized peoples are often silenced to maintain exploitative systems that rely on power differentials. Without stories, people remain isolated individuals without the power to mobilize. Through stories, individuals connect, forming groups and moving for change. Collective action shifts power balances, moving new voices into the spotlight, allowing the potential disruption of current power systems. This study contributes an important qualitative, narrative perspective in understanding how Indigenous women construct their narratives of doing well in career decision making.

Social Constructionism

Burr (1995) describes Social Constructionism as a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge. I intend to root my research in this epistemology of historical and cultural specificity whereby knowledge is understood as sustained by social processes. Burr juxtaposes this way of knowing against traditional psychology that has a history of essentialism and positivism. Constructionists reject the notion that a person is a formed self. Rather, they posit a shifting, reacting, responding identity. A person is neither wholly a product of birth, or nature, nor wholly a product of nurture, for both these positions essentialize the individual rather than understanding the person as constantly in flux in response to the world and relationship. Similarly, a constructionist does not view the world in terms of absolute truth. There is not a right way or a wrong way, but ways which are built through language and given meaning in discourse (Burr, 1995). An

important concept rejected by social constructionists is Descartes' notion of a distinction between the mental and the physical. Western knowledge which accepts this dualism is challenged by social constructionists who might ask people to consider a recent headache, which one might say has been brought on by stress, and is therefore a physical manifestation of a mental experience. A separation of mind and body is fundamentally positivist and essentialist and therefore challenged (Burr, 1995).

Burr (1995) averred that "Social psychology as a discipline emerged as an empiricist, laboratory-based science which habitually served, and was paid for by, those in positions of power, both in government and in industry" (p. 8). Social Constructionism in the realm of counselling attempts to shift this history by responding to historical and cultural specificity of knowledge, by seeing knowledge as located in small areas/groups, in particular in the language of a group. Language is viewed as constructing thoughts and therefore the world. Through the act of using language one participates in social action. As language is used between two or more people, knowledge is created. Knowledge then, is not viewed as something that "we have or do not have, or something waiting to be discovered, but as something that people do together" (Burr, 1995, p. 6). For Burr, knowledge is a verb. Through discourse, including participation in narrative inquiry, a speaker constructs meaning of self and world in a specific context. Co-constructing the story with the listener-researcher is dynamic, with the potential to shift dominant narratives and create new knowledge/stories/insights.

Narrative Methods with Indigenous Participation

Narrative methodology explores human meaning-making through the stories people tell, using the principals of social constructionism (Kovach, 2009; Riessman, 2008). In Indigenous oral traditions the story is always connected to the teller (Kovach,

2009) and is a live, shifting entity reflecting the readiness of the learner to hear the story (Hoffman, 2015). In research interviews, the participant and the researcher co-construct a story to create a meaning in answer to a question. The act of telling the story may bring coherence to experiences, connecting them to larger narratives of the past and future (Kovach, 2009; Riessman, 2008). In creating a narrative, a participant does not recite each event in chronological order, but rather chooses particular moments and excludes others in the creation of a story in relation to a theme (Polkinghorne, 1988, as cited in Riessman, 2008). Kovach (2009) wrote that Aboriginal stories are often not associated with the “linearity of time,” but rather are connected to place (p. 96).

Research Design for Narrative Interviews

Participants. Qualitative research enables variety in the number of participants for a study, starting from a single participant in a case study. For this study, I interviewed four women to offer a variety of perspectives and protect against essentializing.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. To participate in the study, interviewees needed to identify as Indigenous, as women, and as doing will in career decision-making. Originally, I sought participants aged 25 to 35, and ultimately found interviewees aged 26 to 36. Participants had to be willing to share their career-related stories with a settler-researcher: this included being available for an initial screening interview of fifteen minutes, an interview ranging from two to three hours and a follow up contact via email, and possibly telephone, which included my version of their narrative. All participants spoke English, only because that is my first language and the study could afford a translator.

Determining Potential Risk. The 2014 version of the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans acknowledges that research, in that it seeks to learn

something new, contains some element of risk and recommends that low risk research not exacerbate a participant's everyday exposure to risk. This study focused on participant success, thereby reducing risk of exacerbating discouragement. However, even when focusing on the positive, participants shared stories which likely included distress, and may have produced anxiety. I engaged with participants and acknowledged if the interview became difficult to share. I responded with empathy. Participants were also referred to counselling support at UBC if they were interested. Bezanson (2016) suggested that telling a story to a listener may have healing elements for the teller and indeed two participants mentioned the therapeutic nature of not just telling, but of reading their stories. Kovach (2009) recommended a collaborative approach to research involving Aboriginal participants and non-Aboriginal researchers. This research was conducted with consent and with ongoing participation by participants as interviewees provided feedback and analysis of my version of their stories. The goal of this project was mutually beneficial outcomes with improved understanding of Indigenous narratives of success in career decision-making leading to more inclusive counselling theories and services.

Minimizing Potential Risk to Participants. To mitigate risk, participants were made aware of informed consent, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was made fully aware of the topic and intention of the research. Their identities and the content they shared remained confidential. This means that each participant was assigned a code, and the transcript and narrative and notes were all stored using the code. Identifying features, including names and places, were altered to protect the identities of participants. When participants reviewed the narrative, they had the opportunity to request further changes and three did, requesting further changes to the

story's details. I practiced reflexivity, considering my role in the interview process.

While I interpreted the participant's narrative and attempted to organize the story sequentially, the participant had the final say on the version of the story that was analysed and included. I acknowledged in my analysis that the participant and I had different aims, with the participant seeking to construct a personal story, and me seeking to construct a story of theoretical value. Each participant was made aware of my intentions.

Recruitment. Creswell (2012) allowed for purposeful sampling when a qualitative research project has a specific intent as is the case with this study. I therefore contacted peers, colleagues and acquaintances in a variety of careers through social media asking for participants. My world revolves around education, but I made an effort to extend invitations for participation to a variety of fields. I sent flyers with the specific details inviting people to contact me by phone or by email. See appendix A for recruitment materials. Simultaneously, the research team from the SSHRC-funded project made attempts to recruit participants. Ultimately, all participants were referred by a mutual contact.

Contacting Potential Participants. Interested participants were called or emailed to arrange a telephone screening interview of approximately fifteen minutes. During this conversation I explained the purpose and form of the study, answered questions, and checked for eligibility. If the interested participant matched criteria, including self-identifying as Indigenous and female, being aged 26 to 36, being able to speak English and identifying as successful in career decision-making, and desired to continue with her involvement, we arranged a time for an in-person interview.

Informed Consent. When we met, I again explained the purpose of the study (to better understand the decision-making process of Indigenous young adults who believe

they are doing well with their career decision-making). I then gave each participant a paper copy of an informed consent contract and explained each section (see appendix B). I explained the procedures of the study, including an overview of our interview time and my request for a follow up conversation, once I had completed my narrative version of the interview transcript. I described confidentiality and explained that identifying information would be protected for confidentiality and privacy. I explained that each recording, transcript and narrative would be stored with a randomly generated code. I also gave each participant contact information for the UBC Office of Research and Services to enable reporting of any concerns or complaints about the research process. Each participant signed that they were informed of the above details and consented to participate in the study. I reiterated that the participant could choose to excuse herself from the study at any point.

The Interview. In arranging the interview participants were giving choice of where to meet. One chose the University of British Columbia, one chose her place of work, and two invited me into their homes. I shared my own motivations and experiences in relation to the project in order to build a trusting relationship with the interviewee. I approached the interviews as a conversation and desired that the women feel comfortable, even when discussing difficult moments in their career journeys. I brought food to the two home visits. During the interviews, I followed the guidelines created for the study entitled, “Cultural Infusions and Shifting Sands: How Indigenous and Immigrant Youth Make Career Decisions” (see Appendix C for interview guidelines). When participants became upset remembering moments from their stories, I used reflection to share my empathy. The interviews were recorded, and I took notes as well.

Transcription. Having recorded the interviews, I continued by creating a raw

transcript which included the dialogue, but not the participants' gestures, laughs, sighs or tone of voice, among other ways of communicating. As well, the transcript did not include my own thoughts or reactions as the researcher. At this stage, I listened to the interview once again, this time as an observer, hearing both voices. While listening, I reflected on my own questions and the ways in which I followed certain threads of each participant's story and lost others. My own role in co-constructing the story became more apparent as I listened and typed. At this stage, I did not make choices about what to include and what not to include as it pertained to the research question, I placed all dialogue on the paper as the next step in creating the narrative of the participant's success in career decision making. I included line numbers and page numbers in accordance with Dr. Marla Buchanan's instructions included in appendix D.

Data Analysis. After transcription, I reread the transcript and then created the narrative account. To do this, I copied the transcription into a new document, and highlighted the parts of the story related to the research, eliminating extraneous text, and my own comments and questions. Next, I organized the story in sequential order and added a new set of line numbers and page numbers (see appendix D steps 1, 2, 3). Upon constructing my version of the participants' stories, I emailed the story to each participant and asked the following questions:

- 1) Does this version of your narrative accurately reflect your experience of doing well in career decision-making?
- 2) Are there aspects of the story which need to be re-examined, expanded or deleted? Please explain.
- 3) Reading your story, what do you understand as the most significant parts in relation to the research question?

After receiving ongoing consent from all the participants, I used thematic content analysis of the data as presented by Braun and Clarke (2006), who describe the technique as a theoretically-flexible and accessible approach. Thematic analysis fits with many qualitative procedures, yet is structured in the steps of analysis. In response to those who might say that finding themes is merely a portion of other methods, Braun and Clarke argue for thematic analysis to be “a method in its own right” (4) as the act of naming themes acknowledges the researcher an active participant in co-creating the story. I used the six phases of analysis as provided by Braun and Clarke to guide my research:

- 1) Familiarized myself with the data, including transcription of recorded discussion.
I participated in the interview, transcribed the content, reread the transcript, edited the transcript into a narrative, and discussed the new version with each participant, making changes as necessary.
- 2) Generated initial codes. I wrote on the narrative version from each participant, coding each section of the story. Using a table in a document, I recorded the code, the line and page number, and my comments. This study was a semantic analysis, as I considered the most basic segments of each interview and named them. A single item may have been coded multiple times, as long as I keep the context of each item.
- 3) Searched for themes. At this stage, I reviewed the codes and refined and integrated similarly defined categories, imagining themes they might belong to. A theme was not based on prevalence of mention, but was identified in relation to the research question. I named themes based on response to the posed question, regardless of frequency of the theme. The theme finding was inductive, based on the interviews, rather than being based on my research. However, the research on

Indigenous epistemology and career theory necessarily shaped my interpretation as did my goal to answer the research question. In this way, the analysis may be considered theoretical and deductive (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

- 4) Reviewed themes. At this stage, I re-examined the extent of all my created themes and considered if all were supportable with evidence, or if any fit into each other as subcategories or could be collapsed into a single theme. My goal was to have internal homogeneity of categories/content within a theme and heterogeneity between my themes. I also examined the feedback from participants to see how their interpretation of themes fit with my own analysis. I conducted this review at the individual level and across the entire dataset. Writing happened throughout the process. As the researcher, I identified themes across the data set, wrote, and then returned to the data.
- 5) Defined and named themes. I named themes to best contain the data grouped within. I also assessed the data to ensure that the selections fit the theme. In step five, I wrote up each theme, with evidence, in relation to my overarching research question. I also identified sub-themes at this stage.
- 6) Produced the report. I wrote up the thematic analysis, using clear and engaging selections from the interviews to, not merely summarize and describe, but to tell a story and make an argument in relation to my research question. I considered what each theme meant and what conditions may have given rise to each theme.

Trustworthiness of Findings

Hoffman (2015) conceptualized four Aboriginal ethical principles for research: reciprocity, respect, relationship and responsibility which must be maintained in research, even while striving for trustworthiness. Riessman (2008) described trustworthiness of

research as being based upon four main factors: correspondence, persuasiveness, coherence and pragmatic use. There is much overlap between these ways of framing the research dynamic and the differences are not mutually exclusive. Reciprocity extends beyond Riessman's factors and signifies that the participant will also gain due to our interactions. Each participant in this study was offered an honorarium for participating, and in a small gesture I brought food to my last two interviews as I began to appreciate the meaning of reciprocal exchange. Furthermore, I shared my own story as was meaningful, in an effort to contribute to the participants. For example, one participant, beginning her own graduate research, was very interested in the process of transcription. I passed along notes on my own experience in an attempt to have a mutual relationship. To foster relationship and respect, and also to meet Riessman's criteria of correspondence, I discussed my research aims and my own identity with participants during the initial screening interview, at the interview, and then in post-interview email and phone conversations. Each participant was given a copy of my version of her narrative and asked for her response. During this member checking process all four participants responded, giving feedback on the style and content of the story. This member checking was also an opportunity to be responsible and ensure that the narratives reflected and honoured the women's experiences. It gave me an opportunity to consider the persuasiveness of my findings by comparing my own with those of the participants. Although all four participants responded with feedback on the narratives, only two answered my questions regarding her story's key points in connection to the research question. The two responses were detailed and supported my own findings. According to Riessman (2008) persuasiveness is also determined by how the findings match previous research. The findings of this study fit into some career research, but also reinforce that

there is limited career research and theory based upon the experiences of Indigenous women, particularly those who identify as successful. The findings that are not reflected in career theory match with research that describes Indigenous ways of knowing. The matching between this thesis and previous research strengthens the trustworthiness of the study. To meet the standard of coherence, I chose research methods congruent with my research question. I documented each step in my process and checked my plans with experts in the field. I transcribed each interview verbatim, paying attention to specific language and patterns. My goal was to present a coherent and persuasive narrative analysis. All analysis followed a systematic method of recording and analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Throughout the process I practiced reflexivity. I would reread literature in the field and consider how this current research was supported or problematized by what I read. The next section on my own cultural positioning and the ethics of completing this study reflect that process. Finally, the most important marker of this study's trustworthiness may be its pragmatic use. The women's narratives offer important insight into a particular place at a particular moment of time. These findings could contribute to improved educational and counselling systems and as part of Canada's aim to eliminate educational and employment disparities between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples.

Cultural Positioning and Ethics

Kovach (2009) cited the significance of the researcher's responsibility for respect when asking to share a story from an Indigenous participant. She further argued that using story without understanding cultural epistemology likely results in the misunderstanding of the layers or themes of the story. In particular tribal stories such as creation tales, hold both an element of the trickster and the tragic which may be missed

by the researcher (Kovach, 2009). Working with personal, rather than mythical, narratives enabled me to ask the participant to explain layers. However, I acknowledge that the stories from participants likely contained many themes that I as a settler-researcher failed to hear. Missing elements of the story may cause harm. To reduce harm it was necessary for me the researcher to strive to understand the cultural epistemology of Indigenous peoples, and to position and reveal myself to each participant. Since the participants were unknown prior to our interview, I offered the opportunity for them to trust me (Kovach, 2009). Discussing my intentions and the purpose of the research in the screening interview was a time for the participant and the researcher to build relationship and gain trust. Furthermore, allowing the participant time to tell her story, and sharing appropriately my own story, contributed to that relationship (Prenn, 2009). As I listened to the story, I participated by self-reflecting, and when I co-constructed the narrative, I had the opportunity to share myself as I described my own experience and process. I acknowledge that in writing down the stories that were oral and lived between me and the participants, I changed the story. The story moved out of the space of the teller. Hoffman (2015) raised the concern that writing down Aboriginal knowledge may erase the collective nature of knowing and suggest that the knowledge comes from a single person. He also suggests that it is possible that a reader may access the knowledge without the necessary respect and responsibility. These difficulties do not suggest an impossibility in cooperation between academic research as it has been and Indigenous epistemology, but rather necessitate a reconsideration of which knowledge counts (Kovach, 2009). Kovach (2009) names this as a “concession” of the Indigenous knower to academic research. I approached the interview process as a learner, rather than as an expert (Hoffman, 2015). Kovach (2009) noted that there is a dearth of non-Indigenous academics supporting

Indigenous research frameworks. She calls for an increase in order to speed decolonization efforts.

Prior to this study being conducted, permission was granted by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The board considers respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice as core principals of research ethics. In her discussion of ethics and qualitative research, Haverkamp (2005) paid special attention to informed consent and confidentiality. All participants gave verbal and written informed consent before participating and were made aware that consent was ongoing and could be rescinded at any time. Participants were informed of governing bodies they could contact if they were concerned about any aspect of the study. To maintain confidentiality, participants were assigned a numerical code. All data was stored using the code. The original documents with names were kept in secure storage. Identifying markers were altered including locations, job titles and details. Participants gave feedback to ensure anonymity.

To admit a history of exclusion and to shift towards a valuing of Indigenous knowledge within academic institutions requires being and acting with a balanced harmony that goes beyond research into lifestyle (Hoffman, 2015). For this reason, beyond the difficulties related to the form of my research, my position as a white female of European descent, raised in a Western paradigm of thought, limited my ability to fully know, or even describe, this way of knowing. My very language held my own systems of thought, even as I attempted to represent the ideas of another. I hope that my own intuition and the experiences which have led me to seek alternate ways of knowing, including studying feminist epistemology during my undergraduate degree and counselling psychology for my graduate degree, have enabled me to present an honest account of my understandings of these narratives. Participating in the processes discussed

above including researcher reflexivity, member checking, maintaining an audit trail of my work, following specific narrative inquiry processes, including receiving informed consent and protecting confidentiality, all worked to support my personal efforts at contributing to this field of knowledge with integrity.

CHAPTER 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how Indigenous women who identified as successful in career decision-making created stories of career success. I wanted to understand and to share factors that may contribute to positive career trajectories for young Indigenous women and youth. After the initial interview process, I transcribed each story personally. During this process I began to clarify themes that I had first started constructing during the interviews. I took notes of possible themes as I transcribed. I then translated each of the interviews into a compact narrative of their career, including only events that directly answered my research question. Each participant was then emailed a version of her narrative and asked for her own input on central themes and moments that answered the research question. Before reading the participants' responses, I conducted my own analysis through coding the texts. I have named seven central themes and multiple subthemes through Braun and Clarke's thematic content analysis method (2006) and joint conversations with participants. I created charts of key events in the story and then categorized the helpful items into themes based on my literature review and own understanding of the world. I revised the themes several times as I checked for relevancy and fit with the overall data set. This included asking myself, "What changed?" for each participant in her story of her career success, and then, "How did that growth occur?" These two questions allowed me to determine an interpretation of the data, thereby enabling me to offer my own contribution to the process. Revision included renaming, eliminating, adding and regrouping items and themes. Each theme represents a significant aspect of a participant's personal narrative of how she viewed herself as successful in her career decision-making. The themes look differently in each narrative and are reflective of the individual stories, but also of the entire data set. The language of the themes is

based on my research and my own experiences, though I often used participants' language in identifying subthemes, which may be more specific to an individual narrative.

Ruth

Definition of Career and Success in Career Decision-Making. When I think of career, I definitely think of my current family. I wanted to choose a career where I could have a balanced life with my family. I'm very honoured to be basically living my dream right now. What I do at work is just as important as what I'm doing outside of work, my family.

Doing well in career decision-making comes down to the lifestyle you want to live. If I want to work all day, I have to be in bed by 9 and have a well-balanced meal. I have to have my family time. I have to have my preparation time. It comes down to time management when I have all of these things that are important to me, that I need to make the right time for, in order to maintain the lifestyle I want. Most of the time I'm happy with the choices I make. I always talk to my boss about how the pieces work together. How important it is for me to do coaching or make time for my other commitments, and not just work, work, work.

Ruth's Narrative. I've been wanting to be a teacher since grade 2. I always wanted to play school. I was obsessed with saving my homework and pretending to be a teacher. I had a passion. I didn't know anything else at the time. I mean, you're in grade 2, school is all you know. So my teacher was my role model, and I pictured myself teaching at that young of an age. I didn't have the greatest childhood. I don't have the most greatest memories, where we did *this* as a family. My mom didn't have the money to take us on holidays. I just don't remember any of what I did outside of school. Most of

my memories are in school. All I did was wake up and go to school each day. So school was a big thing for me. I wasn't the best at school, but I was never really behind. I didn't feel as important during those years. I just felt like it was my job going to school.

There were few role models back then, no one to look up to, other than the two I had growing up. One of them I'm still in contact with. His name is LS. He's still a teacher today. He was the one driving me to my track practices, an hour out of our hometown to Saskatoon. So he would drive me every Saturday to practice with these elite athletes and that was the thing that resonated with me the most, having that person that has their own family, to just drive me and help me become the person I always wanted to be. But in order to do those things, I had to be in school and do well in school also, so those were my most important jobs as a child, going to school and excelling at sports.

And the few people that I was friends with are doing exceptionally well. I have a few high school friends that also went on to be teachers and are in the process of finishing their master's right now. I was lucky enough to have a group of friends that were First Nations and on the same page as me. Having these friends helped me apply to university, because, "Oh! They're doing this? I want to do that." We were all on the same page of what we wanted to do with our lives. And I don't think I would have applied to University with a different group of friends, so my friends were my role models, too.

The next career decision was to stick with university and finish it. Even when I was in grade 12, I didn't imagine myself going to university. When I came out of high school, I had low self-confidence, low self-esteem. I was even surprised I got into university. So that was a big, big thing for me. I had all this confidence, thinking, Wow, I can really do it. I know for most Aboriginal, whether it's women, or just everyone, they don't come out of high school having confidence or self-esteem. I can only ever do the

best I can to help inspire others is what my goal is, because I'm coming from Saskatchewan where there's predominantly European teachers, European descent.

I chose to take classes in my hometown. You could do your first two years of Arts and Science at home and that's what I did. Staying home those first two years of university really helped me, because I just wouldn't have made it in the city all by myself being 18, 19. The courses are through a college that offered University Arts and Science classes. You could do your first two years and then move to on campus, which was in the city. One thing I should mention is that where I grew up is ranked number one for the highest crime rate in Canada. I'm pretty fortunate to come out, come out here, considering where I grew up.

After the first two years of classes, I moved to the city to finish my B. Ed. I was lucky enough to get invited into the Indian Teacher Education Program, which is a program from the College of Education that helps teacher candidates like me to specialize in teaching culture to First Nation communities. I'm Plains Cree, and that's the program I graduated from that helped me get my B. Ed.

Looking back, I think I just did it. I really wanted to make my mother proud, and I knew I had it in me to do it without that many resources. I worked full time to finish my schooling, and I was able to do that, but I look back and, you just do it. There's no time to think about, "Oh do I want to finish or not?" It's just everything comes down to deadlines and, I mean, that's what helped me, motivated me to finish. And to finish on time. I guess I was lucky enough to not have to worry about raising children during that time, which a lot of my friends did. So I mean I just think about all of my friends when it comes to the questions you're asking me. The role that they played; they played a much bigger role than I did during that time. I got to experience what a 20 year old should, the socializing

and the going on trips and that kind of thing, stuff they have out on because they were young parents.

I think it came down to me in the end and what I wanted to do. It was so easy for me with my education to just get up and move. Everywhere I've gone, I've been able to find work, I've been able to pay rent and all my bills and move out here and make it happen with no help, zero help. So I think that's a major milestone for anyone, to just pick up and move all the time, but that's what I was used to until I finally moved to Vancouver.

So right out of university, I moved to Lac Le Biche in Alberta, and I was engaged to someone else at that time, and that relationship didn't work, and going home wasn't an option for me. For me that would have seemed like a sign of failure. I just didn't want to go back home and have that feeling of I didn't make it in this place. I wanted to keep pursuing things I wanted to do. So I moved to Calgary on my own. I just packed up whatever I could in my car, and I was on my way. I worked when I was in that small town. I had job offers as a teacher. If I wanted to stay there and make it work, it would have happened, but I didn't want that, so I moved to Calgary. And it was one of my first major things I did on my own. I didn't even tell anyone. I just did it. I had total freedom after that, because I was able to find a home and have a job the following week. I wanted to live near the mountains. I'm from the prairies, and I never got to experience that, going to the mountains every week, going snowboarding, taking myself on trips. It all came down to me and taking myself. I came from a really poor family. I never got to experience that as a child. Even in Calgary it was super easy for me to find work as a teacher. Again, I had job offers, and I declined, because I wanted to be on the North

Shore, and so that's when I was already seeing my current partner and we moved here together.

It was scary to make those choices. But I didn't have much other than what could fit in my car. I wasn't carrying a bunch of baggage or anything. I just really wanted to make my life happen. With my previous relationship, it could have just all stopped in Lac Le Biche. That could have been the rest of my life. I just kept pursuing what I wanted to do and a lot of people respected me after that, after moving out here. I kept on moving and pursuing more things, just never giving up.

I worked as a server for ten years, so I was able to get work as a server, bartender for, anywhere, I worked for Moxie's and some big companies, but I mean, my last job as a server, I was like, Ok that's it, And then sure enough I was pregnant. When I found out I was pregnant, is when I applied for my BC certification. Pregnancy really kick-started me to getting back to my career and getting my life on track to prepare for this family. And my partner did the same as well. He had to go back and take a few courses, and I look how far we've come and we're still trying to make it work. I mean we might never own a home here, but we still have really good jobs, and we're able to raise this daughter of ours. To me it's the most fulfilling feeling being able to take care of her. I feel like she's so lucky to have a mom and a dad.

We weren't trying for a child when my daughter was born, but she came along and we were both actually so happy, and I found I was pregnant with her on a camping trip that he and I went on, so everything just seemed to work out really nicely. I am really lucky to have the partner I have. I think everyone says that to me. He's just a really well-rounded person. Very respected. He works very hard and he too wanted a child from the moment he was young, so he had prepared himself right out of high school to buy a house

and have the big yard. But when our child came along, we didn't see ourselves living in Kamloops, so that's why we sold our property to make a more permanent move out here.

I really thank my child for kickstarting me becoming a teacher. I didn't really have that much confidence in being a teacher here because I just wasn't in the right state at that time. I wasn't sure there would be any work for me. I'm used to working for First Nations band schools. I really love that because I really love working with First Nations people. They need role models and I feel like that's my, my role is influencing children's lives that might not have all the best resources. I really enjoy that. I love them so much. I don't get to work with many students here, but when I see them, I get so happy. They're really sweet and genuine and I really like working with children, even my own daughter, teaching her things. I'm really committed to her. I mean that's my job, something I'm very very passionate about is giving hope to First Nations children.

Maybe I should mention that, while I was pregnant, we were in Alberta working. We had just heard on the news that the BC government was going to give up a lot of money for the BC Teachers' Federation to hire more teachers and that's the process. I had already applied and I was getting ready to have my child. When we got the news that there was going to be more hiring of teachers so we were both really excited to hear about that. Even then I wasn't quite sure where I wanted to work yet. I knew I wanted to live in North Vancouver and that wasn't going to change so, we moved back and when time was right. I applied everywhere for teaching jobs as a sub teacher and I heard back from all of them, so that was awesome. I had my pick when I was coming back to work, and I was really nervous and I was working for a few different nations. So for a while I was juggling three jobs. I favoured this job because I would come here and work with some of our high school students that are struggling. They treat me really well here, like a

family member almost. They were looking for a science teacher and that was one of my subjects that I excelled in. I didn't know I was good at Biology, but I'm really good at it, and so I had no issue with teaching it. I also have the support of one of my university professors.

I love being on the North Shore. You're living in a city, but at the same time you're by the ocean and the mountains are just right there. We have a lot of friends. I think the thing we love doing most is going on BBQ dates. We have a boat now, so we hop in our boat and drive up the Indian Arm and stop anywhere. We're very outdoorsy people. And now we take our daughter.

Even when I go home to Saskatchewan, I miss the green. There's a lot back home that I get chills thinking about. I mean, just there's just no diversity. It's very black and white and the Colton Boushie case that just happened has really divided the town where we live in. Our youth aren't doing so good out there. At all. It's just more gangs and more drugs, and it's really sad to see children as young as ten getting into that. We have our ideas of how we want to raise our daughter, and I'm not sure this Western lifestyle is going to be the best way to raise her right now. I get very afraid to think about giving her a cell phone one day, or I mean there's so much abuse going on out there. And we don't want that for our child. I get very afraid for any child. We have little sisters. Me and my partner both have thirteen year old sisters and it's just scary to think about the things we're going through right now. Even with the students I work with. I'm very afraid for them. And there's really nothing I can do about that except help influence them to live healthier lifestyles. I think once you're born healthy, you should stay that way for the rest of your life. But most people are developing depression and anxiety, and I'm still trying to figure out how I can help people with that. I hate to admit that I ever suffer from

anxiety or depression. I would be lying if I said I don't, but that's why I do all the things I do to help fulfill me as a person. But it hurts me knowing that there might be this younger person experiencing that. It's something that truly breaks my heart. Like I said, I didn't have too many role models growing up, and I want our youth to see, to know that there are, there are role models out there that are willing to help and give back. I think that's super important, using my time helping Aboriginal youth. Cause they need it.

My job wants me to go back to school and they want to pay for that. So I'm going to go back soon to specialize in special education and then eventually a master's. We're just looking at different courses right now. I'm favouring the Queens university program. It'll be online through a program we already use anyway. I look forward to a lot of that, but I do worry because when 9pm comes along, I'm asleep, so again, I have to think about how I'm going to make and have time for all that.

I also coach snowboarding. That was always a hobby of mine that I excelled at outside of high school, something I chose to do. And I took the further steps to getting my certification. When I moved to Calgary, that's when I really excelled at snowboarding, living close to the mountains and that really pursued me to be where I am now, coaching. I work with the First Nations snowboard team. I really admire the culture. I really admire the sense of community. And that helps me have that sense of belonging, that I'm doing the right thing.

You know, those are the things I enjoy outside of work that are still really important to me. I just wanted to make it clear that what I do outside of work is super important to me. I get off work at 5pm. I need to be at yoga at 5:30. That's each evening. I'm a very active person. Extremely active and that's why I've moved away from home to be here, on the West Coast. I can't do what I do now back home. I can't just 20 minute

drive to the mountains. It's just a different kind of lifestyle I guess. Yeah and with the whole snowboarding thing, I teach it as well and my daughter's two years old and we have her up on the mountain already. Even just coming home from Saskatchewan, everyone is so proud of me. They want me to come home and do maybe presentation kind of things for the youth back home. But yeah, I mean, it all came down to being super proactive about the life I wanted to live.

I'm just really happy with where I'm at right now. The only thing I struggle with is the idea of going back to school I guess, because I'm going to have to shuffle my time and energy around to get that done. So that's something I struggle with, but other than that, I'm really happy with where I'm at in my life right now. I don't do anything unless I can imagine it. If I can see myself doing it, I do it. That's just how I've been all my life, I guess. I just really have to think things through. I've always been like that. I really have to think through things. The latest decision was cancelling my wedding last minute. It was supposed to be this summer, but I stopped it because there was just too much planning, and I couldn't give up any more time to plan, to focus on something like that when we're not quite settled here yet. I mean, life out here, the only struggle about living out here is having somewhere to live. We have to move every so often it kind of sucks that that's the reality of having a family out here. I mean it would be great to have a home, but we could do better things with our money right now than...and so we have. I'm actually just super fortunate. I live a couple blocks away now. We have it pretty good, I would say. We've made all the right choices to make everything work. And that's something we're proud of. We're really happy. We're not totally stressed out right now. I think I'm just proud of coming to work each day and knowing I've got a family to support, that I help support. And that's pretty well-balanced and that's what makes me

happy at the end of the day. I'm happy to see them when they get home and our schedules work out pretty nice, where my daughter only needs to be in care twice a week, as opposed to 5 days a week. She spends a lot of time with dad and she really loves her dad. I think this is the first time in my life where I see myself staying in one area more than five years. So, and for my family reasons, I don't want to move around. I feel very happy here. I don't need to change anything.

Going through everything I've gone through will help me help others. I think it's really important that our youth know that there's more to life than staying in one spot and feeling stuck. That was my worry growing up. I was worried I wasn't going to have anywhere to work after high school. I really wanted a good job. I was scared of not having anywhere to work, or not having the money to travel. So that really helped me finish university. Had it been the other way around, had my daughter first, I don't think I'd have been able to finish, maybe. I was lucky enough to have a great paying job and all my friends looked to me. It wasn't like a career life job, but it was a money job. I didn't mind working as a server, because it was great money for that time. But had I been a server for 30 years, that would have been a different story. There's just no way I could have been doing that. I really needed that 9-5. It's super important to me, knowing that one day I wanted to have a family and be ready for that. And then that's how our life is going to be until she's old enough to be on her own. It's constant, restructuring in how we're going to make a good life for her, I think. We're pretty good at that. I would say. I'd say that with confidence.

And for the kids I work with. They should be able to come to me with concerns, and we should be able to sit down and have open conversations. I don't want to ever not have that. For somebody to be afraid of me, like I was afraid of half my teachers growing

up. I don't ever want a child to feel ignored, like I felt ignored growing up. I always treat others how you want to be treated, right. It's cyclical. I'm busy with a lot of that.

Harriet

Definition of Career and Success in Career Decision-Making. I think of career and volunteer work as doing something that's valuable to society. This definition evolved from when I was a student, and I had teachers who helped me understand the idea of doing something of a benefit to the greater student body. I'm trying to find where I contribute and where I give back, and hopefully it's also valued by society, so then you either have some kind of income or support from that role that you took on.

I think that doing well in career decision making means that I have choices and options. And that I'm in an environment that allows me to do work that improves things. And also, again, has value, so that there's some support for what I'm contributing.

Harriet's Narrative. My overview of my career decision making begins when I was young. My parents ran a business from home, so I would see them working. I would see my mom working as an equal partner with my dad. I always understood that there would be equality in the type of work that I would be doing, with men and women. It was normal, we work. When I was very young, I was also very outgoing and then, I don't know why, at a certain point I became very shy. When I made the transition to grade 8, I was very scared. I didn't want to be talking to anyone. I didn't want to be noticed. I just wanted to fade into the background. I was closed off to new experiences basically.

There was a student council and they were looking for representatives and nobody had volunteered from the grade 8 class, and so they had to find some people, and I was approached by two teachers. They came to my math class, and they pulled me out of the class in the middle of it, and I was so humiliated and embarrassed. I was shocked. I

thought, what could I have done wrong? It must be serious. They said they had heard good things about me, and they asked if I'd be willing to be on student council. I was closed off completely, and so I said, I don't think that's what I want. When I talked to my parents that night, they were saying, "Why don't you just try it? If you don't like it you can always quit. But if you just try it, you'll get to experience something new." So I did. And then I ended up loving it. And the teachers who were involved as advisors became very important mentors to me. So I started to kind of see a different side to myself, and I started to feel that I had something to offer. And some of the things and ideas that I had could have a positive benefit on people around me. I was really interested, because I was someone who felt like an outsider, I was interested in events that included people. The kind of things I was trying to do, were the things that were building inclusivity.

In my first year at post-secondary at the orientation, one of my leaders said, "You should get involved." He probably said that to everyone, but I felt that he had said that to me. So I was like, "Maybe I should. It's not what I know, but it sounds like something where I could give back." It was a lot easier to participate than high school. I wasn't offended, I wasn't horrified. I wasn't any of those negative emotions. Then I ran for representative for a student society, and I was elected. But then when I was in the position, the primary task they gave me was to deliver the newspaper. I hated that job so much. I felt that anyone could do it. I wasn't giving anything back. And also, it was just boring.

I ran for an alternate student association, and I was elected. Again, I tried to do things that were really inclusive. Every time I had a volunteer opportunity, I tried to consider what we could do that would include everyone and make everyone feel part of the community. In the student society, before I joined, I had made friends with colleagues

or peers who had plans to run for the student government as part of a group. And because we were friends, they asked me whether I would consider it. It had not been on my radar at all, but then I thought, It seems like a great next step for me, so I agreed. I loved that it was a team. And I never ever would have done that if it wasn't part of a group.

When I was in my role, I worked really hard to try to negotiate the school's health coverage and unfortunately we were not successful. I felt that I had unfinished business. I wanted to continue. No one else in my group wanted to be the leadership candidate for the next year, so by default I was the person to keep going. Nobody really asked me, so that was probably the first time that I said, "Well I have to do this. I didn't finish the job that I wanted to finish, so I feel that I need to keep going and make that happen."

And then right before the election campaign process started, I had incredible self-doubt that I wasn't equipped or I couldn't do it. I felt like I had to drop out. But the support community stepped up. The people in my group sort of staged an intervention to prevent me from having cold feet. A group invited me over, including the former leader, a woman. They invited me for dinner, and we talked through it, and I talked about my self-doubt and they helped me get over it. I didn't feel that I was the best person for the job, but they boosted me and said, "This is for you. You need to keep going." It really helped that it was a female. I feel really emotional about this. I think it's dipping into that feeling of self-doubt that's making me emotional. But also it was so positive that I had someone who was willing to intervene. That was pretty impactful.

I ran. And then I won. Within the first month, there were some unpopular structural changes at the college. In my new leadership position, I was in a place to speak for students and try and make sure that student voices were considered, but obviously I was not in a decision making capacity. I did my best to represent what I felt were student

concerns. I had some doubt, but I did speak, but then my political opponents continued to be antagonistic towards me, and they were obviously very frustrated with the changes, as I was as well. I had chosen to make private presentations, so the opposition decided that they were going to do something public which I had not. They staged a large protest. My feelings were beyond hurt. It was extremely painful. That was quite difficult. But I had a team of people, and it was amazing because I was younger than all of my executive team, and I was a First Nations woman, among these white people who went on to be doctors and dentists and business people. It didn't matter who I was; they were very supportive. I felt entirely supported by them. If I didn't have that, again it would have been something when I would have questioned if it was worth continuing. But I just decided that this protest that I considered to be a failure wasn't going to define me. I can see the opposition's point that I didn't engage the student body in a way that maybe they wanted to be engaged. I felt that it was a communications gap. In my mind it became this little kernel of an idea that I have a learning opportunity here and what I'm kind of thinking now is I need to master this. I defined the problem as my inability to understand how to communicate with a mass audience to build support for ideas or be able to work together even if we disagree. It really was a driving force for my career once I graduated. I needed to master communication. My choices were really defined by that understanding of that problem. I said, There's a lesson here I need to get to, and that's how I found my way in my career once I graduated.

I failed a couple of classes while I was in leadership, because I was just trying to do everything related to the job. I think I failed one class and got 50% in another. It really undermined my ability to go back to graduate studies for a while, but I'm glad that I did it, and I think that I became a much more skilled and more rounded person because of the

experience. I wish that I'd had better coping mechanisms; I didn't have a plan for personal well-being, I wasn't exercising regularly, I wasn't eating healthy, I didn't understand the benefits of counselling support and that sort of thing. I think that if I could do it over again I would try and access something that would help me have a personal plan to be resilient. In spite of the challenges, I'm glad I did it. But I would have liked to be a bit more prepared.

When I graduated I didn't know where I wanted to work, but I knew I needed to improve community. I talked about it with my parents, and we talked about an upcoming international sporting event that the city was hosting and that seemed to me, like it could be something that could bring a lot of people together and is consistent with my idea of wanting to give back. I talked about it with my dad and he said, "You should just write a letter to the CEO," who was actually Aboriginal. My dad said, "Write him a letter and say you want to work there, just say that you're Native." He was saying that they needed the support of Indigenous people because what they're building, what they're creating, what they're touting; they need the support of Indigenous people, is what my dad was saying to me in not so many words. I struggled with that, because in my mind I was like, No. I want to be just me with the skills that I bring, the experience that I bring. I don't want to be the Native person who does the Native work for this event. I don't want that to be my career. My dad said, "You can do that once you get it, but just get in the door first." He seemed confident, so I thought, I'll just self-identify and write the CEO, and I was interviewed and then I had a job as an administrative assistant. And I was really glad to have the job, but I was also extremely conflicted because I had been in an important leadership position and now I had to be an administrative assistant, and also the salary

was low. I felt devalued. Even though I was excited to be working for the event, I felt like I wasn't being taken seriously based on the skills and experience that I had.

When I first started, I was employee number 20. I was one of the first people and had credibility even as the organization grew. Part of why I stayed at the company for as long as I did, is I thought I would get promoted, so I really invested a lot to show what I am capable of. That went on for two years. During those years, quite a few people from the my department were being fired, including the senior vice president, and this person had been a supporter of mine. He gave me career advice along the lines of, "Do what you feel most passionate about, and the money will come." So I felt really good about having his support, and when he was let go, I felt there was very little that was there for me anymore. I no longer had this protector or top level person looking out for me. Around that time I had applied to be a Communications Coordinator, and to me this was my destiny. It was like communications had foiled me earlier, and now I'm ready to engage in this profession. I'm going to master this, and it's going to be the lesson I needed to learn before.

I had been angling towards this Communications position the whole time. I had accepted the assistant role just to be in communications. However, they just saw me as a helpful person, even though I thought I was a critical person. When the communications coordinator jobs were posted, I applied, and I wasn't interviewed. I received a phone call but no feedback. Nobody came to me and said, Thank you for applying, but we're looking for this sort of a candidate. When I realized I wasn't going to be interviewed, and the Senior VP was gone, I thought, I have no reason to work here anymore. I went home and felt very emotional. I didn't swear, but today I would be like, Fuck this. I quit the next day, and I didn't have another job to go to, because it was an emotional decision.

I felt disrespected. The new senior vice president said, “Is there anything I can do to make you stay?” and I said “No, I wanted Communications and it’s just not going to happen.” Even after I quit, they felt awful. I was offered two jobs after I had quit, and I declined both of them. I was still feeling very emotional, and the job was actually consistent with my values, but I made an emotionally-clouded decision to decline, which was probably for the best if I wasn’t in a good place emotionally to continue. In my mind Communications was my path and this was something that had been placed in front of me to master, and they were not allowing me to tackle this thing that I’m meant to learn about and master. I felt that the trouble at my college must have happened for a reason. It had been placed in front of me as something I needed to learn about and master and if I wasn’t going to do that, then I was ignoring this thing that had been placed in front of me for a reason. That was my way of framing what had happened to me that I couldn’t just let go of. I couldn’t just do whatever else comes up. That didn’t seem like the right thing.

Then I was unemployed for six months after turning down two jobs, and it felt pretty bad. I had to move back home because I didn’t have enough money for rent. My dad had been starting a home business that I respected, and I tried to help him with different marketing and communications pieces: content on his website, letters to potential customers. I started to gain some experience, but I found that my dad and I clashed, so we agreed that I wouldn’t help him anymore and there were no hard feelings, so I stopped doing that and then I realized that if I was going to be in Communications, I’d better start networking with people who were Communications professionals. That’s when I started reaching out to public relations agencies and asked for informational interviews. I met with quite a few people. I learned quite a bit.

I'd applied for a job as an accounts coordinator for a communications department. This was an agency I hadn't met with, but I got the job. I went right into a PR agency. To me, this was again like I was approaching destiny. This is exactly what I'm supposed to be doing. I learned quite a bit from working there. The job was total vindication. Because I think my parents also didn't understand what Communications and Public Relations was. In their view, I was just an unemployed child of theirs being too fussy. I was like, No, I have a very specific vision of what I need to be doing. I can't just take anything. My parents were saying just get a job. In anything. And I was like, No, no, no. It has to be something specific. It was a big change from when I was in grade 8.

I worked there for like a year and a half, and I began to feel more empowered in my work. Then I got a call from a director at the original company where I was an assistant, and she said that a Communications position was available and would I be interested? This was two years after I had quit, and I didn't have to think about it. I just said, Yes, definitely I would. It felt like more vindication that I was capable. This international sporting event was, for me, the ultimate in community building. I had no doubt that this was the right move. I went back as a Communications specialist, and I was glad that I did, because it felt like things had been set right. I had some skills that I'd developed at the PR agency, so I was a more valuable employee. It was a very young organization so it was so fun to be a part of it. But it was also very stressful. I got very physically ill. I was feeling that I needed to think about how I could be less stressed out by what I do, but I didn't really have a plan. When the events were over, all of us were unemployed.

I was tired, but I still wanted to grow. I was still ambitious. I still wanted to be the best possible version of myself. And within a couple of months I was interviewing for a

job at a provincial Aboriginal advocacy organization. And because I had communications experience and self-identified as a First Nations person, it helped, and then I was successful. This felt like my path. I was continuing to realize what I'm meant to do. It still felt relevant, even though it had been 10 years since the original incident at the college had happened. I wanted to feel that if anything like that came up again, I would have the communications knowledge and experience and skills for this problem to never arise again. That was my goal to continue to be growing in my career to address that problem.

Towards the end of the third year at that job, I essentially had some emotional difficulties, and I had to go on a leave of absence and part of the reason I felt that was I felt like I had been investing so much of myself emotionally in my work, and it wasn't going the way I thought it should be going. That felt bad. I had a disagreement with my bosses, and I left work, and I just started crying and I couldn't stop crying and I phoned my parents and my sister, and they supported me. I saw a doctor who helped. After that, I was off work for like a month. I started to think that I no longer felt like that organization was the right place for me to work and then I also started to think that maybe I had already learned enough about Communications, that I didn't need to be continuing on that path. What was important to me was that I grow in my career, and I think I'm now at a stage where I don't need to be growing specifically as a Communications professional. That was a real turning point for me to be like, I don't need this specific thing anymore.

While I was off, I applied for a job at a local institution where I became a manager. I was using my communications skills, solving problems between people. That felt good, and it also felt good not being obsessed with the title of Communications anymore. I feel free, and now the whole idea of choice became really important to me. I

wanted to be able to choose from among a variety of things that I could do. And then an opportunity came up in another department, human resources. The job was higher level and it seemed that you'd be making great change, so that felt like the right thing for me. I was really grateful that they wanted me to stay in my old department, but I felt like I had to grow and make the big-as-possible change, and follow the human resources job. I almost didn't apply because they said master's degree preferred and I don't have my master's degree. But I spoke with a few different people and they said to try it anyways. I did even though I felt unsure, like I was probably not the most qualified. I have a pretty good sense of humour, and somehow it translated well during the interview across skype, and so they really liked me. I took the job.

Early in this job, I had a long struggle over defining my role. It appeared to be an issue of race—in part a belief by others that my Indigenous status made me most qualified to fill certain roles. I worked hard to advocate for additional funding and additional support. Eventually, we agreed to have a fourth person brought on. I thought that was good. Others were really resisting it, but I felt like we were able to come to an agreement. I knew, from personal experience, I couldn't do the job if I was going to be constantly embroiled in conflict. It wouldn't be sustainable for me personally, or for anyone who would come after me in this job. And then, as the organization distributed resources, others continued to disagree with my position and I experienced conflict with a colleague. I felt attacked. When I left, all of the emotions that I was feeling started to come out, and I started to cry. I went to the Longhouse, and I spoke with my colleagues there, and they provided an incredible amount of emotional support. They were so empathetic. I felt uncomfortable with my emotion and I tried to be tough, and just kind of get through it. I tried to tough through it for like a couple of months, and then I realized

that what I was feeling was something that I couldn't just get over, so I went to see a doctor, and the doctor diagnosed health concerns again. And within six months, I realized that I needed to take a break. I didn't want to take a medical leave, so I decided that what I was going to do was take a one-year personal leave of absence, unpaid. I would focus on taking a couple classes with the idea that I would take a master's degree in a therapeutic helping profession. And I was a little bit trying to run away. I thought maybe counselling psychology was an escape route that still offered me many choices. I made the mistake of telling my boss though. I made her think I didn't want my job, when really, I should have said, I'm struggling. I should have been more forthright and just said, I'm dealing with a health condition. I need to remove myself from this situation in order to get healthy. But I made her think I wasn't interested in the job. I took the year leave and volunteered with some therapists, and quickly realized the job wasn't a good fit in terms of my skills and strengths. I just recently came to the decision that I would return to the job. I'll be going back soon. It was really, really hard to decide that. It was really stressful. I had resolved my health issues within a few months of my leave. Then, I threw myself into exploration, taking classes and volunteering. I had thought I could be a counselling therapist, and then maybe I wouldn't be so stressed out. I'm volunteering as a mentor to a young Indigenous girl. I needed all these things to feel better. I needed to feel like I was helping someone. I needed to have personal relationships. That's all been part of what's been making me feel more positive about everything. I'm still meeting my career goals and also feeling reconnected to the idea of helping, I was looking for that more positive immediate feedback that I'm making a difference.

I think part of the problem is that I've had such a negative idea of graduate studies. My GPA was not great from my time of my original undergrad. That was part of

my goal taking this year off was to boost my GPA a bit, but also find the program that would be the right fit. I was thinking a lot about what could I do that wouldn't feel limiting. One of the things I've kind of been thinking of is Human Development. My parents had very unique experiences. My mom went to residential school and my dad dropped out of high school in grade 9, and he actually ran away from home as well. Their view of education is just enough to get a job, but not too much. For me, the 'too much' was a graduate degree. I struggled a long time with that. But where I'm at now is thinking that my parents are almost miracles. The fact that they found each other and created a business together, and they've been able to support their family and be there for us, emotionally. Their success is incredible. I was interested in what are the things that happen in someone's life, and that's a little bit like what this study is maybe, that allow someone to achieve their potential or reach their goals or be successful. I thought I wouldn't feel limited if I was studying something like Human Development. The other one I'm kind of interested in is Public Health, because it's thinking about a population and thinking about what works for them and what's not working for them.

I can do a good job when I return since my leave. I'm in a better emotional state. I've got the experience. I know how to get some things done. I've had the year away from it. Taking a year off has made me feel, in a good way, empty, like I'm not filled to the brim of emotions and stress, so I feel a lot more in position, ready. I have space. I don't think I've felt this ready in quite a long time, because, I haven't taken this amount of time to pause. And I was trying to get some insight into myself as well, because you never have that much time to be introspective when you're working.

I'm still proud of what I've done, but sometimes I feel that I've done it the hard way, in a way that takes a greater toll on me. It feels good to have a little bit of space to

think about all kinds of things. I feel like it is a struggle to find, and maybe it's not a struggle for everyone, but I found it to be such a struggle to find my place in the world career-wise, and that's why, when I saw the posting for this research project, I was just like, Yes! It's really important to come up with an understanding of what struggle and success in career looks like, and how to help people.

Sam

Definition of Career and Success in Career Decision-Making. Career is something that I'm working towards. Something that I do with my time, working towards something. It's building on something, a theme. Some things that I get paid for are part of my career, but also some things I don't get paid for are part of my career, so it's not necessarily what I get paid for doing. It's what I do with my time when I'm working towards something, building something based on my interests. My career trajectory has been in the human service field in the broad sense, so that's included volunteering at many different places and then also work and also schooling to get more experience, and then I'll continue that throughout my life in that field.

I define being successful in my career decision making when I feel personally satisfied with my decisions related to my career. Also, if I'm building on something, so I feel like there's movement. To me, that feels successful. It's kind of like I'm working more towards something, building on things, as opposed to staying still and saving all this money.

Sam's Narrative. When we talk about career, I think of when I was young. My mom had a business, so I was born into a family where there was a business at the house, a tax business. Since I can remember, I was always taking people's money, or seating them in the living room, and helping in that sense. But I never saw myself working like

that in the future. It was just something I had to do at home. She didn't pay us, because we were at home, but that was the first time I thought, Okay, I want to go and get a job for myself.

I needed money in order to move out, and I was like 16, so I went and got a job at a fast food place. It wasn't what I wanted to do with my life. It was more that I needed money to move out and people my age worked at these types of places, so I went to work there. And that's when I started thinking about what should I do for a job, because working there didn't pay very well and it was really hard work.

And then, in grade 11, CAP, career planning class, the teacher made us do a project where you have to pick the career you want after high school and then you make some kind of plan. I went and did the paper, I thought I did a really job, I wrote a paper about how I wasn't sure, but I listed some interests, but then he said he couldn't pass me if I didn't pick one and then come up with a plan. I remember being really mad at that teacher and I thought that was not a good way to help people explore their interests. I just thought that was garbage, and I remember being frustrated with that assignment, thinking that it was a lie. It was an ethical dilemma for me. The assignment was about what you're going to do, and I didn't know, so I couldn't lie. And I remember talking to my mom, and she was like, "Just write what I do." So I put business and then she gave me this plan, so I wrote this paper about how I want to be in business and then I wrote I would go to the school down the road. I got an A. And then I ended up following that plan after high school. I enrolled at a local college for business, and I didn't even make it. I did one semester. I took full classes, but I only finished half of them. I dropped out of the other half. It was really hard math-wise and that was my first college experience. I went to a small school from kindergarten to grade 12. College was very different. I just felt like I

didn't know what to do with my life. I felt bad for my mom, too, because she was really excited that I would be like her and take over the business. So I felt bad to let her down, and also I felt like I didn't know what I was going to do. She said I could work for her as her secretary, so I could have money. So I worked for her for, I don't know, between 6 and 9 months. Not a whole year. I felt horrible. I felt like a failure. I felt stupid. I remember I didn't even want to tell my mom, because I lived at home. I was crying all night. I didn't want to tell her, and I had a midterm the next day, and I didn't even know what to study. I felt like a failure. High school, it's not like it was easy, but I knew what high school was. Those were the classes, these were the people. College was ridiculous. And my anxiety was really bad at college. I didn't know anybody. I'd always been anxious, but it's never been pushed like that. Like on the first day I would have panic attacks and even in class, I would leave. Looking back, I'm like, "Awww, poor kid." I should have asked for help. I didn't even know that you can ask for help for that. I thought I was just dumb and I just couldn't understand why everyone else was so chill, why they could do it and I couldn't. It was just really hard.

So then I worked for my mother, which was irritating, but it was helpful, cause she gave me a full time job right away. I got to work for her Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm. It helped me learn what I didn't want. I didn't want to work for family, which I learned from working for her. You don't get sick days, it's just like you're at home, so there are no boundaries in that sense. I remember I was sick one day and I was like, "I need a sick day", and she was like, "No. You don't get one. You can sit up here and work." I was like, "This is not a real job!" And she was like, "Go get a real job then." That's when my mind said, I don't want to just do this. I don't want to work for her.

And then, I just—I feel so stupid saying this—I had a boyfriend at the time and I was like, “What should I do?” And he was like, “You should be a chef. That’s cool. I have a friend who’s a chef. You like baking.” I do like to bake. It was literally one conversation and then I was like, “Yeah! I should do that.” But it wasn’t really my thought. He just told me that. I didn’t give it much thought, and then I just went on the internet and found a culinary arts program. It’s in a nearby city. I kind of wanted some space from my parents. They’re really protective. But I didn’t have money, so I couldn’t just move out. But I have a grandma who lives near the program, so I was like, I can move in with my grandma and go to culinary school. So I did that. I pitched this idea to my parents. Told them how much I loved cooking, wanted to be a chef. I took it on like, This is what I will like, because I like baking. I didn’t try it out or anything, or shadow a chef. I just kind of went with it based on what I knew about being a chef, which was that you cook. So then I applied, and I got in. And then I got to move out to my grandma’s and I got more freedom. And then I started at the culinary program. It’s a twelve month program and by the second month I wanted to drop out. I hated it. It was horrible and it was repeating what had happened to me at college. I wasn’t failing the classes. I got really good grades, but I didn’t like it. I didn’t like the atmosphere. I hated it. When I look back now, I hated it because I was one of three girls. I was the youngest girl in a class full of men, and we had all male teachers and they would yell at us, berate us, one of the male teachers grabbed my butt, two of the male students touched my boobs. I didn’t know that was necessarily wrong, or I couldn’t say anything. I was just like, “Ahhh. This is disgusting. I hate this environment.” I thought, I can’t do this for my life. They would talk to us about the schedule how you’re going to be working evenings and weekends. I was like, That sounds horrible, in terms of being a chef or running a kitchen

or something. So I just didn't like it. And I would like cry at school if we got yelled at. It was just too chaotic for me. So in the second month of a twelve month program, I thought, I need another plan, but I'm not going to quit, because I already quit college, and I wanted to commit to something and finish it. So I stuck with the whole 12 month program, but during that time, I would look online at the internet at other things and I didn't really know what to do.

And then, this was very significant, in culinary school you don't really have homework, so I had a lot of free time, so I was trying to find something to do volunteer-wise. I was lying on my bed at my grandma's house, looking at the phonebook and there was a flyer for a mentoring program. I called the number and I went to an info session and they explained how you commit to hanging out with a kid once a week. You just have fun, do things. So I signed up for that. I was so excited. I got this little six year old. Her picture's here. I think she's seven there. They paired us up. We went every week, volunteering to do things in the community. That, I found really meaningful. I was like, I love this. I like hanging out with someone and being helpful. And so that kind of started my mind thinking about, How can you get paid for that kind of work? I'm sure this is a career of some sort.

I think I found a program on the internet, at a local college. It's a diploma you can get in Youth Justice. I found it one night, looking at the internet, thinking, What am I going to do with my life?, and then I saw this ad. I must have come across their page or something and it was describing the program and how you learn to work with young people who are in the criminal justice system. It sounded really interesting. My coordinator at the mentoring organization was giving me some tips for the essay. So I was really excited about that, and I felt really supported by her. She would say, Oh you'll

do great at that. She would say really nice things. I felt comfortable that I would like it. My parents were not that excited about that kind of career. They didn't really understand it, but they kind of let me do what I want. They didn't say no, and they helped me pay for it. So then I finished culinary school and even though I wasn't going to continue in that field, I had done well. I got really good feedback from my teachers saying how I should stay in the field. Even though I didn't want to, getting that feedback felt good, because I'd dropped out of college and I felt like a failure. This school, I stuck with it and got a certificate and I did well. So I guess that boosted my confidence a little bit.

And then I started at college for a diploma in Youth Justice. And I did it full time for two years. I didn't work during that time. I really liked it, but I also found the classes really hard, learning about child abuse and violence between people and family abuse and sexual abuse, all those topics were really hard. I wouldn't leave class, but I would get really upset learning the material, but I was also very interested in it. So I really enjoyed learning the material and it was reinforcing, I was soaking it up in my head. And then in the first semester of the program, they put you on a practicum. Oh my goodness! My practicum was at a drop-in centre for youth who experience homelessness. And that was a big wake up call for me of what the field actually is. Learning in school was great, but actually seeing what it's like, that was really stressful for me. It was also reinforcing in that sense, because I actually met with youth and talked with them and got to build some relationships. I got pepper sprayed on my first day. I was really scared to go back. The spray got me, the residue, and I couldn't breathe. I had a panic attack. I went to talk with one of my teachers. You know how you have a supervisor for practicum? I had a male supervisor, and I'm really uncomfortable with male teachers, and he shared an office with a woman teacher, so I went to talk to her about it, and she was a very pivotal person for

me in the program. I went to her and I couldn't explain myself. I started to cry. I couldn't explain it without crying. She helped me settle down. She didn't really say anything. She just normalized it. Probably used all these counselling skills and then just said, "Alright. You're going back tomorrow." That kind of thing. We didn't settle anything or change practicum. She was just kind of helpful and said I could come back if I needed to, but I didn't. She just made me feel that even though I was all upset, I could still go back and it's going to be fine. That relationship was a really pivotal moment.

On my papers I would like take every single comment really seriously. If there was a 'good job', I would feel it so intensely. I would feel so good about myself. I would get good grades and that was very reinforcing for me. The teachers who ran the program would talk about how if you liked it, you should finish your degree and transfer to the child and youth care program. They were always dropping these hints. And then I always had this idea, not that I wasn't smart, but I never saw college as the thing for me. It was just the way I was raised was that you need to get a job. You need to work. You don't necessarily need college. Neither of my parents graduated high school. It wasn't like a thing. But then the way it was presented was that if you get a degree, you have more options in the field to move up, so then I'm like, Okay. I like school. I'm getting good feedback, but then I still wasn't sure. I had this idea I wasn't smart enough to keep going. I went and spoke with one of the teachers, and he said really kind things about me as a student. No one had talked to me like that before. My perspective began to change. I thought I could do the degree.

During that time, the same teacher sent me an email of a job opening at PLEA, the place where I volunteered, but they have so many different programs. I always take everything so personal. I felt so special that he sent it to me, but he probably sent it to a

lot of people. So I applied. I got this job. I started working full time, while I finished my degree part time. When I got that job, that was my first paid job in the human service field. I loved it. I fell in love with it. I couldn't believe I was getting paid to do that, to hang out with people, and be a nice person. I don't know how long I loved it, because then it started to get stressful. But I got lots of experience there. I finished my degree over the next three years. So sometime in that three years, while I was working and going to school, I started to get irritated with my job, in terms of being told what to do. Like, as a youth worker, you have coordinators and managers over top of you and they all have opinions about what goals you should be working on or what you should be doing. Somehow over that three year period, I started getting irritated about being told what I should be doing with the youth and thinking I have a better idea, or that's not what I learned in school, or I'm trying to come from this approach, and not being able to voice that, cause I don't want to be disrespectful and they're senior people, so you have to listen to your manager. I was young, I didn't want to talk back. I would just hold it in. I would get frustrated. I started thinking, I don't want to do this job forever. I can't live like that. So I started thinking, Maybe I want to go back to school to build on that. It was just in the back of my head.

And then I guess at the same time, if you think of my career that I've been talking about, at the same time, parallel I got married. I got married young, so would have conversations with my husband about our careers and when I'm going to stop school finally, because throughout our relationship I was always in school. I felt a lot of pressure from him and his family to finish school and settle down and be more traditional in that sense. They're very religious as well as my family. I think those were my thoughts for myself when I was a teenager, but then as I started going to school and just growing up

watching my mom work, I didn't quite see that for myself to just have children and stay at home and not also be doing something else. When people would talk about how I need to have children, I would get all stressed out about it. I want to do other things. So, I would kind of go back and forth if I want to keep going to school or should I stop. It would cause some marital problems for me. So that was a lot of different pressures that I would try to think about in my head.

And so then at around when I graduated from my degree, I got divorced, so then I didn't have to think about anyone else. I found that very refreshing to think about, what do I want to do? I don't have to think about my husband or his family, or my family. I separated more from my family at that point in my life, because they are very religious, they didn't agree with my divorce, so I just moved to my own place and we didn't have a lot of contact. That was the first time I had ever lived by myself or started thinking for myself. I had to really think for myself to get divorced, because we were religious and you can't get divorced. I had to go against everything I was taught, and even believed myself. It was the first time that I was thinking my own thoughts.

I also started seeing a therapist at that time to help with my divorce, which is significant because then I went on to study in the field of mental health. I started to look into prerequisites that I needed, and I just started taking those prerequisites. It felt like I had a plan. I was going to try to go to grad school. And I remember I told my mom first, because I would need some help, because I couldn't pay for it all. She said that was fine.

So to go back to school, I was thinking, I can have more independence in my career and then I won't have to be micromanaged. So it felt like I was moving so that I could have more independence in my job if I could finish graduate school. I would go to counselling appointments with the youth that I worked with. Sometimes they would ask

me to come in with them, so I'd get to sit in and watch their sessions. That was inspiring to me. I would look at my job, and then look at this psychologist's job, and see how they're also being helpful, but it's only for an hour, and it doesn't appear that anyone's telling them what to do. It just seemed like something that is still helpful because being a youth worker meant that I'd been with the same youth for 7 or 8 hours a day. It's so tiring and you're dealing with all their ups and downs. You're getting calls, You need to do this. You need to do this. It just seemed not really sustainable for me, because I would get so irritated, so then seeing what a psychologist does, I could see myself in that role.

So I guess wanting more independence and then seeing it in front of me. And then getting feedback from teachers in my undergrad that I was intelligent, that I could do it. That type of thing was helpful and they built on each other. And then having that freedom, that pressure off, of not being married anymore, pressure to stop school and have kids, and relating it to like God and the bible and those kinds of things. It felt nice to just go with what I was interested in without people telling me that it's not right or that I shouldn't be focusing on that.

I did all my prerequisites and then I applied to grad schools, and I got rejected. I wasn't devastated. I was sad, because I wanted to go back. But I just thought I'd reapply. I already was working full time as a youth worker, and it didn't change anything that I didn't get in. I'd just get some more experience and volunteering. I started volunteering at a crisis line. I think that was the only thing that I worked on. And then I joined a lab for research experience, because at college I didn't do research.

And then I also met my current partner at that time, too. He helped me study for the GRE, so we had similar interests in terms of schooling and going on in our education, so that was really reinforcing, and something I found was a good fit, because with my

other partner, education was looked down upon. It's not for Christians, or women. It's not something you want to get into, because then you can't have a family and look after the home and those are your roles. So for me, someone who was attracted to the fact that I wanted to go to school and had these plans for myself, it was nice. It felt like a good fit. So then we became really close and moved in together, really quickly. And that was helpful.

I chose my grad school based on being able to write a thesis and keep the possibility of continuing on in my education a possibility. I had a plan. I wasn't thinking of doing a PhD then, but I wasn't *not* thinking about it either. I didn't want to take a program where it would cut me off from doing something else. So I completed graduate school. It was very stressful and very hard. In my second week of grad school I got into an accident and it like made everything way harder, being in pain and getting headaches and then also my mental health started going down at that time because of the pain and the stress and starting a new thing. It just was like a very bad combination, but I persevered. I went through it. It was not comfortable at all.

The first time I started thinking about maybe doing a PhD was in a career counselling class I took. We had to do a project about helping somebody with some career goal. I just applied it to myself. Like the theory, I applied it to myself. It was about helping a client take one little step. You don't have to think about finishing this, don't think about being a doctor or whatever you want to be, but what is that next thing you might need to learn. So then I applied this kind of thinking to myself. I would toy around with getting a PhD, and then I'd say, "I'm not smart enough. This has been the worst program ever. I can't do it." Then I'd say, "What's the next step?" I'd apply that thinking. We learned all these tips in the career class, like doing an informational interview, or like

just approaching people who are doing this program, just little things that you can do to learn, not necessarily that you're committing to something, but just to learn about it, and so then I thought, I should do that. It was just little, no pressure activities that you could do. So I approached a few people who I knew who had applied to that program or were in that program and I just emailed, Hello. Can I interview you about your experience? And then I talked to three people who had either applied or were in PhD programs. It was breaking down how scary it was or how unattainable it was, or how dumb I thought I was.

I felt like an imposter throughout my whole master's degree. I just had very bad imposter syndrome. And like, people would make comments. And because I was the only Indigenous student, I had this thought in my head that that helped me get in. I mean, you don't know. You can't live again and see if I hadn't checked the box. So I had these bad thoughts about that. And then, yeah, I basically talked myself into applying to a PhD program, and doing my masters' thesis was really hard but also increased my self-esteem that I could do that just at a larger scale. And getting good feedback from my supervisors and stuff was really helpful. So then I applied to the PhD program, but I got rejected the first time. And it was okay. It wasn't too bad. I've already experienced rejection, well like dropping out in college, and also with my masters I was rejected, and it's just like, Oh well! You apply again. Except for this time I approached the program and asked for feedback, even though it says you shouldn't on the letter, I decided to do it anyways. So I got some feedback, and that was helpful.

So then I got an interview for a great position in my field. They didn't even offer me temporary or contract work. I got full time, permanent work immediately. I took the job, even though I knew in my head, I was going to apply to go back to school. I knew

school was only a possibility, but I felt a little bit bad taking it, and applying. But people do that. You need to work on your career. But thinking about other people, I was always worried about how much paperwork they were going to have to do. I was trying not to think like that. It was really hard for me to just focus on myself. So then, I worked there and did my application again and that was really helpful, because the work was in a related field. And then I got in. I don't know if I'll take a leave or quit my current job to go back to school. That's current day.

Kim

Definition of Career and Success in Career Decision-Making. I'm really passionate about my career. From early stages in life, you have different jobs to make money to get to the next step, but for me, my teaching career is a life-long endeavor and something that consumes most parts of my life. In a good way. There's a drive to always be better. My teaching is all-encompassing. My career is intertwined with my identity, and my identity is something that is developing. The more I learn about myself and my culture, the more I can share, especially with Indigenous students to help guide them, and let them know that they can see themselves in these types of institutions.

I thought I was doing well in career decision-making when I was creating outside-the-box programming. Administrators noticed, and then they started to ask me to speak at different events and be part of different collaboration groups, and that made me feel like I was doing well. That's one side of it. The other side of it is doing well for me: seeing what's happening in my room, at recess, at lunch, after school, in the morning. Kids would come to my classroom and just be with me and hang out. I think for me remaining a mentor, someone who kids can talk to, I think that's really important, so doing well in that area is really rewarding. And seeing improved graduation rates. Two years ago I

thought doing well was becoming an administrator and that's how I came into my current leadership position. And now the idea of doing well in my career has drastically shifted. All I want to do is go back and be with kids, but I see that as a real dilemma, because it's kind of giving up or failing. I feel a little bit awkward about it in two ways: 1) I feel I've gotten past that and 2) I just feel that you move on, and people expect you to thrive in these positions, but I don't love it. This year has been the most difficult for me professionally in all the years I've been teaching.

Kim's Narrative. I can start my career life review with my school experience, which wasn't positive. My mom always told us, "Don't tell anyone you're Native. Don't tell anyone that you're Aboriginal or Coast Salish. Tell them that you're Hawaiian." We are Hawaiian, but she was like, "Don't tell anyone, because you'll be streamed into special classes, and you won't thrive." So I went through school not telling anyone about my identity. I still streamed into easier classes, but I was totally capable of regular English. That's what my B.A. is in, but we were streamed, my sister and my brother and me too. My sister didn't finish high school, and my brother went into trades, the Ace It program. I was all about sports. I played soccer, and I fit in that way. The teachers liked me because I was athletic and a jock and would kind of push me through. They needed me on the teams. And then I had a lot of friends, so I liked school for that, but I didn't like academics. I got really nervous, hated reading out loud, hated tests. I didn't thrive. And then I got to grade 12, and I had an English teacher, and he totally shifted my whole world. He asked me to come in in the morning, an hour before school, and he'd work with me on grammar and writing essays, and he thought that the way I wrote was really great. He built me up. So I graduated with really good marks in English, and I worked

really hard at it, because I love writing, and I love reading, just not out loud. So he was really one of the main people who shifted my world.

So I graduated, and then I worked at a mediocre job, a cafe, and I double shifted and I saved all my money for two years, cause my mom said, “You have a couple choices. You can get a job and move out, you can go to school and live here, or something in between.” And I said, “Okay, I’m not going to school. I can’t. I got C minuses except for English and P.E., and I don’t want to move out, so can I work for a year to two years and live here and then go travelling.” And she agreed. I knew I wasn’t good enough to be in post-secondary. I knew I couldn’t do it. I’m not smart enough, I thought. And I didn’t want to move out, because moving out meant working full time in a job that I didn’t love, and I wouldn’t feel good. I wasn’t going to accept a mediocre job. My nanny was a nurse, so she helped people every day and loved it. So I wanted that. But I couldn’t be a nurse, because I couldn’t go to school, I thought I wasn’t smart enough. I needed to find something that I could do.

I was so curious about the world. I started reading travel magazines and books, autobiographical works of people from countries I’d never been to, and I just got enthralled with it all, and I watched National Geographic, and I was just travel, travel, travel. I told everybody for the two years that I was saving up to travel, and I kept believing in it and saying it. But then I didn’t think I could do it. I saw a counsellor because I didn’t think I could travel. I’d saved up all this money, bought the ticket and then I freaked out, thinking, I can’t go. I can’t do this. I was really sad for a while, and my counsellor called that the negative voice, The Other. And that’s the voice that tries to hold you down and tell you you’re not good enough, that you’re not worthy. That other voice is there. It’s black wolf, white wolf. You need it there, but you don’t need to listen

to it. I just slowly started changing that. When it came up that way, I just said, “That’s The Other. I’m not going to listen to it. That’s black wolf. No, I’m not feeding you.” Then my godfather helped me plan a Contiki tour. I bused around Europe with a group. And then I wasn’t satisfied with that, so I got a Eurorail pass and backpacked. I was supposed to be gone for a month, and I remember at the end of that month, I had secured a job in London. I was working at a hostel just at the front desk and really loving that, because I could just zip off to wherever with Ryanair or Easyjet. It was so cheap. My mom wanted me to come home, but I stayed. I stayed and ran an internet cafe at the hostel. I made some money. I just didn’t want to go home. I wanted to see the world. I want to see other ways of being and living. I went to Barcelona and then Greece to work. I went to Paris and Ireland. Then I had a realization there, Oh I’m so selfish. I’ve just been living this life all about me. I want to help. I want to give back. So I went online and I just started researching programs and then, at that moment, I was ready to come home, because it had been three years. So I was researching, and then this program popped up at a local college, called Global Stewardship. It was a two year program on how to run NGOs and international development. But I didn’t think I was going to be able to get in, because I don’t have the grades, and I’m not smart enough and blah blah blah. And so I was like, No. I need to change that narrative. I enrolled as a mature student, which I think is the reason I got in. I remembered I had learned to call that negative voice, The Other. I didn’t feed black wolf.

My papa and my nanny were really successful. My family, they are all working professionals, so they had money for my school. At that moment, when I saw the global stewardship program, I called my nanny and papa, and I told her I found a program. And my nanny said, “Take it! We have the money.”

I came home, and the program was starting in September, and I had six months. So I did my application, I got in, everything was great. I was waitressing and saved a bunch of money, and then I bought a ticket to Thailand. I was taking a yoga teacher training class. I thought I could be a yoga teacher on weekends and in the evenings and go to school. I had to work, but wanted to do something I liked. So I chose yoga, and then the tsunami happened. It was boxing day, and I was meant to leave the next day, and then the tsunami happened, and my parents were like, "You can't go." But I didn't listen to them and they were really upset with me.

I got certified as a yoga teacher and then stayed longer because I loved it so much. It was a community. We took care of each other. It was spiritually really good to learn those skills and meditate there. It was so fun. And then I went to Koh Pi Pi and worked with an aid organization. I planted coconut trees and cleaned up. And it was really hard to do this, because I was finding all these articles of clothing and journals and thinking how that could have been me. But I really enjoyed helping.

Then I have to go back to school. I excelled. I was getting C minuses in high school and then I go to college and I'm getting As. Part of that program was international development, so my friends and I decided we were going to go to Africa and volunteer at an orphanage. And it was there that I decided I wanted to be a teacher. I worked with this little boy, Moby, and he was a self-selected mute, and a child soldier, and I read his file and it was just atrocious, the things this little five year old had been through. And I just related. I don't know how that is, but I related it to residential school in a way. He was addicted to glue, because they huff glue to stay full. Those leading these types of groups give the children glue so they don't have to feed them, so they're high and they have guns and weapons, and he would scratch kids and bite them through the flesh. As soon as I

walked in, he saw me and just ran to me and just hugged me. My goal was to have him say, "Hi, my name's Moby. How are you?" So, every night I read him stories. I started to tell him, "I'm leaving in 30 days, 29..." He knew I was leaving, and then on the second to last day, he looks at me and he's like, "Hi. My name's Moby. How are you?" I start crying and pick him up, and smooching him and hugging him. And that's the feeling I want forever. And then I totally changed my degrees. I came back home, and I was like, I don't want to do this. I want to be a teacher. I transferred to university and started at the bottom again, as a mature student. I was way older than everyone. I thought, What am I doing? But then I just started loving the English classes, so I was thriving. I finished my four years and then I got into the teaching program.

I wanted to apply to the teaching program. I was really nervous, because I didn't think I'd get in. And then I started typing out of my application, and I realized that everything I'd been doing had been leading up to this. The universe is so interesting. I remember I dropped the application off the day it was due in the morning. I was apprehensive, and thinking, Do I? Don't I? I slipped it under the door. I didn't even hand it to someone. I slipped it under the door and walked away, and I felt so good. And then I got in. It was an accomplishment that I completed the application. It was quite lengthy. You have to get all these references, and you have to do an essay. And that was really great that I went to college first because I learned a lot of basic skills about the institution of university so that when I went to university that was really helpful. I thought, This is right. This is the right move. But I was nervous. I didn't want to fail, but I had to risk it. I knew it was the next step. It felt good to be moving. I wasn't meandering. It was intentional.

And then I had originally applied for the Aboriginal teacher cohort, and then I freaked out and withdrew my application, but I still wanted to do Indigenous studies, so I did go to Iquitos, Peru. And of course I end up in a rural area, working with this medicine man. Local. Remote. No shared language. Walking the hills. Learning about all the Indigenous plants there. And looking back now, everything I'm doing now is just that. I was very much part of the community there, and I was invited to ceremonies. I started to wonder, What in my culture do we do? What is it we do on Coast Salish territories? Cause Indigenous people of the world have similarities, and very drastic differences.

But then I got here and I started my practicum at a local high school, and it was the worst experience. I lost 15lbs. I had to extend my practicum. I wasn't meeting expectations. I was like, I'm going to fail? What? And the weird thing was, in Iquitos, they really thought I was a great educator. I knew I was good at what I was doing because I put so much into it. And I really heard the kids. And so it was perplexing that when I was in Canada, speaking the same language, I wasn't thriving. I was failing. I was up all hours of the night prepping. Trying to reinvent the wheel. Being an idiot about it. I remember one of my observations went poorly, and I ended up crying and my SA felt bad, but she directed me to extend my practicum. And then another supervisor who was there in Iquitos, came in to do an observation to see what was up. And I gave her all my materials. And she looked through it all, and she said, "This is interesting stuff. What do you mean they say you need to extend your practicum?" Her believing in me helped me get through that time. She told me I couldn't quit. And that she's seen this happen with other Indigenous educators in the district. She said, "This happens a lot to our people. You need to be stronger for the kids." I knew she was right. I didn't come this far to give up now. All the time and all the money, and I would be disappointing my papa and my

nanny and that broke my heart. That shattered me. So then, I just buckled down and really focused and didn't stay up all night and didn't try to reinvent the wheel, and I actively asked for help from my network of friends that I went to Iquitos with. We were all women and we were all friends and we became like sisters, so I asked them for help, and they were sending me lessons and I used them. I couldn't even think about that, about being creative. I just needed to get through it. Yeah, so then I graduated and as soon as I graduated...

I missed a part. After my B.A., I went to the Indigenous Peoples' office and said, I'm Indigenous, and I'm graduating. I didn't want to tell them before, because I didn't want help. I didn't want them to put it on my file that I'm Indigenous, because then teachers would look there, see my file, and give me a break, or lighten my load. Or give me a pass when it should have been a fail. And I just could not have that. I needed to know I could do it on my own, with the same standards as everyone else. I didn't take any bursaries, any scholarship money. I didn't take gifts or handouts. I just couldn't. And then on the day I graduated, I went to him and I said, "I'm graduating." He was kind and said, "It's so great to have you." It was good to see him there in a place of power. He invited me to the honouring feast. It's the real grad for Indigenous students. I refused. I thought I couldn't. He told me I needed to come. He was inviting. I thought about it. I told my papa about it and he said, We're going. So I RSVP'd, and my whole family came. There was a table of twelve. The morning I was getting ready I was feeling so sick. I threw up in the bathroom. I was so nervous. I thought, I don't belong at an Indigenous grad ceremony. I didn't know what to expect. But my papa told me to get in the car. He said, "We'll talk about it on the way up." So I got in the car and we went. And he didn't talk about it at all. He just talked about when his own story, a time for him when he was

so nervous he was sick. So we go, and it was a beautiful spread, beautiful room, and they gave us all cedar headbands, and I was thinking, “This is amazing,” and I got so emotional. “This is my culture. And they’re here honouring me. All this work. It’s so important.” Papa introduced me to this woman I had never met. She’s a family member. And she was the Director of Education. I was like, “Oh god. This is crazy.” I was just in awe of her. And she was so beautiful and really strong. And so she’s up at the podium and she’s doing the address and all the students are sitting beside her, me included. And I’m just like freaking out. I can’t believe that I’m sitting here. This is amazing. And she says, “I just wanted to start with a story, so my niece is here today and she’s walked in this institution for the last four years and it didn’t break her, and she’s picked up all the sticks of knowledge and she’s created her own bundle and she’s carrying it heavy on her back for her people.” [cries] It’s so emotional. “And she has learned to walk in two worlds. And I’m so proud of her.” And I’m like, “Whoa. This girl seems amazing. Who is it?” And then she says my name. And it’s me. I could have fainted.

And then, she enrolled me in a local language class, and she hired me after university at an elementary school as an educational assistant, and tells me, “You have to work from the bottom up, my girl. Know everyone’s position so you can understand what they do, and help them be better.” That makes sense, so I was a qualified teacher working as an EA. And that school is immersion, so it was mostly Skwxwú7mesh snichim, and I listened to all the songs, was invited to these parents’ houses. Finding my family. And then I was I got on the TOC list in a nearby district, so I was TOCing, but mostly I was learning my culture, learning the language. So I was studying all these other cultures and Indigenous people. I was living in them and now I was living in mine, and it was just right there.

So I did that for about six months before I went back to London. I wanted to travel again. I fell in love. My partner wanted to travel, so we went. We had an adventure. And then I ended up in this little town, and I knew immediately I didn't want to be there. And the kids were really tough. Chairs were thrown. I got spat on. The community was conservative, and a teacher at my school learned that I had a girlfriend, and he went back to the school and told a bunch of kids, and then they started harassing me. I'd be walking down the hallway and big groups of kids would be shouting really horrible things. And I went to the head teacher and she told me, "You're the one who chose this lifestyle. Deal with it." And my partner didn't understand, but I had to come home. I only lasted 6 months.

And then I came back and I got a place on the water on the other side. I enrolled in my master's, I got a car before I came home. Got the place before I came home. My parents were so lovely. They dropped my car off at my place and put an air mattress in there. They put food in my fridge. They really helped me out. I'd had a hard time and they knew it. So they kind of set me up, and then I just healed myself in the water. I swam every day, and I just took really good care of my body and ate really well and just wrote and wrote. And then I started my master's in September, and I was still TOCing.

When I was in London, I knew I wanted to get higher education, because some of the things I was doing, I didn't know how to talk about, so I knew I needed to go back to school. I thought that if kids are going through what I was going through, I would have the tools to help them. And so I just started going to school, and then all the articles, and all the projects revived me. I could have studied for the next seven years. If I was rich. [laughs]. I would just do that full time, in every subject area. I got a permanent position teaching, really fast. I had a great principal who really made me feel heard and valued

and part of a team. I created a program for students with special needs, and then they used that model for the district. And that's where I started to gain recognition, which wasn't even in Indigenous education. And then we weren't offering BC first Nations studies, so I asked to teach that. I ran that for three years. And it grew every year and it was so much fun, because it was all experiential and the classes were really small. We went to a pipe ceremony at a university, Long house, all types of dance groups, pow wow.

It was still really hard for me to say to people that I was Indigenous. No one knew what I was. They just assumed I was South American or Canadian, or Italian. Then I started offering BC First Nations studies. The ideas from my master's led me to want to push forward Indigenous education and in doing so I would have to offer BC First Nations studies. And then people started asking me, "Why are you teaching this? Are you Indigenous?" I avoided the question for the first little while, and then I just couldn't avoid it anymore. So then, I had to say, "I'm Coast Salish and this is my family." It was uncomfortable.

But then after it was even more uncomfortable because then I'd be teaching, mid lesson, and a teacher would run into my room and be like, "I have a question, Do Coast Salish people wear headdresses?" And I'm looking at this teacher, looking at my class, like, "Can this wait? Google it! You're interrupting my class for this?" I don't take that much personal, and I kind of stuck to my own thing, but things shifted in the school after that. I became the one to do all the acknowledgements. At one point I said, "It would be nice for a non-Indigenous educator to take on this work. It's not just my work." People say, "We can't pronounce it." I feel like dealing with those kinds of comments is my obligation. Those comments feel like bullets. I think I can take that on for the kids and

compartmentalize it, and say, "These are assumptions. They are not mine." I can put them in a different category. But little ones can't. They are the ones that will take that on and be affected for the rest of their lives. So if I don't help this teacher develop a better approach, a more inclusive pedagogical approach then the students are the ones who will suffer.

And then I applied for a leadership position for Aboriginal Education. I was shortlisted, but I wasn't selected, but they created my current position. It's an Aboriginal Support position. This year has been extremely difficult, and I'm not really sure how that changed so drastically in just one year. I know it has a lot to do with leadership and system change. I think I'm having a really hard time taking all the culture that I know and I've learned and applying it to classrooms, because it seems like I'm cheapening it or something. And I had conflict with my boss about how to honour the students with Coast Salish traditions that were meaningful. I didn't like how he organized events without showing respect to elders or honouring the people who did the work.

I did a drum-making workshop with an important woman in the education and Indigenous communities. She knows the system and she told me, "You just change it. You just change the system. Slowly. Incrementally." So we're working together. And she says she sees a lot of my family in me. When she sees me she sees all my ancestors behind me. That's actually how she views me. And I love that. I'm learning from her. And then another woman, who I met in Longhouse, she wears red paint, so she's an empath. She feels what you feel and she has the gift to take it and then she deals with it in the ocean. She puts it back in the ocean. I was in Longhouse with her and she came up to me and she was like, "You have the same gift as me and you're not nurturing it. You don't know how to control it, so you're suffering." I just started crying. And we met on

the first of the month to talk and she challenged me to listen to the ancestors. The ancestor world and our world collide from 3am to 6am, and this is the time we're together. So she said you need to get up every day for 4 days when the ancestors wake you up and you need to go to the water and pray. And you need to ask for some help, because you're scattered. I went to the water every morning. The first morning I was up at 3:09 am, made some tea and went to the water and just sat still. I had all these visions come, and got on my paddle board and went to a nearby island and just sat there and did a cedar bough brush off and just prayed. And then the most beautiful writing came to me when I got back, so I wrote it all down and then on the last day I was paddling back and in the water there was this beautiful spotted owl feather floating there, and I knew it is a huge deal to find that. And it was interesting because the very first day I went to meet her, I was in the forest collecting salmon berries because you always take elders food, you always bring them something when you go visit. I was collecting salmon berries for her, and I heard these two blue jays going crazy, so I looked up and there was an owl sitting in the tree midday. I took her the plate, and she's like, What animal did you see?, and I was like, Nothing, what are you talking about? Then she said, What winged? I admitted I saw an owl. She said, My girl, I've been praying to meet you. Then she told me I'm scattered, and I need to rein in. Apparently my family has that too in past generations. She was like, "You haven't been feeding your ancestors. You need to feed your ancestors." This is a very important ceremony that I need to do. So I'm getting into all this cultural work that I've never done before. So I'm trying to do that and help teachers, but I can't talk about it. I can't tell them about things that happen in Longhouse, or that happen with her. For one, they'll think I'm nuts, because some people don't even believe there is an ancestor world, and also, I feel too much. So, I'm not going to put

myself in a position to be criticized or cut down. My boss is the one who makes me feel like that. I feel like I'm in grade school again.

Leaving my school and taking my current job looked like the right move to make if I wanted to one day be a principal or administrator. I thought, "This is great. Everybody is recognizing your worth." And then all these small things started happening. And now I'm here. Now I'm taking an educational leave in September and most likely will not be going back to the team. I also applied for the Skwxwú7mesh Sníchim language class at a university. I'm taking a class on reserve, but this way I'll get certified. I took my current leave because I didn't know what else to do. I was really floundering. I was not happy at work, dreading going to work every day. I was uncomfortable with the leadership and needed a change. I had a few options: move to Oliver to live with my sister and apply to the Oliver school board and get a little place on the lake, but leave my city, my family, my community to be a guest on Okanagan territory, which holds three bands. I would have to learn the culture and protocol for every band. That's a lot. That's like a master's in itself. I applied to Oliver. Then I met a woman and she mentioned to me that she was on educational sabbatical. She said you could earn 60% of your pay while you have a break. Write. Reflect. So I researched that, and I got my proposal together. My last choice, I was looking at teaching in Hawaii, at an Indigenous charter school which is language focused. And then all the choices seemed possible. I had been hoping two wouldn't pan out, and I'd only have one. I don't want to leave my community. Especially when I'm making such great connections and all my family members. And Longhouse has welcomed us back, and we've reclaimed our space in Longhouse. This is a big year. We have to go through the naming ceremony still. We have to feed our ancestors still. All these things take time. I'm not going to be able to do that if I'm away.

And then I got the leave, I didn't think I was going to get it. So I was like, This is perfect. I can spend, possibly the entire year, learning the language and immersing myself in skills I've never developed and reflect and write about the last two years in this crazy job. I'm doing that. That's happening in September, so I'll see what happens, but I'm already very well connected with my two mentors, and I'm weaving, carving, singing, praying. I'm really supposed to be doing this. So I don't know if it's going to happen, but I don't want to go back to my job. So we'll just see. I just trust it. I trust the process. So I'll just keep moving in it and then hopefully never go back to work with my boss again. My world at work is off balance! And there's not one Indigenous woman or a woman of colour in a place of power. That's my story. Overall I'd rate myself a 10 for satisfaction with my career decision making. I'm not just staying in that position and being unhappy. I actively sought change in different areas.

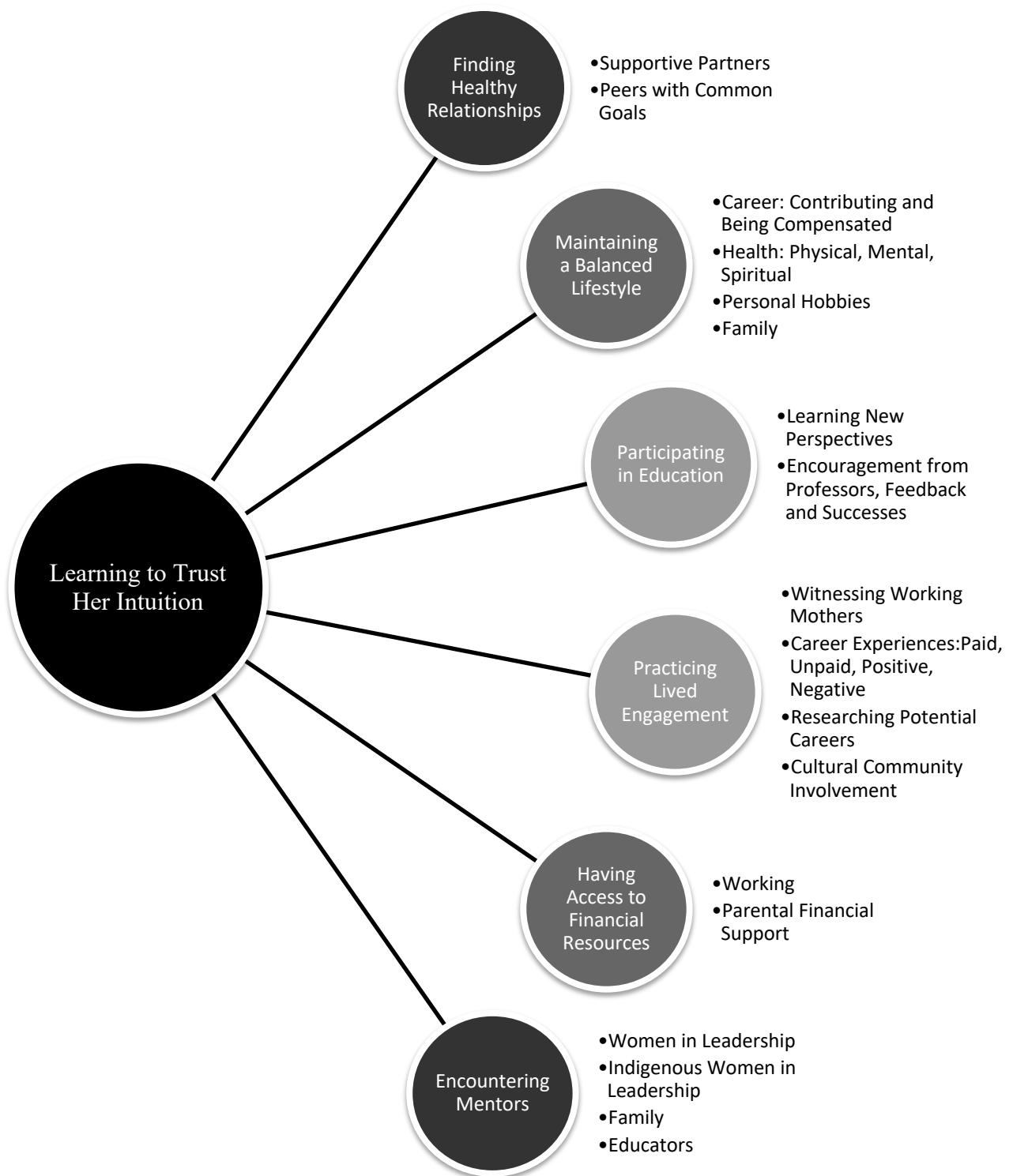
Thematic Analysis of the Narratives

This study has explored how Indigenous women who identify as successful in career decision-making defined and described their career experiences. The study sought to highlight the resourcefulness and resiliency of Indigenous women in the midst of ongoing systemic oppression. I heard stories from four women who had expertise in their own lives. In their narratives, they described a shift from viewing themselves as insecure, limited and hidden to confident, unbounded and open. Each woman told me a story of strengthening her own internal understanding of herself and her abilities. Each woman explained how she moved forward. One described living in an abusive relationship, studying a subject she did not enjoy, and being told that her place was rearing children, to being a doctoral candidate in a field she is passionate about and living with a supportive partner who values her educational goals. Another described how she grew from hiding

her cultural identity to embracing the Sḵwxwú7mesh sníchim (Squamish language) and creating programs to help Indigenous youth see the strengths in their cultural heritage. A third shifted from being an elementary student whose goal was invisibility to the president of her college student council. This same woman again shifted as she made changes to find a career in which she could contribute and feel valued. And finally, I heard a story from a woman who grew up in a small town, isolated, with few opportunities. She described her own lack of confidence, her own disbelief in her abilities. And yet, she worked to put herself through university, moved to several cities in her goal of living on the West Coast, near the mountains, and ultimately created a community for herself including a satisfying career, a supportive partner, a daughter, and time for physical activity and the outdoors.

Underneath this umbrella of the women telling stories of *Learning to Trust their Intuition*, six other themes emerged: *Finding Healthy Relationships, Maintaining a Balanced Lifestyle, Participating in Education, Practicing Lived Engagement, Having Access to Financial Resources, Encountering Mentors*. See diagram below.

Diagram of Findings from Thematic Analysis



Learning to Trust Her Intuition. Across the narratives, I heard stories of women learning to see themselves as experts in their own lives. Sam told a story which started with her, in high school, being required to choose a career pathway before she was ready. On her mom's advice, she completed the project mimicking her mom's career journey. After high school, Sam followed this plan even though she had little interest in the field of study. She dropped out and failed several classes her first year. Feeling like a failure, and looking for something to do, she asked her boyfriend who quickly told her to go into the trades. Without more thought, she followed this suggestion. Although she completed the training, Sam reported hating the atmosphere and finding the learning boring. At the time of the interview for this study, Sam had embraced her own agency and learned to trust her intuition: she had divorced an abusive husband, rejected her family's religious limitations, completed graduate school in a field of interest and was beginning her PhD. The shift in self-efficacy was astounding. I wondered how she had made such a positive shift.

Each woman described learning to make decisions based on her intuition and sense of what felt right, rather than any rational techniques. When I asked one participant how she chose to leave a former partner, job and place, she said, "I just did it," (Ruth). When describing her ten year career journey to master the skill of Communications, Harriet said,

I felt that the trouble at my college must have happened for a reason. It had been placed in front of me as something I needed to learn about and master and if I wasn't going to do that, then I was ignoring this thing that had been placed in front of me for a reason. That was my way of framing what had happened to me that I couldn't just let go of.

When she says her troubles had been “placed in front” of her, she assigns an order to the universe beyond her own rationality, she acknowledges the limits of her own power. She went on to say, “This felt like my path,” and “This felt like the right thing for me.” She chose her career movements based on an internal sense of what was right for her in the context of a larger world and framed her career journey as having a purpose beyond her own goals. Another described success in career as having a sense of her own forward progress, her own development, distinct from monetary compensation. When the same participant divorced her husband and found a partner who supported her goals, she described the relationship as feeling “like a good fit.” (Sam). When Kim applied to teacher’s college, she shared that “it felt good to be moving.” She was scared of applying, of the possible rejection and failure, but she also felt an sense of rightness. She sensed that the action matched her career aspirations, and judged the effort as worthwhile due to her internal satisfaction. This overarching theme was difficult for the women to articulate, and they repeated the phrases, “I just did it,” or “it felt right” when I asked follow up questions, perhaps seeking a more rational answer to how they made decision. The focus on following a feeling, an internal value system, their intuition, a spiritual need or sense of purpose was seen in each aspect of each story. The following six themes came to the surface in all four narratives and are understood as ways in which the women were guided by and supported in following their internal purposes. Looking at the transformation of each woman’s ability to see herself as capable and successful in her career decisions, I understood the following six themes as components that supported each woman on her journey.

Having Healthy Relationships. A central theme emerged of the importance of the participants having healthy relationships with partners and peers. Three women

shared stories of leaving relationships that did not support their personal goals, one of which was an explicitly abusive relationship. Sam shared the joy she found in choosing a partner who not only supported but was attracted to her desire to continue her education: “someone who was attracted to the fact that I wanted to go to school and had these plans for myself, it was nice. It felt like a good fit. So then we became really close and moved in together, really quickly. And that was helpful.” For this participant who had shifted away from her family’s religious values, a supportive partner was a key component of her overall story of career success. Ruth also described her partner: “I am really lucky to have the partner I have. I think everyone says that to me. He’s just a really well-rounded person. Very respected.” She talks about their journey to B.C. as one they made together, encouraged by the upcoming birth of their daughter. She attributes her motivation to apply for a teaching position in BC to their desire to create a secure life together.

Three of the women emphasized key moments in their development when they were supported by peers. Harriet discussed a formative moment of choosing for the first time to run for a leadership position. When she felt overcome by doubt and insecurity, her peers gathered around her offering encouragement. In another example, Ruth named her high school peers as the reason she was able to attend university. Their examples of doing something different from the others in the town gave her the confidence to apply. For Kim, it was in university that she relied heavily on the support of her peers. She described struggling to complete her practicum as she felt stressed and lost. She describes a sense of frustration at her way of teaching not matching with her supervisor’s expectations. At a crossroads, she said, “I actively asked for help from my network of friends that I went to Iquitos with. We were all women and we were all friends and we become like sisters, so I asked them for help.” She was close to quitting at this very early

stage of her career journey into the field of education, but having peers to lean on helped her complete the degree. The women emphasized the importance of being surrounded by people who offered encouragement of their own personal goals. These healthy, supportive relationships with both partners and peers were described as enabling forward growth during difficult transitions.

Maintaining a Balanced Lifestyle. Maintaining a balanced life style appeared as a significant theme in the women's descriptions of success in career decision-making. Their descriptions of balance included careers, health, family and fun. Each participant mentioned during the interview and in the surrounding conversations her focus on taking care of her body with an active lifestyle and healthful eating. Kim shared that after a difficult time in her life, she focused on eating well and swimming each day: "I just healed myself in the water. I swam every day, and I just took really good care of my body and ate really well and just wrote and wrote. And then I started my master's in September." She described how she got stronger and stronger until she was able to swim across a nearby bay, but also became strong enough to apply for her master's. The care of her body was linked to her ability to move towards her career goals. The participants discussed physical health as contributing to their mental well-being; however, they also shared the importance of access to counsellors, doctors and medication to aid them in living with and changing depressive and anxious patterns. Harriet describes her experience when mental health concerns required that she leave her current work position:

I tried to tough through it for a couple of months, and then I realized that what I was feeling was something that I couldn't just get over, so I went to see a doctor, and the doctor diagnosed health concerns again. And within six months, I realized

that I needed to take a break. I didn't want to take a medical leave, so I decided that what I was going to do was take a one-year personal leave of absence, unpaid.

She cared for her own well-being by accessing healthcare resources, taking a leave, and using the time to consider alternate career options. In contrast, when reflecting on her time in leadership at college she said:

I wish that I'd had better coping mechanisms; I didn't have a plan for personal well-being, I wasn't exercising regularly, I wasn't eating healthy, I didn't understand the benefits of counselling support and that sort of thing. I think that if I could do it over again I would try and access something that would help me have a personal plan to be resilient.

Though Harriet was imagining an opportunity to redo her time at post-secondary, she actually demonstrated her new valuing of maintaining balance in her response to more recent mental health concerns. The next time she did focus on exercise, healthy eating, and counselling support. Ruth shared, with reserve, her own experiences with maintaining her mental health: "I hate to admit that I ever suffer from anxiety or depression. I would be lying if I said I don't, but that's why I do all the things I do to help fulfill me as a person." She explained how the work she does in education with Indigenous youth helps strengthen her and counteracts the depression. Three of the women expressed hesitancy in sharing these personal details. Each of the women expressed that she was healing from mental health concerns and had made lifestyle choices supportive of positive mental health.

Closely related to mental health was the subcategory of spirituality, including the importance of ceremony and connection with nature. When Kim shared about the

significance of reconnecting with her cultural heritage, including the spiritual aspect of the Coast Salish peoples, she was hesitant and articulated how often she hid this aspect of her identity from non-Indigenous people. She described being guided to understand and care for herself:

And then another woman, who I met in Longhouse, she wears red paint, so she's an empath. She feels what you feel and she has the gift to take it and then she deals with it in the ocean. She puts it back in the ocean. I was in Longhouse with her and she came up to me and she was like, "You have the same gift as me and you're not nurturing it. You don't know how to control it, so you're suffering," and I just started crying. (Kim)

The participant continued, "she said, you need to get up every day for 4 days when the ancestors wake you up and you need to go to the water and pray. And you need to ask for some help, because you're scattered." After hearing this, Kim went to the water every morning. The participant explained how healing took place in those mornings by the water, and she rediscovered herself as a writer. Two women described the impact of Indigenous graduation ceremonies. Kim attended after being encouraged by her grandfather. She said, "it was a beautiful spread, beautiful room, and they gave us all cedar headbands, and I was thinking, This is amazing, and I got so emotional. This is my culture. And they're here honouring me. All this work. It's so important." Other participants described the importance of Long House and returning to their home towns to participate in cultural traditions. Across the interviews, the importance of finding balance between work and personal life surfaced. Ruth said:

If I want to work all day, I have to be in bed by 9 and have a well-balanced meal. I have to have my family time. I have to have my preparation time. It comes down

to time management when I have all of these things that are important to me, that I need to make the right time for, in order to maintain the lifestyle I want. I always talk to my boss about how the pieces work together. How important it is for me to do the [snowboard] coaching or make time for my other commitments, and not just work, work, work.

For this participant, being able to maintain a balanced lifestyle, including work, family, healthy habits, learning, and the outdoors, was her very definition of being successful in career.

A final component of maintaining a balanced lifestyle was the women finding work that was fairly compensated in which they contributed to society. The participants shared wanting to feel valued, both emotionally and financially for the work they were doing. Harriet described several occasions in which she felt underappreciated and underpaid for her work, describing how early in her career she “had to be an administrative assistant, and the salary was low. I felt devalued.” She made several career decisions in an attempt to find work that was valued emotionally and financially. Ruth also hinted at this when describing her desire to leave the world of serving and enter into the field of education. Each woman shared her desire to do work that contributed to society. Sam described two previous career attempts, as an accountant and as a chef, which seemed to be rational choices, yet failed to engage her due to the nature of the work. Ultimately, through volunteering, the participant found personal satisfaction in work that was social and contributing, what she calls the field of “human services.” Ruth discussed her personal motivation for choosing to work in education with Indigenous youth:

I didn't have too many role models growing up, and I want our youth to see, to know, that there are role models out there that are willing to help and give back. I think it's super important to spend my time helping Aboriginal youth. Cause they need it.

She expressed feeling motivated by her desire to offer young people something that she felt was missing from her own adolescence. She expressed a desire to contribute to her chosen community. Ruth is currently researching graduate programs in the field of special education in order to continue honing her skills to better enable her ability to do work that has a positive social impact. Kim also discussed her personal motivation to build systems that better support Indigenous youth. She described her own experience of sharing her Coast Salish identity and then becoming the point person for all land acknowledgements. When she raised her concerns, co-workers told her, "We can't pronounce it." The participant described her response to people's lack of engagement, cultural disregard and ethnocentrism:

I feel like dealing with those kinds of comments is my obligation. Those comments feel like bullets. I think I can take that on for the kids and compartmentalize it, and say, These are assumptions. They are not mine. I can put them in a different category. But little ones can't. They are the ones that will take that on and be affected for the rest of their lives. So if I don't help this teacher develop a better approach, a more inclusive pedagogical approach then the students are the ones who will suffer (Ruth).

In the midst of ongoing colonialism, the women described the importance of contributing to changing social systems which might better support Canadian citizens, particularly Indigenous communities.

Participating in Education. Another common theme that emerged across the data set was how the women viewed education as a means of enhancing their careers. A subtheme included school as a place to learn new perspectives. Kim shared the importance of her schooling in helping her identify as Coast Salish in her career, thus enabling her to bring together her identity and her work. She said, “The ideas from my master’s led me to want to push forward Indigenous education and in doing so I would have to offer BC First Nations studies.” Until this moment, the participant has kept these two aspects of herself distinct. For her, a university class offered an alternate perspective to her mom’s advice to keep her Indigenous identity hidden. Kim also took language classes locally and then registered for a certified training program: “I also applied for the Skwxwú7mesh Sníchim language class at a university. I’m taking a class on reserve, but this way I’ll get certified.” She described finding personal success in her ability to learn more about her cultural heritage through coursework. The women also recounted taking courses and discovering that they were not a good fit for a particular area of focus. Sam described multiple examples of registering for courses and deciding the program was not of interest. Of her time registered in a culinary program, she said, “I wasn’t failing the classes. I got really good grades, but I didn’t like it. I didn’t like the atmosphere.” She then shifted her career to the field of human services.-After completing a diploma, and then an undergrad degree, and then a master’s degree, the participant continued to struggle with seeing herself as a capable learner. She described the impact of a career counselling course on her own career success:

The first time I started thinking about maybe doing a PhD was in the career counselling class we had to take. We had to do a project. It was something about helping somebody with some kind of career thing. But I just applied [the theory]

to myself. It was helping a client take one little step. You don't have to think about finishing this, or [being] a doctor or whatever you want to be, but what is that next thing you might need to learn? So then I applied this kind of thinking to myself. Because I would toy around with, oh PhD, and then I'd say, I'm not smart enough. This has been the worst program ever. I can't do it. Then I'd say, "What's the next step?" I'd apply that thinking. We learned all these tips in the career class, like doing an informational interview, or like just approaching people who are doing this program, just little things that you can do to learn, not necessarily that you're committing to something, but just to learn about it, and so then I thought, I should do that. It was just little, no-pressure activities that you could do (Sam).

When I spoke to this participant she was enrolled in a doctoral program. Her access to education opened her up to new possibilities and prepared her for her identified career success.

As the women participated in school they became immersed in fields of interest and several began to consider further education as a means to personal fulfillment and greater societal contribution. While all four women participated in more education than their parents, two of the women explicitly shared how this desire for education was in contrast to their family cultures. Harriet talked about her current struggle with applying to graduate school in the face of a family system which valued training, but also valued working:

My mom went to residential school and my dad dropped out of high school in grade 9, and he actually ran away from home as well. Their view of education is "just enough to get a job, but not too much". For me, the "too much" was a

graduate degree. I struggled a long time with that. But where I'm at now is thinking that my parents are almost miracles. The fact that they found each other and created a business together, and they've been able to support their family and be there for us, emotionally. Their success is incredible. I was interested in what are the things that happen in someone's life, and that's a little bit like what this study is maybe, that allow someone to achieve their potential or reach their goals or be successful. (Harriet)

The participant's experiences in education contributed to her renegotiation of what her career path could look like. She found a way to honour her parents' history, while creating her own way forward. Sam, similarly, struggled with her own internalized view that university was not for her:

And then I always had this idea, not that I wasn't smart, but I never saw college as the thing for me. It was just the way I was raised was that you need to get a job. You need to work. You don't necessarily need college. Neither of my parents graduated high school. It wasn't like a thing. But then the way it was presented [at college] was that if you get a degree, you have more options in the field to move up, so then I'm like, "Okay. I like school." (Sam)

The participant related how her experiences in a college program opened up the potential of her attending university. She began to consider more options for herself and her future. Through her exposure at school to new ideas, she opened up possibilities for her career pathway. Both these women's educational experiences equipped them to follow a route distinct from their family history.

School was described, as well, as a place where participants gathered encouragement to continue on their career journeys. This encouragement took the form of

professors, written feedback, and program successes. Ruth described being accepted to and completing university as bolstering her confidence. From not seeing herself as able, she began to view herself as self-sufficient and capable. Sam describes how she would pore over her assignments: “You know how you do papers in school and you get a grade?, I would take every single comment really seriously. If there was a ‘good job,’ I would feel it so intensely. I would feel so good about myself.” Later on, when considering applying to university, the participant described her insecurity and how the encouragement from a professor helped her apply: “I had this idea I wasn’t smart enough to keep going. I went and spoke with one of the teachers, and he said really kind things about me as a student. No one had talked to me like that before. My perspective began to change. I thought I could do the degree.” The positive experiences in education enabled the women to access their career goals. Perhaps for this reason, their educational pursuits were ongoing. Though the four women I spoke with were engaged in self-identified successful careers, each was also pursuing additional, post-graduate qualifications. Two were in the process of choosing a master’s program, one was enrolled in her second master’s and one was entering a PhD program.

Practicing Lived Engagement. The importance of the participants’ lived engagement with the world appeared many times in many different ways and included the participants’ engagement in family life, work and volunteer experiences, online researching, and engaging with cultural traditions. This experiential category appeared to be strongly linked to the participants’ ability to discover their route to their individual career success as it allowed participants to uncover their own interests, strengths, and needs.

Across the narratives, the women spoke of the impact of seeing female family members engaged in the world of work. Harriet stated the influence of a working mother most explicitly, saying, “My parents ran a business from home, so I would see them working. I would see my mom working as an equal partner with my dad. I always understood that there would be equality in the type of work that I would be doing, with men and women. It was normal, we work.” She began her life with an assumption of equality between different sexes and an expectation of her own value, both of which impacted her future career decisions. Sam’s mother also worked from home, and even though she did not want to do the same work as her mother, she became comfortable with career and it’s expectations: “My mom had a business, so I was born into a family where there was a business at the house. Since I can remember, I was always taking people’s money, or seating them in the living room, and helping in that sense.” Although her own career choice was quite different from her mother’s, Harriet absorbed an early example of a woman supporting herself and her family and finding satisfaction through career. For Kim, the significance of her family example came later when she was done high school and thinking about long-term career options. She did not see herself as a learner and could not imagine going to post-secondary education; however, looking at her grandmother, compared to other family members, she saw the value in a meaningful career. She said, “My nanny was a nurse, so she helped people every day and loved it. So I wanted that.” This example of a career which was both contributing and personally meaningful encouraged the participant to continue searching for a new path, even when she couldn’t see the way forward. For this participant, travelling and volunteering became the further stepping stones that allowed her to ultimately pursue higher education and discover her passion for working with young people in schools.

A second key component of the theme of lived engagement was work experience, both paid and unpaid and both positive and negative. Each participant was explicit in the impact of working in other jobs before choosing a career with which she was satisfied. Kim described working at a café after high school, saying, “I didn’t want to move out, because moving out meant working full time in a job that I didn’t love, and I wouldn’t feel good. I wasn’t going to accept a mediocre job.” She expressed an internal drive to find work that was more satisfying than her current work in a café. This sentiment was reiterated by Sam who, during high school, got a job in a fast food restaurant to save money to help her move out of her family home: “that’s when I started thinking about what should I do for a job, because working there didn’t pay very well, and it was really hard work.” The difficult work experience allowed the participant to consider what she wanted to do for a career. Fortunately, through a later volunteer opportunity, while completing a college degree that she was not enjoying, Sam discovered work that she found both meaningful and satisfying: “[Mentoring], I found really meaningful. I was like, I love this. I like hanging out with someone and being helpful. And so that kind of started my mind thinking about, How can you get paid for that kind of work? I’m sure this is a career of some sort.” Through her lived engagement with the world, the participant discovered her area of interest and is now pursuing her doctorate in the field of human services. Her positive experience in unpaid labour was reiterated by participant 330a who changed her field of study after volunteering in an orphanage in Africa. She had spent time with a young boy who was a self-selected mute after having been a child soldier. After several months building relationship with the child, she described her week of departure:

He knew I was leaving and then on the second to last day, he looks at me and he's like, "Hi. My name's Moby. How are you?" I start crying and pick him up, and smooching him and hugging him. And that's the feeling I want forever. And then I totally changed my degrees. I came back home, and I was like, I don't want to do this. I want to be a teacher.

Through engagement with the world, the participant found an area of career which was personally meaningful. She felt motivated enough to apply to university and start her training from the bottom. Sam described how engagement in the world of work led her to understand her valuing of having autonomy in the workplace. Even in a field which she enjoyed, she did not appreciate having bosses who could tell her what to do. She shared:

I started getting irritated about being told what I should be doing with the youth and thinking, "I have a better idea," or "That's not what I learned in school," or trying to come from a certain approach, and not being able to voice that, cause I don't want to be disrespectful and they're senior people, so you have to listen to your manager. I was young, I didn't want to talk back. I would just hold it in. I would get frustrated. I started thinking, I don't want to do this job forever. I can't live like that. So I started thinking, Maybe I want to go back to school to build on that.

The participant felt caught in a bind, thinking it would be disrespectful to verbalize her disagreement, but feeling uncomfortable completing tasks in ways that contradicted her own learning. Ultimately the participant decided that more education would allow her to advance her career to a place where her own views could be appreciated. Experience in paid and unpaid work environments helped the women find what fit with their own internal gauges of success and satisfaction.

Another aspect of lived engagement was the women researching to discover what career options were available to them. Sam described several times when she was unhappy in her career or confused about her future direction, and how she would browse the internet for alternatives. She said:

I think I found a program on the internet, at a local college. It's a diploma you can get in Youth Justice. I found it one night, looking at the internet, thinking, What am I going to do with my life?, and then I saw this ad. I must have come across their page or something and it was describing the program and how you learn to work with young people who are in the criminal justice system. It sounded really interesting.

Her exploration of career programs and volunteering opportunities increased her exposure to the vastness of the world of work. Kim shared a similar experience: “I had a realization [while travelling in Europe], Oh I’m so selfish. I’ve just been living this life all about me. I want to help. I want to give back. So I went online and I just started researching programs... and then this program popped up at a local college, called Global Stewardship.” She flew home and applied to the program.

The women also shared about the impact of engaging with their cultural heritages. One participant described the significance of learning more about her culture through being gifted a cedar headband, participating in drum-making workshops and language classes and rejoining Longhouse. She said, “And Longhouse has welcomed us back, and we’ve reclaimed our space in Longhouse. This is a big year. We have to go through the naming ceremony still. We have to feed our ancestors still. All these things take time. I’m not going to be able to do that if I’m away,” (Kim). She described how her engagement

with her community and with her traditions influenced her decision-making, resulting in her wanting to find career opportunities that allowed her to stay close to her own band.

Access to Financial Support. Access to financial resources was an additional identified theme. Participants either worked or had parents who supported them financially. Ruth said, “I was lucky enough to have a great paying job as a server and all my friends looked to me. It wasn’t a career life job, but it was a money job. I didn’t mind working as a server, because it was great money for that time.” Her serving job offered her security and flexibility as she made her way to the mountains of the West Coast, a dream destination for her. Another participant reported that even when parents did not agree with her career choice, they helped pay for the college program (Sam). Kim described quitting a job in another country and the stress of transitioning back to Canada. She said, “My parents were so lovely. They dropped my car off at my place and put an air mattress in there. They put food in my fridge. They really helped me out. I’d had a hard time and they knew it. So they kind of set me up.” For these women, financial support was an important component of them being able to transition to more fulfilling career opportunities, in particular in their ability to access safe and comfortable living spaces and to attend postsecondary education.

Encountering Mentors. Mentorship as a theme appeared early and often in the process of listening to, transcribing and analysing the data. This was reiterated by the participants’ evaluations of their own narratives, where three identified the monumental impact of being supported and guided by a person in a leadership person. The women also emphasized the significance of being mentored by a person who “was somewhat like me” (Harriet). This appears as being supported by women, particularly Indigenous

women. Additionally, the women identified educators who impacted them with their engagement, time and guidance.

Harriet describes the significance of female mentorship during a time of self-doubt:

So a group invited me over, including the former leader, a woman. They invited me for dinner, and we talked through it, and I talked about my self-doubt and they helped me get over it. I didn't feel that I was the best person for the job, but they boosted me and said, This is for you. You need to keep going. It really helped that [the former leader] was a female.

Seeing women in leadership and hearing those women offer words of encouragement contributed to the career success of the participant. When having a difficult time in an education program, Kim was visited by a professor who was also Indigenous. She related:

I gave her all my materials. And she looked through it all, and [the professor] said, "This is interesting stuff. What do you mean they say you need to extend your practicum?" Her believing in me helped me get through that time. She told me I couldn't quit. And that she's seen this happen with other Indigenous educators in the district. She said, "This happens a lot to our people. You need to be stronger for the kids." I knew she was right. I didn't come this far to give up now.

Connecting with an Indigenous woman in leadership opened up space for the participant to consider her motivation for finishing the program. She accessed additional resources and was able to successfully complete her training. She goes on to describe another time

she felt dejected by working in the field of education and facing the daily impacts of colonialism:

I did a drum-making workshop with an important woman in the education and Indigenous communities. She knows the system and she told me, “You just change it. You just change the system. Slowly. Incrementally.” So we’re working together. And she says she sees a lot of my family in me. When she sees me she sees all my ancestors behind me. That’s actually how she views me. And I love that. I’m learning from her.

Again, connection with an Indigenous woman mentor grounded the participant, inspiring her to continue her journey of participating in and bringing change to a colonized/colonizing education system. The contact with caring, interested Indigenous women in leadership fortified the participant’s belief in their own abilities.

Participants also shared the impact that family members had on contributing to their success in career decision-making. One described a time she thought she might fail out of a post-secondary program. She said, “All the time and all the money, and I would be disappointing my papa and my nanny and that broke my heart,” (Kim). Her relationship with her grandparents was a central motivating factor to her continuing at a time when she felt almost defeated. The same participant described a time in her life when she was beginning to publicly acknowledge her Indigenous identity. She had self-identified to her university at graduation and was invited to an Indigenous grad ceremony. She described the following:

I was so nervous. I thought, “I don’t belong at an Indigenous grad ceremony.” I didn’t know what to expect. But my papa told me to get in the car. He said, “We’ll talk about it on the way up.” So I got in the car and we went. And he

didn't talk about it at all. He just talked about when his own story, a time for him when he was so nervous he was sick. So we go, and it was a beautiful spread, beautiful room, and they gave us all cedar headbands, and I was thinking, This is amazing, and I got so emotional. This is my culture. And they're here honouring me. All this work. It's so important. Papa introduced me to this woman I had never met. She's a family member. And she was the Director of Education. I was like, "Oh god. This is crazy." I was just in awe of her. And she was so beautiful and really strong. (Kim)

Her grandfather encouraged her to face her fear and risk reuniting with her cultural heritage, which had been kept hidden since childhood. In doing so, he facilitated her connection to an Indigenous woman in leadership, whom the participant looked to for inspiration and guidance. The woman offered motivation, but also practical help in finding work and growing the participant's career. It was the grandfather's presence and encouragement which facilitated that connection. Another participant described transitioning from university to the world of work and not knowing how to get a job she wanted. Her father offered her direction that began her on a long career journey with a desired organization: "My dad said, 'You can do [what you want] once you get it, but just get in the door first.' He seemed confident, so I thought, I'll just self-identify and write the CEO, and I was interviewed and then I had a job as an administrative assistant," (Harriet). Like Kim, Harriet turned to her family for guidance in specific moments, when she thought that a relative could offer advice or share useful experiences in a particular area. These moments of familial connection supported the women at difficult crossroads in their career journeys.

Each participant also shared at least one story of an educator who impacted them with his or her attention, time and encouragement. Ruth repeated several times that she had grown up without role models, without people who encouraged her or inspired her. In particular, she noted a lack of Indigenous people, including women in any leadership positions in her town; however, she describes a teacher who made a difference in her educational journey:

I'm still in contact with that teacher today. He was the one driving me to my track practices, an hour out of our hometown to Saskatoon. He would drive me every Saturday to practice with these elite athletes and that was the thing resonated with me the most, was having that person that has their own family, to just drive me and help me become the person...I don't know... I always wanted to be, I guess. But in order to do those things, I had to be in school and do well in school also, so those were my most important jobs as a child were going to school and excelling at sports.

This teacher showed care and effort in the time commitment of driving the participant to track practices. In doing so, he also supported a system in which the participant was expected to do well in school. In a place where Ruth described how she "didn't feel important," a single educator who cared, and transformed that care into committed action, made a transforming impact on her high school experience. Kim, as well, described her negative high school experience and the importance of a single teacher:

And then I got to grade 12, and I had an English teacher, and he totally shifted my whole world. He asked me to come in in the morning, an hour before school, and he'd work with me on grammar and writing essays, and he thought that the way I wrote was really great. He built me up. So I graduated with really good marks in

English, and I worked really hard at it, because I love writing, and I love reading, just not out loud. So he was really one of the main people who shifted my world. Again the teacher showed care, but also effort. He contributed his time to foster the participant's writing talent. Kim went on to study English Literature at university, and, as of the interview, Kim continued to use writing as a means for personal fulfillment. One story went all the way back to grade 8. The participant shared how life changing it was when two teachers encouraged her to participate in her school's student council:

I was approached by two teachers. They came to my math class, and they pulled me out of the class in the middle of it, and I was so humiliated and embarrassed. I was shocked. I thought, what could I have done wrong? It must be serious. They said they had heard good things about me, and they asked if I'd be willing to be on student council... And then I ended up loving it. And the teachers who were involved as advisors became very important mentors to me. So I started to kind of see a different side to myself, and I started to feel that I had something to offer.

(Harriet)

The participant was active in her high school student council for the next 5 years and went on to participate in her college's leadership systems. The teachers' attention and action were catalysts for Harriet's shift from striving to be invisible to striving to positively impact her various communities. Sam found a mentor in her college program. She had a problem and approached a female professor since she "was really uncomfortable with male teachers." She describes the woman as "pivotal," explaining how after she was pepper sprayed during a practicum experience, she "went to her and started to cry. I couldn't explain it without crying. She helped me settle down. She didn't really say anything. She just normalized it. Probably used all these counselling skills and

then just said, Alright. You're going back tomorrow." After being supported by her professor, the participant was able to gather her resources and return to her practicum, despite her anxious feelings. These women spoke of the impact of educators as influential to their forward movement. Perhaps due to the rarity of such engaged and active role models, these individuals have stood out in the memories of the participants even 25 years later.

The women told their stories out of a desire to contribute to research in this field, understanding the inherent value in further understanding and analysis of Indigenous women's descriptions of career success. Harriet finished her interview by sharing, "I found it to be such a struggle to find my place in the world career-wise, and that's why, when I saw the posting for this research project, I was just like, 'Yes!' It's really important to come up with an understanding of what struggle and success in career looks like, and how to help people." As Riessman (2008) purported: without stories, people remain isolated individuals without the power to mobilize. She argued that through stories, individuals connect, forming groups and moving for change. The themes and subthemes discussed above are a contribution to the understanding of success in career decision-making and seek to connect individuals as a way to move for change.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to listen to and understand the experiences of Indigenous women ages 26 to 36 who identified as successful in their career decision-making. The research question that guided this study was, *How do Indigenous women describe their success in career decision-making?* In this chapter I provide a brief reflection on my own experience of editing and analysing another woman's story and then an overview of the findings in relation to existing literature on career counselling, decision-making, social context and Indigenous epistemology. The significant findings are framed through how they converge or diverge from previous research and include novel findings that further current academic understandings of career decision-making among Indigenous women. I conclude by discussing the implications for future research, counselling practices and educational institutions interested in combatting ongoing colonialism, the underrepresentation of Indigenous women in post-secondary education and the underemployment rates of Indigenous women in Canada.

Researcher's Reflections

It took me a long time and many edits to translate my participants' contributions into concentrated narratives that answered the research question. Omitting a sentence felt like cutting off a participant's finger. Each woman had told me a story filled with nuance and emotion, and I saw value in each piece of the story beyond my own research question. It took several drafts before I could see the story in relation to my research question rather than as an entity belonging to the teller. In my final edits, I could picture myself moulding the story to a particular purpose, rather than violently chopping it to pieces. I found it reassuring when, months after I had sent an early draft to my very first participant, I was able to look at her offered edits. She had painstakingly gone through

and cut the parts of her story that didn't connect to the topic. She displayed incredible due diligence, doing my work for me and making difficult choices about what to include and how to summarize important moments into sentences that respected her boundaries. Reading her contribution, I was encouraged to continue my job with fortitude. I feel remarkable gratitude towards my participants for their patience with me as I learned that shaping their stories was a way of showing my respect, by doing the job I had told them I would do after they had done the work of sharing.

Importance of the Findings

This study sought to understand the experiences of four Indigenous women who identified as successful in career decision-making. The research showed how the women strengthened their *Trust in their Intuition* through the following six themes which are not in hierarchical order: *Having Healthy Relationships, Maintaining a Balanced Lifestyle, Participating in Education, Practicing Lived Engagement, Having Access to Financial Resources, and Encountering Mentors*. These themes are discussed below in the context of their relationship to the existing literature. I then discuss the novel findings and how these findings advance academia's understanding of success in decision-making for Indigenous women.

Comparison with Extant Literature.

Trusting Intuition. As the women shared their experiences, I heard phrases such as, "I just did it," (Ruth) or "This felt like my path," "This felt like the right thing for me," (Harriet) "It felt like a good fit," "It felt good to be moving" (Sam). The women came to make choices to match their internal gauges, their intuition of what felt right to them. They also left jobs in which they felt devalued or overly controlled, places where

the work felt wrong. This is congruent with career research that focuses on intuitive rather than solely rational decision making. Gelatt and Gelatt, (2003) argued that the world, including work, is ever-changing and thus unpredictable, and Mitchell et al., (1999) encouraged clients to act without knowing all the factors, or even without knowing a specific desired outcome. Rationality necessitates knowing, whereas intuition embraces the unknown and possibly the chaotic. Krieshok et al. (2009) discussed the importance of career theory acknowledging the impact of intuition on decision-making. They articulate how even seemingly rational decisions are often made based on feelings and desires reflective of people's underlying, or implied, value systems. The narratives constructed in this study are consistent with the career theory's discussion of the role that intuition played in career decision making.

The women's descriptions of career success which focused on their own satisfaction and personal growth align with Kovach's (2009) description of how Indigenous epistemology flows from many sources in many ways to many people. While historical social scientists valued knowledge based on particular methods with particular evidence (Polkinghorne, 2017), Indigenous epistemology's knowledge creation may happen anywhere in any person. Rather than knowledge production being limited to the "special few," professors in academic settings, Kovach (2009) described knowledge creation as "woven tightly with a personal identity that shifts over a lifetime" (p. 55). Indigenous epistemology, including spirituality, appears to be an underrepresented area of focus in career theories. The impact and nuance of alternate ways of knowing should be further explored in order to form the basis of career theory relevant to Indigenous women and youth.

Finding Healthy Relationships. The narratives revealed the positive impact of healthy relationships with partners and peers. This finding corresponds with career counselling research and with the research on Indigenous epistemology that names the importance of relationships. Hoffman (2012), Kovach (2009) and Romm (2015) emphasized that relationship is so essential to an Indigenous paradigm that it is insufficient to label it as a specific theme; rather, connection to self, others, the earth, the spirit world is an assumed undercurrent which supports all other themes. Career counselling models purporting to focus on Indigenous clients included a focus on the importance of relationship (Bezanson et al., 2016; Marshall, 2011; McCormick et al., 1999). McCormick et al. (1999) recommended inviting family or community members into the counselling sessions. In contrast to what is discussed in the above mentioned literature, the participants in this study often made decisions apart from their families of origin, including decisions such as moving to a new province (Ruth) or getting a divorce (Sam). Marshall et al. (2011) described the career-focused joint projects of a parent-adolescent dyad as focused on navigating towards a safe future. The authors clarify that although parents and family supported as they could, the adolescents made own choices regarding their field of career or next steps. However, it appears that the women in this study expressed more autonomy in their decision-making than is suggested in the literature, specifically they expressed individuation from parents' history and expectations.

Maintaining a Balanced Lifestyle. A noteworthy finding of this study was the participants' focus on practicing balance between career, family, health and hobbies. The literature reviewed on Indigenous knowledge systems expressed a holistic understanding of the universe, which includes the physical and metaphysical. (Hoffman, 2012; Kovach,

2009; Romm, 2015). Steinhauer (2002) argued that knowledge may be taught and empirical but may also be found through revelations, such as visions or dreams; it may be intuitive. The women's stories reiterate the impact of the spiritual world on decision-making. A key component of balance was an acknowledged spirituality. The women described attending Long House (Harriet, Kim) and participating in cultural ceremonies (Ruth, Kim). Kim shared the necessity of her reconnection to her ancestors at the water during the early morning hours when the spirit world was open to her. This supports McCormick et al.'s (1999) supposition that career counsellors need to consider and include the spiritual traditions important to the client. Another component of balance was the participants' desires to be fairly compensated for work that contributed to improving society, specifically, the experiences of Indigenous youth. This aligns with Marshall et al.'s (2011) findings of a joint project focused on intergenerational continuity through a tradition of care. And Shankar et al.'s (2013) findings that participants were pursuing further education in a desire to be good role models. The narratives also included a focus on the importance of access to mental health resources for combatting mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression. This is supported by literature that speaks to mental health concerns in Indigenous populations (Allan, B. & Smylie, J., 2015; Bezanson, 2016; Bougie et al., 2013; Hallett et al., 2008; Offet-Gardner, 2013). However, the woman's resiliency in managing their mental health through medication, counsellors, psychiatrists, physical activity, healthful eating and keeping a balanced lifestyle has not been reported in the literature.

Participating in Education. The participants shared the ongoing impact of education in their lives. They discussed the encouragement they felt initially at being accepted into post-secondary institutions and their growing self-esteem when they

completed courses or received positive feedback on assignments. They also viewed education as a place where they were exposed to new ideas and could advance personally. All the women in the study continued to participate in education as a means of development. This aligns with literature that viewed school continuance as a step towards occupational success, including a secure income (Marshall et al., 2011; Offet-Gardner, 2011). McDaniel et al., (2013) cited the importance of finding ways to encourage and support youth through to high school completion. Worth mentioning is that several of the women did mention a feeling of inadequacy or “imposter syndrome” (Sam) related to attending university. In particular two women discussed their internal struggle to acknowledge their status as First Nations and Metis to the university.

I didn't want to tell them I was First Nations, because I didn't want help. I didn't want them to put it on my file that I'm Indigenous, because then teachers would look there, see my file, and give me a break, or lighten my load. Or give me a pass when it should have been a fail. And I just could not have that. I needed to know I could do it on my own, with the same standards as everyone else (Kim).

Kim expressed an internalized negative view that to receive services which are meant to level the educational playing field would be have an unfair advantage. Sam also felt uncomfortable with her Indigenous status: “because I was the only Indigenous student [in the graduate program], I had this thought in my head that [my identification] helped me get in. I mean, you don't know. You can't live again and see if I hadn't checked the box. So I had these bad thoughts about that.”

Both women described wondering if they would be treated unfairly based on their identity and if others would view them as having an advantage. This fits with research that describes Aboriginal students' experiences of racism at postsecondary institutions

(Cinarbas and Yohani, 2018; Offet-Gardner, 2011; Shankar et al., 2013). Cinarbas and Yohani (2018) focus on racial microaggressions experienced by Aboriginal students in university settings. They describe the myth of meritocracy that suggests that privileged students have earned their places at university while students who are the focus of affirmative action are believed to be undeserving.

Practicing Lived Engagement. Repeatedly in each narrative, the women explicated ways in which engaging with the world helped them move towards personal satisfaction in their careers. Their descriptions aligned with Krieshok et al., (2009), who argued that career counselling must focus on what they name, occupational engagement. The women's stories emphasized the significance of client's reaching out to people in fields of interest with letters, emails and informational interviews, all recommendations of Cox, Krieshok, Bjornsen, and Zumbo (2015) in their research to validate a scale to gauge occupational engagement. The women also shared the impact of witnessing mothers with careers. Work was normalized, and from an early age the women considered their own occupations. The participants described how their early work experiences shaped their future career decisions. It was through experiences, lived engagement in various fields, that the women were able to identify what they found meaningful. With experiences in other career fields the women discovered the importance of consistent schedules (Ruth) or workplace autonomy (Sam). Through volunteering in a mentorship program, Sam identified her desire to work with youth in the field of mental health. The repeated references to the impact of lived experiences align with career theory which emphasized the importance of occupational engagement to career decision-making (Cox et al., 2015; Krieshok et al., 2009; Marshall et al., 2011) Marshall et al. (2011) did not use the language of lived engagement, but they reported that career

development for adolescents is much broader than career choice, involving staying in school, gaining related experiences, and dealing with family life. The women's narratives also align with the literature describing Indigenous epistemology's focus on the experiential. Indigenous knowledge is described as creative and interactive, in contrast to Western academia's focus on knowledge that can be found in books (Hatcher, 2012; Hoffman, 2015; Porr & Bell, 2012).

Having Access to Financial Resources. Although wealth was not the goal of the participants, access to financial resources was an important component of their reported success in career decision-making. Three of the women discussed parents or grandparents who paid for schooling and the fourth participant described working at a job that was flexible and lucrative while she attended university. This supports studies that point to the difficulties many Indigenous women face in attending post-secondary education due to a lack of funding (Offet-Gardner, 2011; Shankar et al., 2013).

Encountering Mentors. Across the data, mentorship appeared repeatedly, revealing itself as a theme. The participants described the impact of educators who offered time and energy, of Indigenous women in leadership positions, and of parents and grandparents sharing wisdom from their own lived experiences.

The descriptions of the powerful reverberations made by Indigenous mentors supports research of the significant and positive impacts of the mentorship program, AIME (Harwood et al., 2015), on Australian Indigenous high school students. Mentors were shown to influence students' aspirations, including finishing high school and continuing to further study, instruction or employment. (Harwood et al., 2015).

Novel Contributions

There is limited research focusing on career and decision-making of Indigenous women in Canada. This study used narrative inquiry to develop an understanding of Indigenous women's successes in career decision-making. A notable strength of this study was the focus on women telling their own stories directly to the researcher, who then participated in the co-creation of first-person narrative versions. The study design was intended to create a space wherein the participant was the expert, and the researcher was a curious and empathic participator in the storytelling. The desire was to participate in ethical research that fostered reciprocity and respect, enabling sharing of personal details. Though the importance of relationship was outlined by McCormick et al. (1999) in career counselling with Indigenous youth, the impact of mentors appears to be a distinct theme. The narratives describe important moments when the participants connected with people who were in more established, more powerful positions, such as teachers, professors, or community leaders. These people appeared as symbols of possibility for the participants, who described the impact of seeing Indigenous women in leadership positions, or of having powerful women offer encouragement. A personal relationship, or even a single moment of connection, with a particular figure made a significant impact on the participants' history of success in career decision-making. This theme was not reported in related literature on career counselling and is a notable contribution to the field.

Although the significance of a holistic approach, including spirituality was mentioned in career theories focused on Indigenous populations (McCormick et al., 1999), there was no research on the relationship between a client's understanding of spirituality and her career decision-making. This study suggests that the women made

career decisions that honoured their spiritual beliefs, including choices that allowed them to maintain a balanced lifestyle and connection to the land of their band. This study also revealed how the participants were hesitant to discuss details of cultural practices or their own spirituality with a non-Indigenous researcher.

Implications for Counselling Practice and Government Programming

Considering the themes created out of the four women's narratives, there are several implications for current counselling practices. The importance of occupational engagement, or lived experiences, was reiterated many times. For this reason, high school programs would benefit from being more experiential. Counsellors and teachers can prescribe lived experience as a means of helping adolescents begin their career journey. Beyond high school, career counsellors and educators, would do well to connect students with jobs, volunteering opportunities, practicums, sports and job shadowing. An additional level of experiential opportunity includes providing opportunities for clients to interview or email people in different fields. The University of Calgary's Cumming School of Medicine (CSM) offers a possible example of one such experiential program. In response to an underrepresentation of Indigenous applicants to the school and with the understanding that the greatest indicator of a physician choosing to practice in rural or underserved settings is his/her background in such a community, CSM operates a mini-med school for Indigenous students. Junior or high school students from Alberta attend half day, experiential sessions led by an Aboriginal physician and faculty member, and current medical students. Students are exposed to the university setting, science curriculum, and Indigenous mentors. The program has run for four years, so there is not research to show its impact on student applications to medical school, but attendees

report increased health literacy and increased interest in medical fields (Henderson, Williams, & Crowshoe, 2015). Programs such as this are one way of offering Indigenous students earlier opportunities of occupational engagement which is positively correlated with success in career decision-making (Krieshok et al., 2009).

In addition to increased opportunities for experiences, an increased visibility of Indigenous women in leadership roles may provide Indigenous young people with greater opportunity to imagine future possibilities. To increase impact, high schools and post-secondary institutions would do well to initiate mentorship programs that connect students with encouragement, and visible reminders of possibility. According to participants, these connections were not about advice-giving, but about connection and encouragement. As a model of such a mentoring program, the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) (Harwood et al., 2015) program operates across Australia, pairing high school students with university mentors. The program builds upon the cultural wealth of its participants, trusting that each student has aspirations and operates from the basis that “Aboriginal=Success” (Harwood et al., 2015, p. 218). Programs which structurally support access to Indigenous mentors for local high school students may enhance students’ abilities to grow and act upon their career aspirations.

Furthermore, schools at every level wishing to increase opportunities for Indigenous participants should increase institutional support of anti-discrimination training. To minimize racism in the school system, teachers and students need to learn about Canada’s history of residential schools, ongoing colonial impact and the reasons for inclusive policies such as affirmative action. Increased training for staff may help combat microaggressions at educational institutions, which contribute to negative school experiences for Indigenous young peoples. The research also suggests that increased

access to and information about access to mental health resources is important to Indigenous students' education and work experiences. This includes access at educational institutions and in the community. For all of these implications, I would echo the research of Allan and Smylie (2015) that cited the importance of provincial governments and Indigenous people working together to create programs that are directed by Indigenous peoples. These narratives suggest that continuing to support current programs such as community mental health resources and Long Houses on university campuses will contribute to Indigenous women's success in career decision-making. However, there are many other ways, as discussed above, that government institutions are able to contribute to an Indigenous woman trusting her status as expert in her own life with an ability to make decisions.

The field of counselling psychology will also need to consider the implications of non-Indigenous practitioners working with Indigenous clients. Career models focused on cultural sensitivity discuss the importance the counsellor acknowledging the different cultures in the room and considering how they interact (Anderson et al., 2012); however, they do not address the notion of sacred rituals and concepts which may contribute to decision-making but cannot be shared with the non-Indigenous practitioner.

Limitations and Future Research

One of the main limitations of this study was that during member checking only 50% of the participants answered questions regarding key moments in the narrative connected to the research question. Response from all participants would have improved the trustworthiness of the themes. The missing responses may have been due to the length of time that passed between the interviews and the completed narratives, or it may have been that the question was confusing. In the future, researchers could plan for a focus

group with all the participants together to discuss themes. Further, as described by Polkinghorne (2007), narrative inquiry is impacted by the limits of language, and that was true of this study. As a non-Indigenous researcher co-constructing narratives with Indigenous participants, I was necessarily unable to understand and express key themes in the interviews and even limited, with my being, the content being shared. Future studies in this area done by Indigenous researchers will likely reveal additional important themes. This study also suggests the need for larger, more longitudinal studies, both qualitative and quantitative, to examine the components of Indigenous women's self-identified career successes. The narratives point towards under-researched areas such as the importance of spirituality and the impact of encountering examples of women, particularly Indigenous women, in positions of respect and leadership. Future research could work to understand the generalizability of these themes. Further, narrative research focused on understanding how Indigenous women describe their success at managing or overcoming mental illness would also enhance the field of counselling psychology. Additionally, research concentrating on how to translate this study and future research into career theories and practices would do much to benefit an underserved population. Considering how programs like mini-med school (Henderson et al., 2015) or AIME (Harwood et al., 2015) might benefit other Indigenous populations would be a significant contribution to the field. Significantly, such research would be in line with Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2012) which ask for conversations between Canadian government and Aboriginal people to co-create strategies to eliminate the disparity in education and employment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Poster



The purpose of this research project is to give Indigenous young people who feel they are doing well in making career decisions an opportunity to describe their experiences. It also provides individuals with an opportunity to discuss what has helped or hindered them in doing well with making career decisions.

The Principal Investigator for this study is Dr. Bill Borgen, Professor in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia, yyy-yyy-yyyy.

We would be interested in hearing your experience of career decision-making IF:

- You are aged 25 – 35 years; and
- You identify as Indigenous; and
- You identify as a woman; and
- You identify as doing well with your career decision-making; and
- You are willing to talk about your career decision-making experiences in an interview lasting between 1.5 to 2.5 hours and a follow-up interview for 30 minutes; and
- You are fluent in written and spoken English.

You will receive a gift card of \$75 to thank you for your participation.

If you would like to participate, or would like further information about this study, please contact Jessica Lenny by email at xxxxxxxx@gmail.com or by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Appendix B: Consent Form

Code Number:



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Education

CONSENT FORM

"Cultural Infusions and Shifting Sands: How Indigenous and Immigrant Youth Make Career Decisions"

Principal Investigator:	Dr. William Borgen, Professor University of British Columbia Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education xxx-xxx-xxxx
Co-Investigators:	Dr. Marla Buchanan, Professor University of British Columbia Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education xxx-xxx-xxxx
	Dr. Alanaise Goodwill, Assistant Professor University of British Columbia Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education xxx-xxx-xxxx
	Dr. Lee Butterfield, Adjunct Professor University of British Columbia Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education xxx-xxx-xxxx
	Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, Associate Professor University of British Columbia Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education xxx-xxx-xxxx

This research is being conducted as part of our work as professors in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. The results of this research will be included in doctoral dissertations and/or masters theses that will become public documents in the University library once completed. The results of this research may also be published in appropriate professional and academic journals. This study is funded through a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to better understand the decision-making process of Indigenous and immigrant young adults along with young people who are born in Canada who believe they are doing well with their career decision making. It will also provide these individuals with an opportunity to describe their experiences.

Procedures

The interview will last from one and a half hours to two and a half hours. During the first part of the interview, you will be introduced to the purpose of the study and upon giving your signed consent for participation, you will be asked what doing well in your career decision-making means to you. Following this, you will be asked for an account of your career decision-making process. Then you will be asked to recall specific factors that helped or hindered you in doing well with making career decisions, as well as examples of these helping and hindering factors from your experiences. You will also be asked whether you can identify anything that might have helped you but was not available to you at the time. Finally, you will be asked to provide demographic information about yourself. These interviews will be recorded, transcribed and given a code number to ensure confidentiality. Upon completion of the study these tapes will be erased.

There will also be a telephone/e-mail contact, which will last 30 minutes and will consist of a review of the categories discovered by the researcher. Your total participation time will be approximately two and a half to three and a half hours within a six to nine month period.

Confidentiality

Any information identifying individuals participating in this study will be kept confidential. Only trained Research Assistants on the research team will have access to the data. Upon signing the informed consent you will be given a code number to ensure the maintenance of confidentiality. Participants will not be identified by the use of names or initials in any reports of the completed study. All research documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office at the University of British Columbia. Computer data files will be encrypted and password protected.

Compensation

You will be provided with a \$75 gift card prior to the beginning of the first interview, regardless of whether or not you complete the interviews.

Contact for Information About the Study

If you have any questions or would like more information about this study, you may contact Dr. William Borgen (Principal Investigator) at xxx-xxx-xxxx or Deepak Mathew (Primary Contact) at xxx-xxx-xxxx

If you would like to be contacted with the results of the study once the study is complete, please check this box

Contact for Concerns About the Rights of Research Subjects

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at xxx-xxx-xxxx or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-xxx-xxxx

Consent

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice of any kind.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

..... Participant Signature

Date

.....
Printed Name of the Participant signing above

I agree to be contacted in the future for research participation in similar studies by the same researcher.

Initials: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Interview Guide How Indigenous and Immigrant Young Adults Make Career Decisions

Participant #:

Date:

Interview Start Time:

**To the interviewer: this guide contains material that should be read to each participant. Material that does not need to be read is demarcated with brackets ([]); otherwise it should be read out loud.*

Purpose of the Study

[Welcome the participant to the study]

Our purpose in this study is to understand how Indigenous and immigrant young people and young people born in Canada make career decisions.

[At this point, please review the informed consent form with the participant and answer any questions they have that pertain to informed consent].

Part One: What Does Career Mean to You?

In this study we are interested in how Indigenous and immigrant young people and young people born in Canada make career decisions. But first we want to know how you define career in your own life. We are not just interested in long-term paid careers, but in any type of role whether it is paid or unpaid, long or short, including jobs, work, employment, positions, volunteering, care-giving, working in the home, trade, fringe work, or anything else you can think of.

- a. Can you tell me what career means to you in the context of your own life?

- b. Because you are here I know that you feel that you are doing well with your career decision-making. Can you tell me what doing well with career decision-making means to you?

Part Two: Narrative Life Review

Purpose

[To use Narrative Life Review methodology with immigrant and indigenous young adults and young people born in Canada in order to obtain detailed descriptions of the changing relationships with work and the evolution of career decision-making processes over time.]

Narrative Life Review Interview Protocols

[After participants have reported what career means to them and what doing well means, the narrative life review interview will begin. All participants will be asked to recall career decision in their lives. To begin the life review interview, the interviewer will use the following sequence of protocols.]

In this first section, we would like you to think about your life as a life review process, beginning in the early years of your life up to the present time. We are looking for descriptions or stories about significant events or moments that occurred that may have had an effect on your career or employment decision-making process over time. We would like to hear your story about making career decisions that led to your experience of doing well in the world of work.

Beginning with your first career decision, please tell me your story about the types of career decisions you have made, and how you went about making them.

[Possible Probes]

Note: The following probe is to be used to assist the participant to more fully describe each decision, where the meaning is not readily apparent.

What does your story mean to you? As you recall your personal story of career decision making, what insights or new understandings come to mind?

[Other Probes]

1. How old were you? How did you get the career? What were your responsibilities?
2. What was your experience of this career?
3. Did you experience any difficulties in this work? Can you describe them?
4. Can you describe any career decisions you had to make while in this role?
5. What did you learn about yourself while in this career?
6. What did this career mean to you?
7. Why did you leave this role?

Part Three: Demographic Information

This is the last part of the interview. I will ask you a few questions to gather demographic information. This will be reported in aggregate form, such as totals and averages, and will not identify you individually.

1. Where is your career at right now, in terms of activities you're currently engaged in? (Examples could be jobs, roles, projects, contributions, learning, spiritual processes, or however you define current career activities)
2. For each activity, is it part of anything larger in the world like an area, field, industry, project, or movement? (E.g. forestry, parenting, community healing)
3. For each activity, how long have you been involved? Are there any levels or statuses you hold in the activity? (E.g. third year apprentice welder; first year of being a mother)
4. Age
5. Gender (how would you describe your gender?)
6. Income level (household)
7. For Aboriginal participants: Country or Province of birth
For immigrant participants: Length of time in Canada; 1st language
8. Marital status
9. Family status (household composition) / parental status: How is your household and immediate family organized? Who do you live with?
10. Education: Canadian Education System/International Education/Informal, Traditional Indigenous Education

Interview Start/End Time:

Length of interview:

Interviewer's Name:

Interview location:

Interviewer's Self-Summary

[Immediately following interview and after participant is gone, write your own interviewer's narrative summary of the participant's work-life narrative below]

Appendix D: Steps for Narrative Analysis

STEPS FOR NARRATIVE ANALYSIS SSHRC GRANT ON CAREER DECISION MAKING

September 26, 2017
Presented by Marla Buchanan

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE NARRATIVE INTERVIEW *(After informed consent)*

1. WHAT DOES CAREER MEAN TO YOU?
2. WHAT DOES DOING WELL WITH CAREER DECISION-MAKING MEAN TO YOU?
("So we would like to hear your story about making career decisions that led to your experience of doing well in the world of work. So beginning with your first career decision please tell me the story about the types of career decisions you've made and how you went about making them.")

STEP ONE OF ANALYSIS

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE TRANSCRIPT

Download the transcript from the storage files
Put line numbers and page numbers into the transcript
Read the transcript several times to get the storyline.

STEP TWO

CREATE THE NARRATIVE ACCOUNT

Highlight the transcript to extract the story
Put the extracted story into a sequential order
Eliminate extraneous information or text that does not answer the research questions
Eliminate the researcher's content from the narrative account
Cut and paste the highlighted storyline into a new document
Name the document as Participant XXX, Indigenous Narrative Account or
Immigrant Narrative Account, add your name as the coder and date *or code # assigned.*
Add line numbers & page number

STEP THREE

CODE THE NARRATIVE ACCOUNT ACCORDING TO THE BRAUN & CLARKE METHOD OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS (2006)

- Step 1. Familiarize yourself with the data by repeated reviewing of the transcript.
- Step 2. Generate initial codes and organize the codes into similar groupings—create a code book or a coding document: Transcript number, line number(s), name of code, definition of code, notes or comments column. See Atlas TI method.
- Step 3. Review the coded groupings and cluster/sort the codes into categories that are meaningful and related and that answer the research question.
- Step 4. Review the categories by refining and integrating similarly defined categories producing main themes (clustering the categories into themes)

Step 5. Define and name the main themes; analyze the data within each theme and write a detailed analysis of each theme

Step 6. As a final analysis, we will produce a report providing multiple narratives and a thematic analysis of each narrative.

STEP FOUR AND FIVE: Finally, we will need to articulate the next steps.

- Conduct an across-narrative thematic analysis for (a) indigenous participant accounts and for (b) immigrant participant accounts
ASKING: WHAT ARE THE MAIN THEMES IN THE INDIGENOUS NARRATIVES? WHAT ARE THE MAIN THEMES IN THE IMMIGRANT NARRATIVES?
- Compare and contrast the across thematic analysis between the indigenous narrative themes and the immigrant narrative themes asking: WHAT ARE THE MAIN OVERARCHING THEMES ACROSS THESE TWO GROUPS? HOW ARE THEY SIMILAR AND HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?
- DATA MANAGEMENT
- ANALYSIS MEETINGS – setting future dates once narratives are coded and narratives are analyzed individually with main themes.

FINAL SSHRC REPORT

The final SSHRC report on the narrative component of the research will consist of:

- Individual narrative accounts for both indigenous and immigrant young adults
- A thematic analysis of the across indigenous accounts and across immigrant accounts
- A comparative analysis across the two groups (indigenous and immigrant participants)
- Finally, the narrative research will be compared to the ECIT findings
- And a final report will be written