

STREET INVOLVED FIRST NATIONS FEMALE
ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR FUTURES

by

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Abstract

First Nations youth in Canada are at a disproportionate risk of being apprehended, becoming involved in the justice system, abusing substances, being unemployed and out of school and taking their own lives. Given the conditions faced by many First Nations female adolescents, it was believed that an understanding of their future perceptions could provide the social work profession with a wealth of information relevant to their service needs.

This qualitative, exploratory research explored the future outlooks of five street involved female First Nations adolescents living in Vancouver. Using an interview guide, in-depth interviews were conducted and these young women were asked to describe different aspects of lives in the future. The interviews were auto-taped, transcribed and then analyzed for common themes.

It was found that these young women had strong apprehensions about ever becoming married and expressed an array of negative experiences with respect to relationships with men. They all anticipated being employed in the future in mainly traditionally female-dominated occupations. They all had desires to further their education in the future, but expressed uncertainties about how successfully they would be able to this.

These young women also expressed enormous fears about their futures. They feared not making to adulthood, that drugs and alcohol would negatively effect their futures and that people close to them may die. Their future outlooks, however, also reflected great resistances towards many destructive forces in their lives. They had strong desires to maintain their family connections in the future despite revealing separation and

breakdown of their families in their present lives. They also expressed longings to remain connected to their cultures and roots in the future despite the losses they had experienced. They also had strong desires to provide better lives for their own children in the future.

It is recommended that social work as a profession evaluate their contemporary responses to dealing with the issues confronting these young women. Social work practice needs to incorporate community development interventions and social action which work towards altering the current inequities faced by this population.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The intent of this research is to increase social workers' understandings about street involved female First Nations youth living in an urban area. The study focuses on five young street involved First Nations women living in Vancouver. The future hopes, dreams, fears and apprehensions of these young women are examined. Through their words, insights into some of the conditions which so powerfully dictate these young women's perceptions and life opportunities become apparent. The ultimate goal of this study is to provide an overall sense of some of the obstacles for young street involved First Nations youth living in an urban area as they move toward adulthood. Through this understanding, it is hoped that social workers will acquire more insight, helpful in addressing the needs and concerns of this population.

This chapter outlines why future orientations are an appropriate aspect to be studied. The use of language and definitions pertinent to this project are then discussed. The limitations of this study will be presented and followed by an overview of the content and order of the remaining sections of this thesis.

Why Study Future Perceptions?

Inquiring about the future perceptions of these young women was viewed as appropriate for several reasons. It was believed that such an inquiry would best allow for both the positive and negative aspects of these youths' lives to emerge. Although this population is clearly disadvantaged and suffers multiple consequences because of this, it was believed at the onset that

they were also resilient, hopeful, creative, intelligent and resourceful. By focusing on a broad aspect of their lives (future orientations), it was believed that both the negative and positive perceptions of their lives could be captured.

This was considered to be important as much existing research about Aboriginal peoples has tended to focus on only negative aspects of their lives. La Fromboise & Plake (1983) point this out stating that "Social science literature, for example, rarely accounts for the positive elements of Indian cultures" (p. 45). By avoiding a point of entry which was heavily laden with negativity (for example, experiences of sexual abuse, family alcoholism or criminality), a greater opportunity was allowed to explore all aspects of their lives and not just the destructive ones. It was the intention of this research to reveal some of the positive aspects of young First Nations women's lives.

It was also believed that in order to meet the needs of these youth, it would be critical to understand their perceptions of their futures. By understanding a population's expectations and perceptions about such things as their future career, educational advancement or family lives, a wealth of information relevant to understanding their present experiences and service needs can be obtained. A substantial amount of literature supports this by linking adolescent's perceptions of their future with various attributes such as self esteem, self concept or feelings of empowerment.

For example, Lian-Hwang Chui (1990) established there was a relationship between the decisiveness of career goals and self

esteem in the adolescents in her study. Similarly, Ruth Parsons (1989) presented an argument that high rates of pregnancy among minority girls were influenced by their perceptions of having fewer future life options and not feeling empowered. It was believed that the interests and goals that this population possess, and to what extent they see these as being achievable, were important considerations in addressing their service needs.

The implications for the social work profession are enormous. Combined with existing research, this information can be used to create services and programs which incorporate these youths' perceptions and better meet their service needs. Services can be aimed at providing support to these young people in the areas which are most pertinent to their lives and futures. Further, social workers can use this information to enhance their understanding of this population and to improve their cross cultural practice with First Nations youth.

Definition of terms

It is acknowledged that the use of language is both powerful and important. For clarity, definitions are provided for terms throughout this thesis. However, it is useful to address some terms here, at the onset. The terms 'future orientations', 'First Nations' and 'street involved' are utilized throughout this paper. These three important, key terms are clarified in this section.

Future Perceptions

'Future perceptions', 'future orientations' and 'future outlooks' and are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. According to Seginer (1988), 'future orientations' refers to "the

subjective representation of one's personal future. . .", consisting of ". . . plans, aspirations expectations, and fears concerning probable events in the near or distant future" (p. 315). The literature generally agrees that the content of future orientations are organized around life domains such as work, education, family/relationships and leisure time (Nurmi, 1991; Seginer, 1988). This research incorporated all these life domains, as well as some additional ones which are discussed in more detail in the methodology section.

First Nations

The multitude of terms used to refer to this population-Aboriginal, Native, Indian and First Nations -warrants consideration. The term "Indian" was viewed as clearly being an outdated and erroneous term and therefore is not utilized. However, despite the fact that the term Native is, to some, also derogatory and incorrect, it is used on occasion. For example, in the consent and request for participant forms this term is used. The decision to utilize this term was based on my familiarity with this population. In my work with young First Nations adolescents and their families, my experience has been that this is the term most commonly used by themselves.

The term First Nations may also not be totally accurate in that not all individuals associate themselves with a nation. Aboriginal is perhaps the most accurate but because it is so uncommonly used by the population being studied it did not entirely feel comfortable either. In the end, both the terms First Nations and Aboriginal are utilized primarily in this report and to a lesser extent (when seen as appropriate) so is

the term Native.

It should also be noted that when quotes were taken from the literature, the terms which the authors had utilized are retained, despite the sometimes obvious inappropriateness of them. The terms First Nations, Native and Aboriginal are all used to refer to any individual whose ancestors were indigenous to this country, for the purposes of this project.

Street Involved

The young women in this study were considered to be street involved. It should be noted that the participants for this study were recruited prior to determining that they were all street involved. However, the points of entry for selecting participants (an alternate school and a bail supervision program) suggested at the onset that this may be the case. (A detailed description of where potential participants were contacted is provided in the methodological section). Due to the nature of these agencies and the resulting characteristics of the participants, it is important to differentiate them from the general population of First Nations youth.

Some of the conditions specified in the Adolescent Health Survey: Street Youth in Vancouver (Peters & Murphy, 1994) to define street youth were used to determine this definition. This term is used to refer to young people who are not in school and/or are not living at home and involved with any or all of the activities associated with street life (for example, running away, prostitution, engaging in criminal activity, selling or using drugs). All of the young of the young women who participated in this study met these conditions (see Description

of Participants for the detailed description of the participants).

Limitations of the Study

A largely inaccessible population limited the number of participants which were included in this study. Securing participants was complicated by the ages and lifestyles of the population being studied. Acquiring parental approval was an additional hurdle to overcome with this population which often had inconsistent contact with their parents.

The study was also further limited by the lack of existing literature about this population. Resources which specifically address the issues and needs of female First Nations youth were limited. As a result, the literature which addressed young First Nations (both male and female) had to be used along with the relevant literature addressing female (but not youth) First Nations issues. This literature, however, did not adequately address the specific concerns of young street involved First Nations youth in urban areas.

This study was also limited by my own skills, personal resources and theoretical knowledge as a researcher. Often treading in unfamiliar territory in conducting cross-cultural research, I became overwhelmed and bewildered. As a non-Aboriginal individual, I continually had to evaluate my selections of literature, my interpretations and conclusions. I will not deny that I have been limited by my own dominant-culture perspectives and my lack of experience of what it is really like to be a First Nations individual.

As this research was conducted within the context of a

Master's program, it was also limited by several other factors. For example, this project was limited by the amount of time and money available to carry it out. More significant, however, were the limitations imposed on this project by the University of British Columbia's Ethical Review Committee. Although it is recognized that research needs to be monitored and implemented sensitively, many of the guidelines and requirements of the Ethical Review Committee severely limited this project.

The guidelines with respect to recruiting and selecting participants particularly hampered this project. As a result of these guidelines, I was unable to contact those youth with whom I had previously worked. Instead, a letter had to be sent by the program manager to which the youth were required to respond (see methodology section for complete details of the recruiting procedure). Very few potential participants responded to this method of recruiting. As well, as all participants were under the age of nineteen, they were also required to have parental approval. Many of the potential participants for this study had little or no contact with their parents, making this not feasible.

Also, due to the nature of the research question and population being studied, it was difficult to predict at the onset the difficulties which would be encountered. As the Ethical Review Committee requires that all changes to research projects be re-submitted and approved, altering strategies during the research process would have been extremely time consuming and difficult. This requirement is unsuited to the evolving nature of qualitative work.

Having now addressed some of the limitations associated with this project, I will move to brief description of how this paper has been organized and will be presented. This thesis will begin with a review of some of the relevant literature in Chapter Two to provide a context from which the future perceptions' of these young women can be understood. In Chapter Three, a detailed account of the methodology employed throughout this project is provided. The results acquired from the rich interviews which were conducted are presented in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four is further organized into four sections. First, a profile of these youth's future perceptions as they relate to the major life domains of leisure time, relationships, work, and education, are presented. Second, the fears which these young women expressed with respect to their futures are discussed. Next, the future perceptions which reflected resistance are presented. The final section looks at some of the things these young women suggested they may need to achieve their future goals. Relevant literature is used to supplement this portion whenever applicable. In Chapter 5, the implications for social work are discussed and some suggested areas for future research provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Selecting and compiling the available literature relevant to this research was difficult. Avoiding euro-centric theories, which consistently lacked in their ability to adequately explain the issues faced by this population, made this particularly difficult. As well, the recognition that the issues faced by young First Nations females are complex ones, further complicated this process. In the end, a selection of literature which addressed some of the pertinent factors in these young women's lives was chosen.

The section to follow will begin with a statistical profile of First Nations youth in Canada to establish both the rationale and the context of this research. Some historical events which continue to effect the lives of the younger generation of First Nations individuals will be discussed. This chapter will also highlight the importance of considering culture when interpreting these young women's future outlooks.

First Nation Youth in Canada: A Statistical Profile

Available statistics paint a bleak picture for First Nations youth in Canada. First Nations youth's involvement in social service and correctional institutions in Canada will be presented. Their levels of participation in work and school activities will be revealed, along with their relationship to suicide rates and substance abuse.

Despite the fact that this study focused solely on First Nations females, many of the available statistics which are presented do not differentiate between the genders. Whenever possible, statistics which refer to females are provided. In

addition, some gender-specific conditions (for example, pregnancy) are briefly discussed near the end of this section. This section concludes with a brief look at the special circumstances experienced by First Nations youth in urban areas.

Social Services and Correctional Involvement

Research has shown that First Nations children are greatly over-represented in the population of children in care (Falconer & Swift, 1983). It has been found that "Indian children are represented in the child welfare system at 4 1/2 times the rate for all children in Canada (Falconer & Swift, 1983, p. 185). Compounding this is the fact that the majority of these children are neither returned home nor adopted and "of those children who are adopted, about 75% go to non-Indian homes" (Falconer & Swift, 1983, p. 185). There is ample evidence that First Nations children suffer greatly when they are removed from their communities (Berlin, 1987). For all First Nations peoples, this continuing trend has had detrimental effects on their family and community structures.

The removal of First Nations children from their families and communities has not been limited to the social service sector either. First Nations youth's are also at risk of being removed from their families and communities at the hands of the justice system. A 1993 Canadian Department of Justice report states that, "compared to non-Aboriginal youth, Aboriginal youth have more charges laid against them, are less likely to get bail, are more likely to be sentenced to custody, serve longer sentences and are more likely to be transferred to adult court" (p. 5). Although empirical data is scarce, there is some evidence that females may

be even more disproportionately represented in the justice system (La Prairie, 1984, 1987).

For example, La Prairie (1984) found in her research that the over-representation of First Nations women is greater than that of their male counterparts, particularly for certain types of crimes. Although not referring specifically to young offenders, La Prairie (1987) concludes that First Nations women are twice as likely to be charged with offences against persons than are First Nations males. At the Kingston Prison for Women (P4W) almost three quarters of the First Nations women have been committed for violent offences (La Prairie, 1987). She suggests that this may also true for First Nations female youth.

La Prairie (1987) offers the following results from a study conducted by the Ontario Native Women's Association in support of this:

... over a third (thirty-seven per cent) of the Native women interviewed in Ontario provincial correctional institutions were twenty years of age or younger; slightly over half (fifty-two percent) were first arrested in their middle teenage years (ages fourteen to seventeen) and an additional eighteen percent were even younger when first arrested. (p. 104).

These findings reveal that most First Nations women in provincial institutions (seventy percent in this study), first come into contact with the justice system during their teenage years.

La Prairie and Griffiths (1982) also found that female First Nations youth were disproportionately represented in the justice system compared to non-First Nations females. They conducted their research in northern British Columbia and found that:

In the probation, court registry and diversion data sets, there was considerable higher involvement of native Indian females than non-Native females. Native females comprised

20.4% of the court registry cases compared to 10.0% for non-Native females (p. 41).

Given the overall limited involvement of the general female population's involvement in the justice system, these studies reveal a striking phenomenon among female First Nations youth.

Education and Employment Activities

In general, the educational attainment of First Nations youth in Canada is substantially below that of non-Aboriginal youth (Priest, 1985). Priest (1985) found that for the group aged 15-19, 27.5% of Aboriginal youth were unemployed compared to 16% of non-Aboriginal youth. Although these statistics are somewhat outdated (derived from a 1981 Canadian census report), there is evidence that the situation holds true presently.

An recent article in the Vancouver Sun reported that unemployment among First Nations people was 2 1/2 times the national rate (Bolan, 1992). Although not focusing specifically on youth, this article concluded that "Aboriginals were also learning and earning a lot less than other Canadians" (Bolan, 1992). The result is that First Nations youth in Canada are disproportionately at risk of being both out of school and not working (Priest, 1985).

Suicide and Substance Abuse

In what York (1990) terms the "frightening trend towards self-annihilation in native communities" (p. 97), research has shown that in Canada the suicide rate among Aboriginal youth is about six times higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal youth. York (1990) also explains that this statistic does not include suicides which are erroneously classified as accidents or

incidents which might be hidden suicides (for example car crashes or drownings).

Particularly with young people, high risk activities that result in death can be classified as accidents when they may actually reflect the suicidal desires of the individual. It is difficult to determine, for example, if a death is accidental in the cases of young people driving at high speeds in an automobile or knowingly engaging in unprotected sex with an HIV infected partner. Given this, estimates have been made that the true rate of suicide among Aboriginal youth is closer to twelve times the national average (York, 1990). These alarming statistics have resulted in claims that Canadian First Nations youth may have the highest suicide rate of any racial group in the world (York, 1990).

The vast majority of these suicides occur while alcohol is being consumed and the use of alcohol in many First Nations communities remains a serious concern today. York (1990) states that, "Each year, more than 20,000 potential years of life are lost as a result of the effects of alcohol among Canadian Indians" (p. 195). No specific data could be found which reflected the extent to which this occurs among female First Nations youth. An American study, however, found that in comparison to other female adolescents' alcohol use, heavy drinking was found to be most common (11 percent) among American Indian girls (Hyde, 1991).

Gender-Specific Factors

Due to their gender, First Nations females are also at risk in other ways. Unlike their male counterparts, female First

Nations youth also face the risk of becoming pregnant while still teenagers or before they are in stable relationships. It has been found that "the birth rate for unmarried, registered Indian women is almost 5 times as high as those of non-Indian unmarried women" (La Prairie, 1984, p. 166). An alarming rate of young First Nations females become pregnant during their teenage years.

Although an in-depth discussion is not within the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that the effects of alcohol use on unborn children is also a serious concern. A medical researcher in British Columbia found that, "25 percent of all children on one Indian reserve had birth defects as a result of fetal alcohol syndrome" (York, 1990, p. 195). Fetal alcohol syndrome is a condition where the infant can suffer severe and permanent damage, both mentally and physically, as a result of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. This is a relatively new area of research and only now is the true scope of this problem becoming apparent.

Urbanization

As the youth in this study were living in the urban area of Vancouver, there are additional factors relevant to this population. Although in Canada the majority of Aboriginal youth still reside in rural areas (Priest, 1985), an increasing number of these young people are becoming permanent residents of urban areas. Some research has been conducted which focuses on the migration of Aboriginal peoples to urban areas.

The majority of this research has looked at the levels of migration which have occurred from rural areas and reserves, reasons for leaving reserves and the difficulties experienced in

adapting to urban life. This research has generally concluded that First Nations individuals have not successfully adapted to city life (Frideres, 1988). For example, Frideres (1988) notes that First Nations individuals living in urban areas are more likely to come into contact with a social services or corrections agency than are whites. Blue Clarke (1988) further explains the situation faced by many First Nations peoples in urban areas:

Urban Indians resided in the most substandard housing, had the least satisfactory sanitary facilities, had the highest rate of illiteracy, commanded the highest rate of diseases per capita, were more often unemployed and when employed were more often under employed and received lower wages than all of the other groups in the city (p. 286).

Almost nothing is known, however, about the generation of young people which have been born or moved into urban areas.

Perhaps for the first time, many of these youth have little or no connection to reserves. In Lynda Shorten's (1991) compelling book, Without Reserve: Stories from Urban Natives, she says this about "Urban Natives":

These are individuals without a chief, often without a band or treaty number, people not represented in land claims negotiations or treaty claims; people ignored, for the most part, in discussions about Canada's treatment of its Native population (p. viii).

Very little is known about the plight of the younger generation in urban areas. There is some evidence, however, that First Nations youth in urban areas run a high risk of ending up on the streets.

The adolescent health Survey in Vancouver found that "among youth in B.C. schools just 4% identify themselves as natives or aboriginal, but the comparable percentages among street youth is nine times greater at 36%" (Peters & Murphy, 1994, p. 18). This

suggests that First Nations youth are at enormous risk of ending up on the streets in urban areas and consequently becoming involved in substance abuse, prostitution, drug dealing and other dangerous activities related to street life.

Summary

The disproportionate likelihood of a First Nations youth becoming involved in the justice system, being apprehended, abusing substances, becoming pregnant, being unemployed and not in school, taking his/her own life, or ending up on the street is appalling and warrants far greater attention than it is currently receiving. These statistics provide a general context from which to begin discussing the possible genesis of the problems faced by First Nations youth in this country.

In searching for explanations of why this situation presently exists for First Nations youth in Canada, it is important to consider the problem from a broad perspective. Next some of the historical events which have influenced these young women's lives will be discussed.

Down Through the Generations: A Historical Perspective

This section provides a historical overview which emphasizes some of the detrimental interactions the dominant society has had with First Nations peoples and the ramifications this is currently having on First Nations youth. This historical account highlights how the destruction of First Nations ways of life are continuing to impact the youth of today. It should become clear that the history of relations between Whites and First Nations in this country have paved the way for the deteriorated ways of life presently experienced by many First Nations youth.

It is important to note that this is not an attempt at documenting First Nations history. Rather it is a historical account of some of the relations which occurred since the arrival of Europeans to this province. Clearly not all events are discussed here, but enough as to give the essence of what occurred and the possible effects on today's aboriginal youth.

Contact

Unlike popular belief, upon the arrival of Europeans this was not a vast empty land, but was inhabited by a considerable number of people with complex social and political systems. Long before the arrival of Europeans to British Columbia, First Nations peoples had developed rich and intricate cultures and productive social and political systems. Since the time of contact, First Nations history has been full of abuses and sorrow (Sewid-Smith, 1991).

The first Europeans are believed to have arrived on the coast of what is now known as British Columbia in 1794. From this point in time (until about 1848), most of the explorers that ventured to this part of the world were interested primarily in exploring and trade with First Nations peoples (Duff, 1964). For the most part, this period of history occurred with relatively little disruption to First Nations ways of life (especially when compared to the periods which followed) (Duff, 1964; Fisher, 1977).

Although there exists some debate regarding the nature of the relationship between First Nations and Europeans during this time, in many ways it appeared to be largely a reciprocal one (Duff, 1964; Fisher, 1977). Fisher (1977) explains:

Historians have usually characterized the maritime fur trade on the northwest coast as a trade in which gullible Indians were exploited by avaricious and unprincipled European traders.... [However] these conclusions pass judgements on European behaviour and fail to analyze Indian responses. In fact, the Indians of the northwest coast exercised a great deal of control over the trading relationship and, as a consequence, remained in control of their culture during this early contact period (p. 1).

Regardless, this period was not without its destructive forces. For example, the diseases which the first Europeans brought with them had devastating effects of many First Nations structures.

Diseases

With the arrival of Europeans came new strains of diseases and illness which most First Nations peoples had no immunities against. Besides greatly diminishing the population of First Nations peoples at a rapid rate, the disease epidemics had far-reaching effects on First Nations communities. The influx of new diseases not only eliminated people, but cultures and ways of life. Harold Napoleon's (1993) account of the devastation of the Yup'ik people of Alaska by disease, provides much insight into how the effects of these diseases are still felt by the new generations.

Napoleon (1993) explains that the trauma experienced by those who survived these disease epidemics continue to be passed down from generation to generation. He believes that much of the despair in the hearts of young people today can be traced back to this horrible period in history. Napoleon (1993) argues that many First Nations peoples continue to suffer from post-traumatic stress symptoms which have been passed down from through the generations.

Napoleon (1993) explains how traumatic the disease epidemics

really were. Here, he describes the situation during the influenza epidemic at the start of the century:

The suffering, the despair the heartbreak, the desperation, and confusion these survivors lived through is unimaginable. People watched helplessly as their mothers, fathers, brother, and sisters grew ill, the efforts of the anagluq [medicine men] failing. First one family fell ill, then another, then another. The people grew desperate, the anagluq along with them. Then the death started, with people wailing morning, noon and night. Soon whole families were dead, some leaving only a boy or girl. Babies tried to suckle on the breast of dead mothers, soon to die themselves. Even the medicine men grew ill and died in despair with their people, and with them died a great part of Yuuyaraq, the ancient spirit of the Eskimo. (p. 10).

As a direct consequence of these disease epidemics, much of First Nations cultures and beliefs were lost. Napoleon (1993) explains that, "traumatized, leaderless, confused, and afraid, the survivors readily followed the white missionaries and school teachers..." (p. 12). Left vulnerable and desperate from the ravages of disease, many began to give up their traditional beliefs and ways of life.

Settlement

By 1858, fur trading, as a significant factor in the relationship between the two races, began to decline (Fisher, 1977). The focus instead became simply that, "the Indians had the land and the settlers wanted it" (Fisher, p. 103). With the settlement of new people came rapid change and great disruption among First Nations peoples' ways of life. The relationship between the European immigrants and the First Nations peoples changed significantly. Settlement brought an increasing imposition of capitalist forms of economic development and European educational and religious systems. Assimilation became the prevalent social policy.

As settlement progressed, a number of laws were enacted to accelerate the process of assimilation. This included the creation of the Indian Act which defined who was legally "Indian". Since its enactment, this legislation has been "the principal instrument by which the federal government and, indirectly, the provincial governments have exercised control over the lives of Indian people" (Frideres, 1988, p. 25). It presented a paradox, however, since it confirmed the special status of First Nations people as well as becoming a method of social control and assimilation. Residential schools were another strategy to assimilate First Nations peoples.

Residential Schools

During the operation of residential schools, British Columbia had one of the highest concentrations of residential schools in the country. Roland Crisjohn (1993) explains this process as: "Very simply, the children of First Nations groups were removed, by law, from their homes and families and forced to attend schools operated by non-Indians" (p. 2). While residential schools were operating in British Columbia (and throughout Canada) young children were taken, usually against their will, from their communities and forced to attend these school.

The elimination of First Nation's cultures was clearly one of the main goals of these schools. One of the most extensive studies of residential schools in British Columbia, Celia Haig-Brown's (1988) Resistance and Renewal, reveals many of the consequences of the operation of these schools. Residential schools continue to have negative ramifications on new generations who never even attended these schools.

Younger generations are effected by the loss of First Nations cultures, languages and traditions which occurred. The children who attended these schools were punished repeatedly for speaking their languages and expressing their own cultures and customs. Haig-Brown (1988) explains:

My father, who attended Alberni Indian Residential School for four years in the twenties, was physically tortured by his teachers for speaking Tseshaht: they pushed sewing needles through his tongue, a routine punishment for language offender (p. 16).

As abuses like this were occurring, the children were forced to adapt to the language, culture, traditions and religion of the new society.

Many First Nations peoples' rejections of their heritage and culture can be traced to the "success" of these schools. Not surprisingly, many First Nations peoples who attended residential schools internalized the rejection of their own culture and passed this on to their children. The existence of cultural rejection or cultural self-hate that evident among the younger generation can largely be attributed to the experience of their parents in these schools.

Further, First Nations youth today suffer the consequences of their parents being separated from their families and communities when they were children. When these children were removed, traditional systems of support were severely damaged. As well, the passing down of traditional ways of parenting was obviously hindered.

Residential schools, diseases, the taking away of land and other historical events continue to profoundly effect today's young First Nations population. The intention of this historical

overview was to provide the essential context for understanding the contemporary issues facing the young women in this study. To provide greater depth to this understanding, a useful analytical model for understanding the relations between whites and First Nations will now be discussed.

Colonization

Native-white relations can best be understood in the context of colonization. A model of colonization provides the framework for better understanding the relations and interactions which have occurred historically. As Griffiths and Verdun-Jones (1989) state:

Many observers argue that the subordinate political position and socio-economic conditions of Native groups is a consequence of the colonization of natives by Europeans and Canadian government policies that have exerted control over virtually every aspect of native life (p. 546).

It is difficult to argue that this has not been the process which has ensued since the time of European contact.

Frideres (1988) supports this macro-perspective for understanding Native-White relations in Canada. Stating clearly that, "White Canadians are seen as the colonizing people while Natives are considered the colonized people" (p. 366). Frideres (1988) emphasizes that this approach invokes different, more structurally focused, solutions. From this perspective, racism, discrimination and prejudice towards First Nations peoples are viewed as inherent components of the colonization process. Based on Robert Blauner's (1972) work Frideres (1988) provides a detailed description of the process of colonialism in seven stage model.

Frideres (1988) explains that the first stage in this

process is the entrance of the colonizing group into a geographic area. Basically, this involves the colonizing group forcing its way into an area. In Canada, both English and French settlement followed this pattern.

The second stage of this process is the destruction of social and cultural structures of the colonized group. In Canada, "white colonizers destroyed the Natives' political, economic, kinship, and, to in most cases, their religious systems" (Frideres, p. 367). Education and religious groups have been most instrumental in this process. When First Nations cultural traditions conflicted with Christianity, they were simply outlawed by government (as with the potlatch feast). Residential schools combined these instruments (education and religion) to further destroy the social and cultural systems among First Nations.

The third and fourth aspects of colonization involve the integrated processes of external political control and economic dependence. Frideres (1988) explains that "in the standard process of colonization the mother country sends over representatives through which it indirectly rules the newly conquered land" (p. 368). In his opinion, this representative in Canada has been the Department of Indian and Northern Development.

This includes First Nations prevention from participation in the political arena. Many First Nations peoples did not receive the right to vote federally until 1960 (Frideres, 1988). It is apparent that if a group has no means of participating in the political process they will obviously have a limited ability to

effectively influence or deter policies which directly effect them.

First Nations peoples have also been forced to be economically dependent on the dominant society "because their reserves are treated as geographical and social hinterlands for White exploitations" (Frideres, p. 370). First Nations peoples have been forced onto reserves with no or few forms of economic survival. The effects of this economic dependency has been devastating on First Nations peoples' lives, contributing to high rates of alcoholism, suicide and violence in their communities.

The fifth aspect of the colonization process is the provision of low quality social services, such as health and education services. First Nations peoples continue to have relatively little control over these services, often rendering them inaccessible or inappropriate for the needs of their people. A poor provision of services exists despite the historical commitment made by the government to provide these services.

The last two aspects of the colonization process discussed by Frideres (1988) are social interactions based on racism and the establishment of a colour-line. Frideres (1988) states that;

racism is the belief in the genetic superiority of one group over another; in this case it is White people as superior and Native peoples inferior and a colour-line refers to a situation where indicators such as skin pigmentation and body structure are established as the basis for determining superiority or inferiority (p. 371).

There is ample evidence that many of the interactions which have occurred between First Nations and whites have been rooted in racist ideologies. Racist policies which have been used to control and limit the lives of First Nations peoples throughout

history. Aboriginals have been severely disadvantaged in Canadian society based on their race. As a result, First Nations peoples have been given fewer opportunities in society based solely on their race.

Through this process of colonization, Aboriginals have been subjected to continued segregation, degradation, demoralization, racism and poverty which has caused many of their youth to be in a state of crisis today. This process, which has involved the deliberate destruction of cultures and values among First Nations people, undoubtedly affects the healthy growth of their children and youth today.

First Nations Cultures

It is important to acknowledge that First Nations cultures and traditions have not been totally dismantled by white colonizers. In fact, many First Nations communities are working actively to retain these traditional ways of life. Some of the cultural factors which may influence these young women's lives and perceptions will be considered in this section. It should be stressed, however, that there is enormous diversity among First Nations peoples cultures and varying degrees to which individuals have been affected by assimilation policies in this country. As a result, it is impossible to provide an overview, even a general one, which adequately depicts the influence of culture on all First Nations individuals. However, it is essential to acknowledge that some significant differences do exist between the values and traditions of First Nations peoples and the dominant culture.

Evelyn Blanchard's (1983) article The Growth and Development

of American Indian and Alaskan Native Children, is useful for this purpose. She describes the impact of cultural and traditional norms along with the impact of Euro-Western culture on First Nations children. Blanchard (1983) provides some basic underlying philosophies and values of First Nations peoples which she believes ultimately influence the development of most First Nations children. As well, she highlights the conditions which have disrupted this process.

According to Blanchard (1983), First Nations peoples' believe in a non-hierarchal order of being and emphasize relationships which are based on interdependence and responsibility. As well, the allowance of individual expression and uniqueness, a belief in an inherently good or right social order and an acute awareness of the balance and imbalance in the natural order of things is central to many First Nations cultures. As well, an emphasis on the importance of extended family, community and respect for elders exists. Blanchard (1983) also explains that many First Nations cultures involve a tradition of shared responsibility of child rearing, encouraging children to be in touch with their surroundings, and the discouragement of individual competitiveness and aggression.

She acknowledges, however, that First Nation's cultural traditions, belief systems and child rearing styles have often conflicted with those of the dominant society. Blanchard (1983) stresses that, as a result, various conditions and influences have, and continue to, disrupt these beliefs and ways of life. For instance, Western educational systems and the removal of children through social services and boarding schools have had

enormous impacts. As she explains; "There is no longer a way of life but ways of life that are not necessarily connected" (p. 118). It is believed that this is a significant factor for the youth in this study.

For example, as all of the youth in this study have been educated in the dominant culture's educational system and have been exposed to the values and philosophies of that system. Consequently, they will likely be aware of different ways of life that not only are not connected but also conflict. Further, the degree to which they are aware of these traditional ways of life is greatly reduced if their parents have been exposed to the residential school system which punished First Nations peoples for expressing their culture.

Summary

Disadvantaged on multiple levels (being young, a member of an ethnic minority group and being female), First Nations female adolescents represent one of the most ignored and misunderstood populations in this country. Probably no other group in this country faces the degree of hardships and difficulties of young First Nations women in urban areas. Their significance has really only been acknowledged in statistics about suicide, involvement in prostitution, alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency and teenage pregnancy. Very little is known about their lives, experiences or expectations for the future.

As has been demonstrated, First Nations female's perceptions of their futures will be influenced by a variety of historical and cultural factors. This qualitative research, provides descriptions of how street involved First Nations young

women, living in the urban area of Vancouver, view their futures. It reveals some of their priorities and fears central to their visions of their futures. The next chapter is an outline of how this research was conducted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The following section outlines the research design which was chosen to conduct this study. The participant specifications and type, including the recruitment procedures, are explained. The strengths and limitations are outlined and a detailed description of the data collection process provided. Also, the process of data analysis is explained in detail and examples provided. The methods employed in this study, as are outlined below, were approved by the Ethical Review Committee at the University of British Columbia (see Appendix 1).

Description of Design

A qualitative approach, based on the assumption that "valid understanding can be gained through accumulated knowledge acquired firsthand by a single researcher," (Reid & Smith, 1981, p. 87), was taken. Qualitative methodologists,

proceed from the premise that the methods of the natural sciences, while useful in the study of social phenomena, should not be regarded as the ideal model for all social research (Reid & Smith, 1981, p. 88).

It was believed that the information regarding the future orientations of First Nations young women could best be obtained from a qualitative approach. The general purpose of such an approach is to "acquire in-depth knowledge used to guide further study" (Reid & Smith, p. 88). This approach provided the best opportunity to capture a full understanding of these youths' perceptions of their futures.

A qualitative approach was also believed to be the best method of study due to the fact that this research involved looking at an ethnic/racial "minority" group. Evidence does exist

that suggests this may be the preferred method of study with respect to conducting racial minority research because of the inherent complexity of culture (Ponterotto & Casas, 1991).

Ponterotto and Casas (1991) state that, because most research in this area has been quantitative in focus, "we admonish readers to launch more qualitative investigations at this point in time" (p. 138). According to them, this method of research lends itself particularly well to studying topic areas which involve the complex dimensions of culture.

As very little is presently known about the specific nature of female First Nations adolescent's perceptions of their futures, this research was primarily exploratory. It was exploratory in that it was intended to be "used to gain preliminary understanding of phenomena or to stimulate the development of concepts, hypothesis and theories" (Reid & Smith, p. 67). The following is a description of how the data was collected for this exploratory, qualitative research.

Data Collection

This section will explain the type of measure which was used to gather the information for this research and the manner in which it was employed. The procedures and specific techniques which were adhered to during the data collection phase are then outlined. Finally, the potential effects on participants are discussed and the ways in which these were addressed in this study.

Interview Type

The information for this research project was gathered by conducting face-to-face interviews which were audio-taped to

enhance their accuracy. The intent of gathering rich detailed material rendered interviewing a logical approach to adopt. A semi-structured interview was conducted using an interview guide (see Appendix 2). Open-ended questions were utilized to allow greater expression of the topic areas. This approach allowed specific topic areas to be covered but, unlike a structured interview, the exact wording or ordering of the questions were at the discretion of myself (Hessler, 1992).

An interview guide provided the best method for acquiring the in-depth information I desired by allowing the participants to express themselves in a less restrained environment. The benefit of this approach was it allowed the participants enough room to express themselves while still gathering the necessary information. Its flexibility allowed the participants to elaborate in areas they felt were most important and to capture their experiences and their understanding as they saw them.

An adapted form of a method known as the "futures diary approach" was also taken (Baker, 1985). This approach involved starting the interview by asking the teenager to describe an average day in the present, starting from when she got up in the morning. This was followed by asking her to describe what she thought an average day might look like, from the time she got up, when she is about thirty years old. The probes which were used during the first question replicated those that were used when eliciting information about the future.

In a study conducted by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (1985), this approach had been found to be useful for studying adolescents' future perceptions. The researcher

states:

Research has shown that this is a fruitful way to help young people to be more specific than they might otherwise be, but still give them plenty of room for their own thoughts and imagination (Baker, 1985, p. 5).

This method allowed the participants to discuss the relevant topic areas in the context of their present lives before engaging in the more difficult task of discussing them in the context of their future lives. This proved to be a useful way for getting the youth to think about the different aspects of her future. Another advantage to this approach was that it produced relevant information about the participants' present lives.

The interview questions were designed to illicit information in the areas which were suggested in the literature to be significant to adolescents' future orientations. These included the youth's perceptions of her career, education, family, relationships, children and use of leisure time (Nurmi, 1991; Seginer, 1988). Also incorporated, specifically for the purposes of this research project, was the youth's perceived future involvement in traditional First Nations cultural practices. This was believed to be an important aspect of these youths' perceptions of their futures.

Interview Procedures

The interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to just over an hour. The young women were informed that they could take a break at any time during the interview, however, none of them chose to do so. I supplied refreshments, and on three occasions snacks, during the interviews. The tape recorder was kept out of view to reduce uncomfortableness, although I clearly indicated at

what point I was turning it on and assured I had each participant's consent.

Written parent or guardian permission was obtained for all the participants prior to the interviews being conducted (see Appendix 3). All participants also gave their own written consent prior to participating (see Appendix 4). The form was read and explained to each youth prior to her signing it. All participants were reminded that they could withdraw at any time and there would be no penalty.

In order to encourage the commitment of these young women and to compensate them for their time, a small monetary award was offered. Each participant was paid ten dollars after completing the interview in appreciation for their involvement in the project. Money was chosen as it was seen as the most desired form of compensation for this age group. As well, a monetary award would assure any personal expenses (bus fares, etc.) would be covered.

Upon meeting the young women, I would indicate that if they were to withdraw at some point during the interview, including before even beginning the interview, that they would still receive their money. This was to assure that none of the youth felt compelled to participate solely in order to receive the money. None of the youth, however, chose to withdraw from the research prior to beginning or at any other time during the interview.

There was no specific setting for this research project and, as a result, remaining flexible and adaptable was essential. The locations of interviews were largely determined by the young

women themselves. An effort was made to conduct them wherever the young women felt most comfortable. Two of the interviews were conducted at the school which the participants were attending and had read the notice requesting participants. The other three interviews were conducted in my home. These settings were considered adequate because they were safe, mutually agreed upon and were relatively free from distractions.

Interview Techniques

It was realized that many factors can influence an interviews. As a result, specific skills were learned and adhered to in order to enhance the success of gathering the desired information. The following is a brief outline of some of the factors which were considered to be important to the interview process.

Establishing rapport with the participants was viewed as essential to the interview process. According to Hessler (1992), interviews require that rapport and trust be achieved if research is to be conducted. This was considered to be particularly important due to the young age of the participants I was interviewing. In order to develop rapport, I had personal or telephone communication with all the participants prior to conducting the interviews. Upon meeting the youth to conduct the interview, a short period was also allowed for each of us to familiarizing ourself with the other. My extensive experience working with adolescents was an additional asset. I have worked with many teenagers previously and have developed a style and approach which tends to facilitate the establishment of rapport quite quickly.

Efforts were also made during the interviews to enhance the depth of information I was seeking. As the interviewer, I attempted to minimize my own talking while the interviews were in progress to facilitate maximum expression from the participants. I attempted to control of the process, but not the content, by guiding the interactions as they occurred (Hessler, 1992).

Potential Effects on Participants

As interviewing can potentially be an emotionally distressing experience for participants, certain precautions were taken. Following the interviews, the participants were given an opportunity to debrief. They were asked if they felt alright with the process and if they had any questions. Fortunately, all of the participants indicated feeling fine about the process and the only questions which arose were with respect to having access to the finished product. These youth were informed that they could contact me at a future date and I would forward them a copy of the completed study.

In addition, I received feedback from different adults that some of the young women had discussed their interviews with after completing them. These individuals all provided positive feedback. One indicated that she had been informed that the interview was easy and another that it had been fun. Another youth stated she was pleased that someone had been interested in her life and future outlook.

As a result, I do not believe that any of the participants suffered any negative effects as a result of the interview. One youth even indicated, to myself, that the interview reminded her about how important her future plans were to her. She stated

that, as a result of participating in the interview, maybe she would try harder to attend school more regularly in order to achieve her future goal of going to university.

Selecting and Recruiting Participants

The selection of the participants was a purposeful process. First Nations female adolescents from fifteen up to, and including, nineteen years of age, living off-reserve and in the Vancouver area were eligible to participate in this study. Five relatively homogeneous participants were eventually recruited for this research.

The legal definition of an "Indian" was not used for the purposes of selecting participants due to the obvious racist nature and the controlling and destructive manner in which it has been used in the past. It was assumed that potential participants were capable of determining their own race/ethnicity and any youth who identified herself as being Native was considered to be Native.

Ten past clients of the Vancouver Intensive Supervision Program (operated by the Focus Foundation) which met the above stated criteria were contacted by letter sent by the program coordinator (see Appendix 5). The Vancouver Intensive Supervision Program is a alternative to custody, bail supervision program for young offenders. Prior approval was obtained from this agency before letters were sent (see Appendix 6). It was made clear in the letter of introduction that their participation was totally voluntary and separate from their past involvement in the program. A phone number was provided in the letter through which the potential participants could contact me if they were

interested in participating in the study.

Several of the letters were returned due to the potential participants having moved since their involvement in the program. Only two participants indicated, through a third party, that they were interested in participating in the research as a result of this process. Another youth, through her association with one of the youth who had responded to the letter, was also recruited.

As not enough participants responded to the letter, a notice requesting participation was then posted at an alternate school located in East Vancouver (see Appendix 7). Verbal permission was obtained from school staff to post this notice. A phone number was provided in the notice through which potential participants could contact me. Two participant's responded and were then mailed information regarding the nature of the interview and the requirement of parental approval. After receiving this information and discussing it with their parents, these two youth still indicated that they were willing to participate.

These points of entry for selecting participants were intentional. The purpose was to recruit participants who were likely to be closely connected to, or at least exposed to, the hardships of being a female First Nations youth living in an urban environment. By contacting youth who were either involved in an alternate school or bail supervision program, it was expected they potentially would share some similar experiences as First Nations youth living in Vancouver.

It is clearly acknowledged that in no way was this intended to be a representative sample of all First Nations youth. The regular school system, for example, would have likely yielded

participants who had not experienced the same degree of hardships that this group of youth ultimately revealed having experienced. The youth who participated in this study were defined as street involved to highlight this difference.

Limitations

The participants for this research were limited to a relatively small number due to the difficulties encountered during the recruitment phase. Due to the difficulty of obtaining correct addresses for potential participants and the added burden of having to obtain parental approval, recruiting took a considerable length of time. Although some delay had been anticipated, the task of recruiting participants became more difficult than initially expected. More than once, youth who had indicated they were interested in participating lost their parent consent forms or forgot them somewhere. Also, the transient nature of these youth's lives made securing interview times difficult. Often several attempts had to be made to schedule mutually agreed upon times and places to do the interviews.

As well, these difficulties, particularly their transient nature, made the option of conducting second interviews not possible. Shortly after completing the first interviews, I was informed that several of the participants had relocated, either to different residences or out of the city. Further, two of the participants did not have telephones at their residences making contact with them somewhat complicated.

However, the information obtained from these five interviews were believed to be sufficient enough to provide at least a preliminary understanding about their future perceptions. Hessler

(1992) states with respect to this issue:

Importantly, the actual number of cases is not merely as significant as the potential of each case to add to the researcher's understanding of the phenomena under study (p. 129).

Fortunately, all the interviews which were conducted yielded large amounts of useful information. In the end, over 75 pages of transcribed interviews were obtained for analysis.

Data Analysis

The method of analysis for this research was content analysis. A cross-case analysis was done with the intent of drawing out common themes (Patton, 1990). The overall purpose of this process was to analyze the interviews for both context and meaning. This method allowed the large volume of information which was acquired to be organized and presented in a more manageable format while still retaining the meaning and context that had been intended by the participants.

The analysis of the interviews was, in many ways, a computer-based qualitative analysis (Dey, 1993). The use of a computer greatly directed this analysis process. Although a software package designed specifically for analyzing qualitative data was not utilized, my personal computer played an intricate role in the approach which was taken.

The rich environment provided by a contemporary word processing program, allows greater ease of organizing and dealing with the large amount of information which is acquired through in-depth interviews. In recognizing this, I chose to rely heavily on Ian Dey's (1993) book Qualitative Data Analysis: A User Friendly Guide for Social Scientist, although other sources were

also used when appropriate. Dey's (1993) approach to content analysis is not markedly different the mainstream approach but it does acknowledge the use of the computer in the analysis process. Consequently, the terminology utilized in describing the analysis process reflects this. The following describes, in detail, this process.

The first step in the analysis process involved familiarizing myself with interviews. This entailed listening to the taped interviews several times, personally transcribing the interviews, and then reading the transcripts and returning to the tapes when clarification was needed. Transcribing the audio-taped interviews allowed for careful analysis of the data to later occur. By doing my own transcribing I became intimately familiar with the data.

In transcribing the interviews, there were several characters utilized which should be clarified. Words which were added, and were not those of the participants, were distinguished by square brackets ([]). Only when it was deemed absolutely necessary to clarify meaning were words added into the content of the interviews. A change of thought occurring in mid-sentence was indicated with a dash (-). Several dashes in a row (---) indicated a pause. More dashes represent longer and more pronounced pauses. Other sounds such as laughing or coughing were indicated when they occurred and in encompassed in the following style of brackets- { }. When quotes were broken and presented separately or portions left out, this is indicated with four spaced dots (. . . .).

The second step in the data analysis involved developing

broad categories which represented the information in the interviews. As Patton (1990) notes; "Categorizing data is a powerful tool for organizing our analysis, both conceptually and empirically" (p. 127). The interview guide itself directed the initial development of categories. Due to the 'future diary' approach which was taken when conducting the interviews, the first categories which were developed were simply 'present' and 'future'. The general topic areas of school, work, relationships, children, family, use of leisure time, and participation in cultural activities were then formed under each of these two categories.

These categories directly reflected the questions and probes which had been utilized during the interviews. Additional topic areas (such as drug and alcohol use) also emerged at this time and were used to organize the interviews further. This procedure reflects Patton's (1990) notion that there are two preliminary sources from which to draw from in organizing; "questions and analytic insights and interpretations that emerged during data collection" (Patton, p. 378).

The transcribed interviews, which were contained in separate files on the computer, were then reviewed and sections (sometimes lines and sometimes paragraphs) were copied and transferred to the appropriate files which had been created for each category. Interestingly, there was very little irrelevant information in most of the interviews. Often, nearly entire interviews could be divided into these different categories.

Much effort was made to retain these pieces of the interviews in as much context as possible. Whenever possible,

whole sentences or trains of thought were kept together and always kept in the participants own words. Only when absolutely necessary were sentences separated into different files when they appeared to clearly represents different categories.

Each section which was transferred into a different file was marked with the interview number, line number and page number so that referring back to the context at any time was made easy. At this point the information was now contained in the context of my own categories rather than in their original context, or was recontextualized (Dey, 1993).

After assigning sections of the interviews to these categories the next process involved refining and focusing the analysis. The purpose being to further clarify the data. This involved the two main tasks of splitting (subcatagorizing) and splicing (combining) the information (Dey, 1990). Dey (1990) explains the intention of this process: "We split categories in search for greater resolution and detail and splice them in search for greater integration and scope" (p. 139).

At this time, many of the present and future categories were combined. For example, their descriptions of their present use of alcohol and drugs were combined with their perceptions of their use of substances in the future. It was believed that much of what they had described regarding their present lives provided great insight into the nature of their future outlooks. As well, some sections were divided into two or more categories. Finally, all the categories were then organized into one of four predominate themes which emerged- future life domains, fears, resistance and needs.

Credibility, Soundness and Generalizability

The validity and reliability of this research has certain limitations. However, these were not seen as particularly problematic for the purposes of this qualitative research. From a qualitative perspective, the emphasis is placed more heavily on the credibility and soundness of this research.

It was only within the parameters of this study's particular setting, population and theoretical framework that the data acquired was intended to be valid. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of the female First Nations youth who were involved in this study and is not intended to be generalizable to a population beyond these boundaries.

By avoiding asking leading questions during the interviews, and following the earlier discussed guidelines for conducting interviews, the credibility of the data was enhanced. The credibility of the information was further addressed by clarifying the meanings of responses during the interviews. The goal was to clearly understand the participants' responses and then to present them as authentically as they were expressed. The purpose primarily was to capture, as closely as possible, the future perception's of those First Nations youth who were involved in the study.

As well, despite the fact that loss or change of meaning is unavoidable with any data analysis process, great effort was made to minimize this. The exact words of the participants were retained and the data analysis procedure has been well documented. In addition, the computer-based analysis likely reduced the degree of this loss. There is support that the

"computer provides a partial reconciliation by allowing us to retain direct access to the context from which the data has been abstracted" (Dey, 1990; p. 128). Throughout the analysis process I was able to continually refer back to the original interviews to minimize the loss of context and meaning.

Reliability, or the extent to which the same results would be achieved under similar situations, is recognizable poor in this, and most, qualitative research. However, from a qualitative perspective the concern was more with addressing the soundness of this research. The soundness was improved by clearly and specifically documenting each of the steps taken during the process of collecting the data. The interviews were also audio-taped to ensure the accuracy of the information and to reduce the biases which could arise through other recording methods. Only one interviewer, myself, was used throughout this project. This increased the likelihood that each interview was conducted in a similar manner. Further, the analysis has been supported by verbatim quotations to support any inferences which have been made.

Special Considerations

As this was cross-cultural research it required some additional considerations. Cross-cultural research refers to research which is conducted on one cultural group by someone other than a member of that group. It was acknowledged at the onset that White people have consistently and erroneously defined and interpreted First Nations peoples' experiences and sensitivity to this would be required. La Fromboise and Plake (1983) state in their article that, "Typically, American Indians

are treated as sources of data rather than being invited to contribute to the complete research venture, including problem formulation, interpretation of data and conclusions." (p. 45). This was kept in mind throughout the project and attempts were made to address it.

Every effort was made to consult with members of the Aboriginal community with respect to the relevance of this project and the proposed methods of data collection and analysis. My principal research advisor was intricate to this process. As he is of Aboriginal decent, he was able to provide valuable input with respect to my chosen approaches and areas of inquiry throughout this process.

I believed strongly that, despite being non- Aboriginal myself, much could be gained through this research. An article in the Vancouver Sun, by Dan Ferguson (1993), articulates my position particularly well. He states:

To say that-for example-native Canadians should be able to tell their own stories makes perfect sense. To say that the portrayal of their life in books, news accounts and the arts has been obscenely distorted is, if anything, an understatement. But to say that no non-native should attempt to write about native life is senseless.

He goes on to say,

That inherently assumes that non-native writers and artists are not capable of learning from the plays, books and songs now being produced by native artists. If that is correct there is no hope of reconciliation between native and non-native cultures-we are doomed.

It was believed from the beginning that this research was valuable and it would be possible to conduct it sensitively.

Part of my preparation for this research involved extensive research into the history of First Nations peoples in Canada and

the development of my understanding of the conditions which they are presently facing. This was acquired through eighty hours of university course instruction in Native issues taught by a Aboriginal professor. Forty hours of university instruction on general cross cultural issues in social work. The attendance of relevant workshops and seminars and extensive reading of books and viewing of videos on the topic. In addition, I drew upon my own knowledge and experience acquired through my work with First Nation young offenders.

I in no way propose to be an expert in the area of First Nations issues. I hope only that I have educated my self sufficiently to undertake this task. I am aware as well that I am still in the process of understanding my own values and challenging the biases I have been fully indoctrinated into as a member of the dominant culture. Being aware that my journey is one of a process and of enlightenment, I am aware that I risk make erroneous assumptions and interpretations. I hope my ongoing, critical self-analysis and reflection throughout this project assisted in providing an accurate description of the youths' perceptions that were shared with me.

Chapter 3: Findings/Results

Some of the interviews revealed near inconceivable hardships faced by these young women in their day to day lives. One spoke of the effects of her sexual abuse and another disclosed having been faced with two unexpected pregnancies. Many spoke of violence and alcohol abuse which have affected their families. Several youth spoke about the death of family members or friends and others about their previous contemplations of suicide.

Despite these enormous struggles, the strength of these young women echoed throughout the interviews. They spoke of hopes and dreams for their futures with determination and spirit. They spoke of better lives for themselves and their children. The desire to remain connected to their cultures and heritages were clearly reflected in their expressions.

In the words of these young women, future outlooks which were permeated by fears, yet balanced with determination, emerged. With this glimpse into their future outlooks, as it seen through their eyes, common obstacles are revealed. It is hoped that these young women's words will provide greater insight into what it may be like for this generation as they face adulthood.

This chapter begins with a description of the participants in this study. It will be followed by a profile of their future outlooks as they relate to the major life domains of work, education, relationships and leisure time. The next section will look at these young women's fears. Their future outlooks which reflected resistance toward the destructive forces in their lives will then be presented. The final section will outline their perceived needs for acquiring their desired futures.

Extreme care has been taken to protect the identity of the participants, due to both their ages and the sensitive nature of some of the information they disclosed. All of the youth have all been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy and the descriptions of the participants are presented in only a general context.

Description of Participants

The following description of the participants was obtained from the respondent information which was gathered at the end of the interviews (see Appendix 9), along with some information which was disclosed during the interviews. (See Table 1 for a summary of the description of the participants.) The young women ranged from fifteen years old to eighteen years old. The average age of the participants was 16.8 years old. Nobody nineteen years old participated in the study.

One of the participants had a child and two others indicated they had been pregnant in the past. One young woman indicated she had an abortion and another stated that she had both an abortion and a miscarriage in her past. None of the participants stated that they were married.

Four of the participants lived in single parent families headed by their mothers and one was living on her own. None of the participants lived with their fathers and two participants indicated that their fathers were deceased. Three of the participants indicated that they considered their families to be of lower economic status. One of the participants indicated that she believed her family to be of medium economic status, but also revealed that her mother supported her family on social

Table 1
Description of Participants

USE ALCOHOL	X	X	X	X	X
USE DRUGS	X	X	X	X	
EVER PREGNANT	X	X	X		
LOW INCOME	X	X	X	X	
OUT OF SCHOOL	X	X	X		
NOT WORKING	X	X	X	X	X
ELIGIBLE FOR STATUS	X	X	X	X	X

assistance (this discrepancy perhaps reflects the sensitive nature of this question). The other teenager stated she considered her family to be of medium economic status but emphasized that her family received added financial support from an individual outside of the family.

Three of the young women were not attending school. The two that were attending school were not participating in the regular school system, but attended alternate school programs. None of the youth were employed, although several indicated they were seeking employment. All, but one of these young women, indicated they have been involved in the justice system during their teenage years.

Determining the youths Aboriginal ancestry was difficult. Most of the participants were unsure of, or unable to pronounce or spell, the nations which they believed described their Aboriginal ancestry. Through the youth's descriptions, and some research on my own, the following nations were believed to be represented: Haisla, Babine, Carrier, Navaho (American), Shuswap, and West Coast (see Appendix 9 for a map of the nations of B.C.). All of the participants indicated that they were eligible to become "Status Indians", but only one had applied for and received it.

Three youth described their alcohol use as frequent and the other two as occasional. Nobody stated that she never used alcohol. Two of the youth indicated that they used cocaine and LSD occasionally and smoked marijuana frequently. Only one youth stated that she never used any drugs. The other two indicated that they used drugs occasionally. Having briefly established

some of the characteristics of the participants of this study, a profile of their future perceptions as they relate to the major life domains will now be provided.

Future Perceptions of the Major Life Domains

This section will provide a profile of the types of futures these young women perceived they would have with respect to the major life domains of leisure time, relationships, work, and education. The predominate themes which emerged in these areas will be presented and discussed in the context of their present lives and relevant literature.

Leisure Time

In general, these youth had few ideas about what kinds of things they might do in the future with their leisure time. Other than spending time with friends, there were few activities they saw themselves as being involved in. One of the young women was amused by the question about what she might do for fun in the future and only knew what she likely wouldn't be doing. She answered while laughing, "I have no idea. I probably- for fun- I don't think I'd go out and party as much as I do now" (Shawna). Later she elaborated a little saying:

I'd probably stay home, go out maybe once and a while with my friends but not all the time, you know. Just like go out for dinner or something. . . . (Shawna).

Another youth stated that, "Sometimes I figure it'll still be the same. Go to dancing clubs and just be able to dance and um travelling" (Lisa). Similarly, this young woman stated that she would; "Probably just go out with friends and have a few drinks" (Kate). When asked if she thought she might do anything else she responded; "Probably not. Its about all I consider fun is, you

know, being with my friends" (Kate). Some of the other young women seemed to be only able to reflect their awareness of what activities they saw other adults in their lives participating in:

I'll probably be playing a lot of bingo because on the reserve many of my relatives turn to bingo rather than alcohol. So it's like a lot of my Aunts and everybody else on the reserve, it's like bingo, bingo, everything's bingo (Sarah).

Probably go to the AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] dances. The Richards dance- the North Shore dance. Go there. And a North Shore Dance. They're AA dances. I think that's about it (Amanda).

Neither of these two expressed any other interests or activities they felt they might be involved in the future.

These young women's perceptions may of have been a reflection of their limited awareness of their surroundings as a source of amusement or entertainment. Likely limited by a number of factors including poverty, lack of self esteem, and restricted exposure to different activities, these young women did not appear to perceive themselves as being involved in very many enjoyable activities in the future. These perceptions also reflected the intense sense of boredom that they appeared to be experiencing in their current lives.

An overall sense of repetitiveness emerged with respect to their current lives and most of the youth described fairly uneventful lives. As this young woman explained, "I really don't do anything. Sleep--- just sleep lots" (Lisa). These other young women said this about their use of leisure time in the present:

Um, I don't know, just sit around and watch T.V., talk to my mom and um, I, don't know, just make phone calls (Sarah).

Um, I just try and come to school in the morning and then go home, drop off all my books and everything and then meet up with friends and usually smoke a bunch of weed, drink

sometimes. Go home (Kate).

An average weekday to me is, I don't know, getting up usually I try and plan things to make my day a bit more busy but it doesn't really seem to turn out that way so, I don't know, I try and I'll try and come to school for like a couple of hours and just do whatever and then I'll go out with my friends for the whole evening and come home and go to sleep, so it's not really anything interesting. . . . (Shawna).

Rarely did any of these young women express being involved in activities currently which were particularly important or interesting to them, other than spending time with their friends.

The importance of spending spare time with friends which was expressed in their future outlooks was also evident in their present lives. As is common among many teenagers, visiting or spending time with friends was central to most of their lives. This youth described her average day as, "Um, I just like to spend time with my family and friends" (Sarah), and this youth as, "Um, I'm just always with friends. Either driving around or sitting in someone's house" (Kate). She went on to say this about her friends:

That's about it now a days. Everyone's kind of settled down. A lot of people are going to jail and stuff now. Quite a few people getting arrested and stuff like- about half of my friends are in jail now so we all just kind of settled down and everything, stopped doing crime (Kate).

This young women stated that, ". . . . all I do is just basically out with friends all the time" (Shawna). She went on to discuss some of things she and her friends might do:

Um, I don't know we go driving around, it depends on what we want to do. Usually we to like to like go party a lot, you know, cause I don't know we are just like into that and we go out and we do things like meet new people and you know because we like to be outside, like I don't like to go sit in at somebody's house. We like to go out and have fun and party, and you know, find new things to do I guess. That's pretty well it (Shawna).

Another also expressed the same importance of being with her friends:

Just mostly we--- Well, the friends I've been hanging out with just made me play basketball. Play basketball, go to the movies and go to the dance. Well, somewhere to dance. Anywhere, just as long as we can dance and be together. Pretty well all we do is dancing and play basketball {Laughs} (Lisa).

Given the importance placed on friends in the present, it is understandable that they perceived this would continue on into the future.

Relationships

The young women in this study were asked if they thought they might ever get married in the future. In retrospect, this question clearly reflected my own dominant-culture bias that marriage would be desirable. Nevertheless, much was revealed about their perceptions of marriage, men and relationships.

An effort was made to discuss these issues without implying a reference to only heterosexual marriages or relationships. However, it is realized that marriage is almost exclusively interpreted as referring to heterosexual couples in contemporary society. As may be expected, all of the youth interpreted the questions related to this as referring to relationships with the opposite sex.

Although all of the youth assumed they would be involved in a relationship in the future, they expressed a significant apprehension towards the idea of ever being married in the future. Some were quite adamant that they never wanted to be married stating things like: "No. I am not going to get married. Nope. Probably common-law, but I am not going to get married"

(Amanda). She further explained; "Well, I think you don't need a ring to be with somebody. Just be with them instead of having a ring and everything". Similarly, this young woman did not see herself ever getting married in the future: "I can picture myself having---um ---not married, but a boyfriend that I can live with and take care of me and I might have children" (Sarah). Although not quite as adamant, this adolescent also expressed considerable apprehension towards the idea of marrying in her future:

Married? I can't see myself getting married. I remember always telling myself, like last year, "I'm never getting married. I swore to myself, "I am never getting married." Cause I always thought, "if I am getting married I will be getting a divorce. Just forget it." But then I think well, I think that I could be married for a long time. So, it's hard to say like in a way I hope I am too but I still don't like marriage too much. (Lisa)

The following two teenagers said this about being married in the future:

Not legally. I wouldn't want to get legally married but when I get a stable job and everything maybe because I want to have kids. . . . (Kate).

I don't know if I want to be married. Like I want to be married but its not like something that's really on my mind. So it doesn't really matter to me if I am or if I'm not (Shawna).

She, however, later reconsidered her position somewhat during the interview and explained;

If I was married I think that would be good like because, you know, then I'd have somebody there to, you know, help me. Somebody to help me and to talk to and stuff like that, I mean, but if I don't have a husband I am not going to get all upset and depressed over it, you know. Even just like a boyfriend I guess would be good (Shawna).

In general, however, the idea of marriage appeared to be associated with negative consequences, such as abuse, divorce or the destruction of a relationship.

Many of the young women had either experienced or witnessed negative outcomes with respect to relationships or marriages. This young woman spoke about the physical abuse she had witnessed in relationships;

Um---I probably wouldn't want to be married with him because of other relationships that I've seen happen. Like my cousin's friend for instance, she's living with her boyfriend and she does get beaten--- And I just can't picture myself going through that (Sarah).

Another who said, "I would never want to get legally married because it would just be to much hassle" (Kate), marriage simply meant divorce. She explained, "Well, if I had to go through a divorce and if it just doesn't work out or something". Another saw marriage in itself as capable of destroying relationships;

It's just sometimes it seems like marriage really destroys a relationship. Seems I've seen a lot a of couples be together for a long time. As soon- like they could be together like for five years and as soon as they get married even be together for only like two- and they'll be divorced. And I am like, "why did you guys get married, you were so happy?" It's like no, forget it. I am not getting married. Just, I don't know I don't know what it is. I just don't like marriage, the sound of marriage. The commitment and to hold somebody for permanence and marriage and that. I can't (Lisa).

Their perceptions that marriage would likely not be safe, secure or supportive, were clearly based on experience.

None of these young women had parents who had experienced successful marriages either, undoubtedly making them even more apprehensive about marriage. These young women appeared to have been exposed to relatively few models of healthy relationships either inside the institution of marriage or outside of it. Although all of the young women did express that relationships that are stable and supportive would be desirable in their futures, especially for raising children, they clearly did not

see marriage as a method of providing this.

These perceptions were also being reinforced in some of their current relationships. This youth explained why she didn't want to be in a relationship at the present time:

. . . .boyfriends are good, but not- I don't know, it's like so hard to like find somebody that you want because then, you know, like sometimes it doesn't work out the way you want and something bad happens and then you guys end up having a grudge or whatever so it's not that good (Shawna).

Another spoke at length about how difficult her current relationship was:

So with this relationship- I rarely ever have relationships they're usually just flings I guess. So, I started seeing this guy I am going out with now and we started talking about having a relationship and he made it clear to me that he wanted communication. And I said you know, "Okay," because like I've never been able to like I told him, I've never been able to talk to my boyfriends. I've never been able to open up. I said, "normally I'll run like if you ask me to talk I'll run." And he said, "I hope you don't do that." So we've been trying to talk but we just about broke up once cause I wasn't talking and I really thought about it (Lisa).

She also suggested that having watched her mother in her relationships has added to her difficulties:

Like I grow watching my mom and my mom I remember never seeing my mom talking too much to her boyfriend. And she'd always run and hide. Like just running from things it's the easiest way (Lisa).

She further explained:

So I grew up thinking you know if somebody's trying to talk to me I just say, "Yeah whatever." Just walk away thinking it's the easiest way to go just run. But I find its not the easiest way to go because I always get hurt in the long run (Lisa).

Another youth explained her difficulty with inter-personal relationships in the following way:

. . . . so like I usually use this mask to hide all my feelings inside A lot of people call it using a mask. . . . I usually do---I don't know--- I guess I use the

mask a lot (Sarah).

Clearly, some of these young women found sharing their feelings and communicating in relationships quite difficult.

Although this question was never directly asked in any of the interviews, two of the young women indicated that they had been abused by men in their pasts. One did not provide details, but she suggested that the abuse she had experienced from men in the past made it difficult for her to be in relationships:

The abuse I've taken from men is like you know I just can't really, I can't trust men. So I am not going to talk to my boyfriends. So like just sit there, closure it off throw my walls down and just let him be mad at me. "It's okay," and laugh it off and, "it will be okay." End up getting hurt any way because he always ends up getting mad and saying, "well I am going to leave now." (Lisa).

This next young woman accounted the disturbing effects of having been sexual abused three times by men in her past. She made several references to the reoccurrence of nightmares that she experiences as a result of the abuse. She responded at one point with the following:

Um---like um---I am hoping nightmares would get better--- like I've been sexually abused three times and just I harshly got into my drugs my alcohol especially after my Grandmother passed away (Sarah).

She also revealed that one of the abuses resulted in an unwanted pregnancy explaining that;

But I didn't want to keep it because it was from somebody who sexually abused me. After four months I found out that I was pregnant I went downtown and I knew this ex-doctor, paid him some money to get rid of it (Sarah).

Their exposure to abusive relationships in both their own personal lives and in their family lives likely has contributed to their negative perceptions about marriage and their difficulties in their present relationships.

Clearly, the abuses that some of these women have experienced by men in their pasts have affected many aspects of their lives, including their current relationships and their ideas about the ones they will be involved in the future. The devastating affects of sexual abuse, and other abuses from men, likely will continue far into their futures.

Occupational Aspirations

All the youth wanted to be involved in paid work in the future. For the most part, the desired occupations were in traditionally female dominated areas. As this young woman stated, "And then I see myself, like I want to be a nurse. . . ." (Shawna). Or another as; "Well hopefully I'll be getting up in the morning to come to school to teach" (Kate). These others explained;

I am hoping I'd have a job. I don't know what as. There's lots that I'd like to be, you know, art work is one thing that I like dancing is another, hairdressing and then I even thought about the law, being a lawyer (Lisa).

Um--- just like, ah--- and sometimes I can picture myself looking after um elderly people in the hospital and um voluntary work in a hospital (Sarah).

With only a few exceptions, they saw themselves as becoming either a teacher, hairdresser, nurse, social worker.

There also appeared to be a significant desire to be in occupations which involved working with children. As this young woman who wanted to become a teacher explained, "I like working with kids and stuff [in] an alternate school" (Kate). Or this youth, "Yeah. And probably a job. Day care" (Amanda). Another also expressed the same interest in working with children in her future occupation:

. . . . or like I want to do something to help younger children, even if it's just like being a social worker or a foster parent or anything like that (Shawna).

Most of their ideas about future employment reflected desires to be caretakers or educators, both of which are fairly stereotypical expectations for women.

None of these young women were working at the time the interviews were conducted. When asked if she had employment, this youth responded, "Probably later in my life I am going to work" (Amanda). Another stated this about work in her present life:

Not really. I have like all the things I need to go to work but it's not like- I have resumes and a social insurance card and everything, but it's not like- I haven't gone out and actually looked for a job (Shawna).

And she added;

Well, I don't really go and look for a job, but I want to get a job because I know I have to, but sometimes I like just babysit and stuff like that, like in the summer times I go and get a job (Shawna).

Another youth simply responded, "I haven't actually worked" (Sarah). Two of them did indicate that they had worked in the past and both of these were in child care positions;

Last summer I babysat for my mom's friend and she had to work in the mornings, and all that, so like in the summer time I couldn't go out as much with my friends cause I was getting up at six o'clock in the morning to go babysit at seven and so if I did I'd be like pulling all nighters and stuff like that so I couldn't really go out and do things (Shawna).

. . . . I used to work for a day care in West Vancouver. Um, used to be a leadership job, W.O.W. program [a paid work experience program for youth out of school] and I used to walk to work and back home. It was just about a mile each morning (Sarah).

Overall, their experiences in the job market had been fairly limited. Those who had worked had been involved the traditionally female-dominated occupation of child care.

Their future perceptions, and present experiences in the job market, are clearly reflections of the overall limitations that women have experienced traditionally in the work force. It is well known that historically women have been segregated into certain occupational categories (usually lower paying and less secure) (Wilson, 1991). This trend is not limited to this population, however, it does appear that it may be more pronounced among the females that were interviewed for this research.

A recent study which looked at female adolescents' perceived future occupations found that many young women believed they would be involved in non- traditional occupations (Baker, 1985). The researcher concluded that increasingly young women feel less constrained by traditional expectations of women's work. However, the youth in this study did not appear to reflect this change in perception.

Educational Aspirations

For these women, education was recognized as being important, however, they were uncertain about how successfully they could achieve their educational goals in the future. All of the young women had ambitions about furthering their education, but they continually acknowledged the difficulties they had experienced in the past or anticipated in the future.

Most of the emphasis was placed on trying to complete grade twelve sometime in the future. This young woman said that, in the future, "I'd hopefully finish school Probably only do grade twelve" (Amanda). Or this youth; "Um---probably like night school or something just ah to catch up on the school work that I

never actually worked at" (Sarah). Another explained:

Cause I want to try and finish, um, finish high school- finish grade twelve anyway- finish grade nine to twelve. I am sure I'll probably finish grade nine and then finish and that's as far as I got my future. Just finish grade twelve and from there I'll, I don't know, I'll try and figure out where I am going (Lisa).

Although not with as much certainty, most of the youth did express hoping they would go on to complete some post secondary education.

The following are excerpts of three of the young women talking about their ideas about attending school after completing grade twelve:

Well, right now on my mind is finishing school, going to college and going maybe to university, although its not going to be like- I know it's going to be hard for me because right now I have to get myself in order to go, but like- because like I know it's one of my top priorities that I have to get. . . . And then maybe like take a year off after graduating and like find a job that I like that I am interested in and then once I have- you know, when I am all finished there I can go to college and take a couple courses and then see what I can get and then maybe, maybe by then I might have had changed my views or something, maybe I found something better or something, than being a nurse (Shawna).

Yeah. I was just talking about that today with my teacher. He said it would take four years of university. So its not very long, you know (Kate).

Yeah and I am hoping that I'll already have a couple years of college or something in there, at least some sort of degree. College, have something done with my life. Have something accomplished (Lisa).

However, she said this about university:

I don't know. It's sometimes I think its useless going [to go to university]. Well, only if I go if I can get further in my life but then um I don't know it's really hard to say col- university's nothing really big in my life. If it's on my list, it's probably way on the bottom. Just college or something like that (Lisa).

Although they recognized the importance of education, clearly school had not been a positive experience for any of them.

Many of the youth simply were not attending school saying, "I am not in school right now but I'm going to--- I signed up" (Amanda). Or, "I haven't actually signed up for school this year, I am supposed to be in Grade nine, I failed grade nine last year" (Sarah). Another explained:

No. Right now I am just trying- I am doing an assessment test, one of those adult---basic----[Education]. . . I am doing one of those right now at home to try and find out what grade level I am at and try and get into the Native Ed. or King Ed. (Lisa).

The others who were attending school suggested that it was not always easy and they often experienced many difficulties:

Doing grade nine, I'm getting really bored of it cause, I don't know, when I first started coming here I did a lot of work and because I was really determined to get my grade eight done really fast and I got it all done in a month now I'm just working on more of my English and I'll probably get started on my math and socials and stuff (Kate).

Well, I dropped out like in grade nine and- about two years ago, and I've been in and out of school (coughs)- and half way through grade nine I dropped out, so I was thinking that I could only like maybe catch up doing like half of grade nine and then start my grade ten but then I've been in and out of schools, like all these different schools.

When asked to explain further why she had attended so many schools she stated the following:

Why? I don't know. It's just cause I guess I just had to find something that I liked. Like cause if I'm not interested then I won't you know go there all the time and if I don't feel comfortable I won't show up (Shawna).

Although these youth inherently understood that education would be important factor in their future, their experiences in the school system had not generally been positive. The ones that were managing to attend school continual struggled to maintain their interest and attendance.

Their negative experiences in the school system is not

entirely surprising. A considerable amount of research has been done on First Nations students and their involvement in the European educational institutions. Many have concluded that the current systems rarely meet the needs of First Nations children or youth (Atleo, 1991). Explanations for this have focused on the differing learning styles and world views of First Nations students which make the current educational models not suited for First Nations individuals.

Atleo (1991), however, emphasizes that the First Nations' educational failures have more to do with contextual factors. In particular, Atleo (1991) suggests that it is the exclusion of First Nations peoples socially, politically and economically which more directly effects the low levels of academic achievement for First Nations peoples.

As with other areas of their future orientations, these young women placed great emphasis on themselves as being the factor for their lack of success in school. Not being aware of some of the historical and contextual factors which have effected this lack of success, means that many of these young woman likely believe it is a personal deficiency. As a result, their lack of success in school undoubtedly diminishes their self esteem and self worth.

Fears About The Future

There were several significant things that these young feared with respect to their futures. A disturbing fear of not making it to adulthood emerged. A fear of losing people close to them also arose. Finally, a tremendous fear with respect to drugs and alcohol use in their futures was evident. These fears, as

they were expressed by these young women, are presented in this section. Again, they are placed in the context of their present lives to provide greater insight into their existence.

Fear of Not Being Alive in the Future

Overall, these youth experienced incredible difficulties envisioning themselves in the future. They often struggled to picture what it would be like in the future and even occasionally doubted if they would be alive at all then. One young woman simply responded when asked if she could describe an average day in her future with: "No-----I can't-----I can't" (Lisa). She explained further why it was so hard to look ahead into her future:

But, I don't know, there's so many changes that could happen between now and then. So and I can't even- I can't even look to Sunday and see what I am going to be doing on Sunday (Lisa).

I don't know. I don't like to look too far ahead. Even Sunday seems too far ahead. So just go step by step and go by hour by hour and see what happens next. It seems a lot of times like I can make a plan, make some plans out, this is what I am going to do and this is what is going to happen and something just totally changes it and it doesn't happen. So, forget it I am not making plans anymore. It never works out so I am just not going to bother anymore. Just go, see what happens (Lisa).

She seemed to feel that if she planned or looked forward to anything in her life she would only be disappointed. A notably pessimistic outlook for someone so young and likely a reflection of repeated disappointments or let downs in her life.

Another youth also expressed a similar approach to life stating, "I usually just go day by day. Whatever happens, happens" (Kate). She appeared to feel that she had little control over the events that would occur in her future. At one point

(after describing the type of employment she hoped for in the future) this youth even commented that in her future she: "Might be dead by then. It could be worse" (Kate). Unpredictability and lack of stability in their lives obviously effected these perceptions.

The difficulty with envisioning themselves in the future was even more pronounced for some of these young women. Thoughts of suicide were evident, ultimately hindering their ability to look into their future. This young woman captured, perhaps more than any other, how difficult it was to look into her future;

Sometimes I can't picture myself in the future. Sometimes I can't picture myself being twenty years old--- um--- Sometimes I can just picture myself in the spirit world--- together with my ancestors and my uncles and my Grandmother and my Grandfather (Sarah).

When asked what one of her fears in the future might be, she replied,

Um--- being not able to carry on with my life. Like--- sometimes I think the dreams [from the sexual abuse] will never stop and they'll get worse. Like I've been suicidal quite a few times in the past--- (Sarah).

She was unfortunately not the only youth in this small sample that made reference to having been suicidal in her past. Another youth explained:

Somebody was asking me if I ever thought of suicide anymore cause, you know, I have my daughter to live for my daughter's too precious to me. The only time I'd ever think of suicide is if I lost my daughter--- But I used to think it was just I--- lot of times I used to think I would just do it but then it was for attention I think. You know, because I remember always trying- I did it when I was drinking most of the time. It was only because I was drunk and the attention and- but I used to always make it clear to people I knew what I was doing and I know that people cared like I always told myself, it's only me that doesn't care. You have to start caring, and you know I know other people care. I know my mom and them love me. I know I have friends who care a lot about me. Its me that doesn't care and stuff.

And I remember always saying that when I was really drunk, didn't matter how drunk I was you know, I'd still remember saying that. But I don't want to take that road again. I was on that road for a long time (Lisa).

She also revealed that she had witnessed this pattern in her own parents;

And watching my mom and my dad, my mom and my dad did that to me a lot. Saying that they were going to kill themselves you know. But they pull that, "but you don't care about me" and it's like "my god, okay, whatever, see you guys around" {laughs} (Lisa).

The level of despair among these youth can not be denied. As was noted earlier in the literature review, First Nations youth are at extreme risk of taking their own lives and these young women did not appear to be immune to this fact.

Fear of Losing People

These youth were also concerned about losing people close to them in the future. For two of the youth, this was expressed as one of their greatest fears about their futures. This youth stated her greatest fear in the future was; "Probably losing one my friends or my mom" (Amanda). Another youth responded to the same question with:

Just not having my mother there because she's diabetic. That's how my Grandmother passed away. The disease that she had, diabetic, and that's very common in my family. I, don't know, it's just like it could be like any day, it could be like tomorrow my mom passes away. Like it could happen anytime for a diabetic person. I fear not having my mom there. It's like taking care of my brother--- um--- I don't know, just not having my mother here is what I am worried about in the future (Sarah).

Death did not appear to be at all uncommon in these women's lives. For young people, these women had already experienced more than their share of losing people close to them. Accounts of the deaths of friends and families emerged throughout the interviews.

This youth, who had earlier revealed that her father had also died when she was younger, talked about recently losing two of her friends:

. . . . like a year ago my friend died and he got stabbed right and he was a really good friend of mine too and it was on Robson and it just it's-. . . . (Shawna).

She explained,

He was [age] and he had like to do, he had something to do with the Spanish gang and so, you know, these guys come up and they think, you know, we'll beat them up you know, we're going to beat them up like they're going to be big and tough and then they go and like this guy and like stabbed him (Shawna).

It was and then again my other friend died, seems like so many of my friends are dying it's so bad, cause my friend he got in a car accident and he died. (Shawna)

Another youth spoke about losing her grandmother to diabetes and the effect it had in her life:

Like we used to go there and visit her every morning on my way to school or something because she lived a couple of buildings away and it's kind of different because special occasions do not really seem like special occasions without my Grandmother here. Like my birthday didn't really seem like it was my birthday Christmas didn't seem like Christmas at all. Like I didn't want any presents or anything but I accepted them because I wanted my brothers to have a good time on Christmas and birthdays and all that. . . . (Sarah).

She also talked about her grandfather's death as well,

I never met my Grandfather. Um, my sister, she's born the same day that my Grandfather passed away so my Grandfather got to carry my sister before he passed onto the spirit world. I just thought that she's real lucky (Sarah).

One of the other young women, who had also disclosed her father was deceased, stated that, "It [heroine] killed my Uncle" (Kate). Losing people was almost commonplace in these young people's lives likely adding to their fears that they would lose people close to them in the future.

Fear of Drugs and Alcohol

Repeatedly, when looking into their futures, the fear of drugs or alcohol destroying their lives emerged. When asked what her biggest fear in the future might be this youth replied; "Well, I don't know. Probably drugs and alcohol. I don't like it" (Amanda). The young women expressed strong desires to avoid the detrimental effects of alcohol and drugs in their future. This young woman said:

Well, at the rate I'm going I don't want to become an alcoholic or anything cause that could screw up my education and if I don't get my education, and get good grades and what not then I won't have a good career (Kate).

Another spoke about how she intended on ensuring she would not follow her mother's pattern of alcohol abuse,

My biggest fear. End up falling back down a few stairs. Just um going- taking the same road as my mom did. Not being able to help myself right away. Not noticing problems as early. But I notice, I really watch what I do. But my mom, I don't want to take the same road as my mom did. Cause she's 38 and took her that long, you know, to finally realize she has a problem. So, I take a look at myself every day thinking, you know, "do I have a problem? Am I raising my daughter wrong? Am I okay? Am I physically okay? Am I mentally okay?" and try recognize them and try and do something about it (Lisa).

Another described her plans to avoid suffering the consequences of abusing alcohol or drugs in her future:

That's like scares me, cause like if I go out and party with my friends and you like start doing all these bad things and then you just want to do it more, and then you end up doing it everyday, and then you end up doing it every month, and then it's going to keep on continuing and then you won't be able to stop. So that's like what scares me, so that's why I say party on the weekends, you know, that's good, but if you keep on- like if you drink every day- like my friend she drinks like every day and that's bad and that's not like what I want, you know, cause your just going to want to do it more and more and more and by the time I am like thirty-five or whatever for all I know my liver could be bad and I'll have to get a surgery and get a new one, or something's wrong with my heart or something's wrong with my mind, you know, like anything can happen (Shawna).

These youth appeared to be acutely aware of the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse. They clearly believed that a good future was one which did not involve substance abuse.

The use of drugs and alcohol, however, emerged as a consistent factor in their present lives. This youth stated, "I smoke a lot of weed. I smoke weed every day" (Kate). When asked what her weekends consisted of she explained: "About the same. Drinking, smoking weed going home and listening to my mother bitch" (Kate). Another explained her use of drugs in the following way:

It's not like- it's not like we go and do them everyday but it's like if they're there then I guess we'll do some but it's not like we are going to go out- (Shawna).

She described the types of drugs she utilized as; "It's like marijuana, coke, extacy, but I don't do heroin" (Shawna).

Interesting, two of the youth specifically stated that their limit with respect to drug use was never using heroine: "Yeah. And I know one thing I am never going to do heroine" (Kate);

I am like totally against that [using heroine]. See that's like- I have my like- you know, it's people they don't have anything in their mind to tell them when to stop. Like I have my limits. Like I know right from wrong. Like if somebody's going to tell me, "here do this heroine," I am going to say, "No. No." Cause I am against that, I don't do that (Shawna).

Perhaps this reflected some false sense that they were in control of their drug use. As if, as long as they did not use heroine, their drug use would remain manageable and acceptable.

Some of the youth also spoke of their excessive alcohol or drug use as having been in their past, suggesting perhaps a certain degree of denial:

Well, before a couple of weeks ago it was drinking. Go out

and drink, go home sleep. I quit drinking about two weeks ago now. But we still go to the bars. Still go down, hang out with the friends, our friends. Just go to Ray's and hang out and then go home. Or else we'll go to a party and stick with our friends until six in the morning and then decide to go home (Lisa).

. . . . it was like really bad before like last year, like last year was really bad for us. Me and my friend we'd like go out and drink everyday and get drunk and like next day if there's no alcohol we'll go get high and we'll be like that for a whole three months and not go to school (Shawna).

Um, I started in hard drugs like cocaine, started using cocaine with my friends. We used to stay out all night sometimes for a couple of days. One time I stayed out for about a week just partying it up. I don't like to sleep. So, it's like some drugs that just don't--- just make you feel awake doesn't make you tired or anything. So, it's like I usually like to stay awake knowing that I am not going to have a nightmare and wake up crying or something or wake up pissed off (Sarah).

For her, and probably the others, using drugs was obviously deeply entwined with her desires to escape the pain in her life.

Drug and alcohol abuse had touched the lives of all these young women. All of the youth revealed substance abuse among members of their families. As this young women revealed when considering what effects drugs and alcohol might have in her own future:

My family life cause everyone in my family life they all have drinking problems and it just screws my family right up and I want that to change (Kate).

Well, it makes everyone distant and you know just makes everyone act different. You know my family will have wild parties and it will get violent and I just think there is no need for it (Kate).

Other's also spoke of the drug and alcohol abuse among members of their families. The impact of her mother's alcohol abuse in this young woman's life was almost inconceivable. She described her mother's drinking in the following way:

So and she [her mother] used to do a lot of that [drink].

She drank lots in front of us. And I mean she wasn't just drinking casually she drank to the point where she's falling down, not remembering anything and trying to pick a fight with me and then she'd take off (Lisa).

She further explained the effects that her mother's drinking had on her and her family:

Cause it got to a point where I had to take her kids away from her. I was living in her house but I still took her kids away from her And I went and stayed at an aunty's place. And I am walking out with her kids and she's drinking and I kept saying "well, I am taking your kids," and you know she got to the point- it got to the point where she was saying "okay, I don't care." I was 17. And you know I was, "you don't care? Is that how much of an alcoholic you are where you don't care about your kids now?" (Lisa).

Another also spoke about how alcohol abuse had affected her family in the past:

Yeah, and like he [mother's boyfriend] used to be an alcoholic and like I've seen my mom get beat up by him and all that, right, but it's like they got all that settled and now he's been like- he hasn't had a drink in like 8 years (Shawna).

Surrounded by the negative effects of substance abuse in their families lives undoubtedly enhanced their fears about these potentially occurring in their futures.

Many First Nations peoples and families become victims of substance abuse because of the intolerable conditions under which they live. The severe economic, political and social disadvantages that so many of them experience often makes alcohol or drugs an accessible and desirable escape. These young women seemed to be frighteningly aware of the possible risk of becoming substance abusers as adults.

Resistance

Despite the enormous fears and hardships that were expressed, these young women demonstrated a strong resistance

toward the many destructive forces in their lives. Many of their future desires reflected incredible yearnings to alter their current situations. Discussing some of these young women's future perceptions in the context of resistance is particularly pertinent to this population. First Nations peoples have demonstrated resistance throughout history. This perspective highlights that, despite the overwhelming obstacles faced by this young population, they are strong and determined. They are unwilling to passively accept their disadvantaged situations.

A strong resistance towards the breakdown of their families and the loss of their roots and cultures emerged. As well, they expressed sincere hopes of providing better lives for their own and other peoples' children. These themes which are related to resistance are presented in this section.

Resisting the Breakdown of Their Families

Maintaining connections to their families were significant to these young in their futures, despite the obvious obstacles hindering this. This young woman saw the most important thing in her future as being; "Um, let's see--- basically, just taking care of my family. My brothers and my sister" (Sarah). She also explained that one of her greatest desires in the future was, "Just to have my family together" (Sarah). Another spoke about her connection to her family in the future in the following way,

Yeah. I am sure me and my mom, my brothers and sisters will still all be really close. Like um like in another town I know we'll be close somehow. We'll always be like- we are not, like you know, we are not going to be moving like provinces and provinces over. We'll always be a hop, skip and a jump away. So like- and I can't separate from my mom. It's really hard and I know I won't be able to so (Lisa).

Yeah. Yeah. And my brother and sister I know they won't

separate either cause they're just so, I don't know, they're just so--- They got a lot of love and they're just- they just don't like to be alone. So I know they'll be around all the time (Lisa).

As this youth alluded to, a particularly strong desire to maintain connections with siblings emerged from the interviews.

This youth explained this about her bother and sister: "I don't know, they're always ahead of me. Like I always put them ahead of myself, before myself (Sarah)". One of the other young women explained the involvement she thought she would have with her family in the future:

My sister would be. My sister- my sister is my life and my mom she'll probably be the same as she is now- you know not around that much (Kate).

Another expressed great concern for her younger brother and wished she could do more for him:

I like, I feel bad cause like my little brother, I don't spend any time with him, like I never do anything with him at all. I see him and I'll talk to him for 5 minutes and then I'll have to go again and then I come home and he's in bed, or I'll come home and he's out playing with his friends and it's like when he wakes up in the morning I'm still sleeping and so he goes out and plays and then when I wake up he's home and then I'm getting ready to go out and then when I come home he's sleeping so I don't like--- I never spend time with him, but I know I should. . . . like I have this guilty conscience on me that I should go do things with him (Shawna).

In general, these young women placed great importance on their relationships with family members.

However, for many of them the connection to their families did not appear to be that strong in their current lives. In fact, family breakdown appeared to be a factor in all these youths lives and many expressed a lack of support from their family: "Me and my family aren't close" (Kate), and, ". . . I don't really- I don't know, all my mom's around for is to give me a place to live

somewhere to eat and money" (Kate). She further explained,

Well, its just me and my mom and she has a friend staying with her at our house and, I don't know, nobody's really there that much except for at night time (Kate).

Two others also expressed similar types of relationships with their families: "They're [her family]--- just there. That's pretty well it (Lisa), and;

Cause I think our family is like sort of like, not drifting apart, but we all have our busy days and then you know when it's a family night we just sit there and watch T.V., not like we go and have dinner like we used to. Like when we younger my mom used to take us out for dinner all the time and we used to go do things, go shopping, go here and there, but now it's like, when my mom and her boyfriend, when they go camping, you know, I am not a part of it. (Shawna).

This same youth also spoke later about the lack of involvement her father had in her life,

I mean when I was younger he [her Dad] always wanted to take me to (Town), right. He always wanted to take me there but he was like never there for me, you know. Only for- only from like when I was a baby to the age four when my mom and them got separated (Shawna).

Not surprisingly, as a result of this, some of these young women had repeatedly left home:

Well I was--- I lived at home for awhile I am supposed to be in care but I didn't want to live there. I was living with my boyfriend for a while and then I moved back home and home is okay, it's better than before (Amanda).

Another described her experience while she was in care of the Ministry of Social Services:

Well, supposed to be [living] in group homes but usually not. Just with friends and what not. I go to them sometimes but like in the past two years my life has changed a lot. I've gotten into drinking, drugs and what not and for awhile there I was getting pretty bad, out doing crime and beating people up and its not worth it (Kate).

She also suggested that this period was difficult for her mother as well;

Yeah. My mom is, you know, she tries and but, I don't know, I guess its hard for her too cause, you know, I just moved back home in December (Kate).

Despite all these factors that had pulled their families apart they were acutely aware of the importance of remaining connected to their family members in the future. They were determined to maintain contact with their families.

Resisting the Loss Their Culture and Roots

All of the youth expressed a sense of loss with respect to their cultures and traditional cultural practices: "Well, I don't dance. I don't know how to" (Amanda). Another said;

Well, I go up North sometimes to visit my Grandfather and there's powwows and stuff like that sometimes I go to and there's not really much. Most our culture is lost like no one of this generation knows much about it (Kate).

Well just, you know, there's not really much cause- mostly just go hunting and fishing with my grandfather. I'm trying to learn the Native language and stuff but there's nothing written about it like about the language so its just like more or less from what the elders know (Kate).

One of the other young women explained the loss of her parent's culture and her struggle to pass some of it on to her daughter:

I am not really into my mom's or my dad's culture because they're both from the coast and we don't see our family too often so we can't and there's none of us. Like I want to try and get into my mom's and started learning the language and start teaching my daughter. So I want to try and teach her the language and teach myself. But otherwise nothing is really there just the powwows, that's about it (Lisa).

This young women explained how she had little exposure to her culture growing up:

. . . . cause I've grown up with out it in my life and like I want to learn about it but not so I am all into it, because I been growing up without it all my life so its going to be weird to actually go after it now. Like if I'd been there, like if it had been in my life then it'd be a different story. I'd probably like know more about it, I'd probably get into it but not that much anymore (Shawna).

Like I never like knew what to do, like how to learn it cause like most of them were like brought up in like, you know- when people ask me questions about my culture I'm just like, "Well I don't know," you know, cause I don't know what to say cause I wasn't brought up like that, like on a reserve or anything like that, like my dad was. I was just born like downtown and I had all my friends and we are all like, you know, like different and like we had all our different cultures, like I was a mixture of this and that's just how it was. Like we were all friends like, you know, we didn't really think about that at the time (Shawna).

Despite the losses they had experienced, all of the youth wanted their culture to be some part of their lives in the future.

Although at varying degrees, each youth expressed this.

All of the youth saw being involved in First Nations cultural practices as playing some role in their futures. Most hoped they would become more involved then they were presently: "I think it'd be more. I'd probably be more into travelling than I am now" (Sarah). She further explained,

Yeah. I think I'd have my own traditional suit made by then. Like sometimes it takes awhile to even fix up a traditional suit like some people they take about a year or something just to add those little things to---to--- [decorate it]. Yeah, and joining the traditional dancers and competing against other dancers. Like I already started---like just this last Saturday I borrowed a shawl and started competing against other dancers already. So, I can picture myself competing against other dancers (Sarah).

In fact, she stated one of her strongest hopes for the future was, "That I become a traditional dancer" (Sarah). Similarly, another explained she would participate in cultural activities,

A lot more than now. I'm going to (area) this summer and hopefully I'll be learning a lot more about my culture from my family up there because they know a lot more about it then any of my family down here (Kate).

She further explained that, "I just want to know about my culture and stuff. I don't know, I don't want it to be lost" (Kate).

Another also felt strongly that it would be a more important

aspect of her life in the future:

Yeah, I am sure. I'll probably be more involved in the powwows. I'll probably be able to help at the powwows be able to just be right in there, you know, beading doing everything for my kids. It depends on how many kids I am going to have by the time I am thirty. And I don't know, it just seems I am just starting to learn a lot from my uncle because he's right into the powwow stuff. So really trying to learn from him, train (Lisa).

It is important to note that although all of the youth wanted their culture to be some part of their lives in the future, each one of the participants had individual responses to the extent to which they wanted it in their future.

For some of the young women, this aspect did not appear to be as important. This young woman responded to the question about whether she saw participating in cultural activities as an aspect of her future with; "Probably. Only the singing maybe" (Amanda). When asked to what extent she saw it in her future she said; "Probably about the same [as it is now]" (Amanda). One of the young women, who grew up with what she considered to be little involvement in traditional First Nations cultural practices, said she was uncertain about the role in which it would play in her future:

I don't really think it's going to more a part of my life but I think I'll be- I'll have known more about it, you know, as I grow up I'll probably learn more about it (Shawna).

She then explained;

That's the thing, like I want to be a part, like you know, I want to go up to like see my cousins, eh. Like I don't want to be drifted away, right cause they are my family, right. So that's what I am saying I want to be a part of it but not so I am all into it, you know, like I don't want to live on the reserves like I can- maybe I want to go up there and visit them right and see-like stay up there for a week and see what's going on, like learn more and more about it every day. But then at the same time I want to live back

down in Vancouver cause its where I grew up, right. So that's just- I want to stay in touch with it but I am not going to--- (Shawna).

Another described it in the following way;

I know I'll be still involved in the powwows, powwow trails. Probably be going further than just Kamploops or something. But I don't think there'll be much still with my mom and my dad's culture. Well, maybe my mom's but more it will be more or the Cree culture. There will be more of that I know that (Lisa).

Although there were differing degrees of importance placed on this aspect of their futures, the desire to return to their families birth places was consistently strong among all of the young women.

Several specifically stated wanting to visit the reserves or areas where people in their family were from. This young woman explained why she wanted to return to the reserve her father was born on;

I want to find out. Like I just want to know what it [a reserve] looks like so if people ask me I can tell them and that, so like I don't know, I don't know (Shawna).

She further explained what she hoped to achieve by visiting the reserve;

Like right now I am interested in going to go and see my Aunts and my Uncles cause my dad died, right. So I want to go see them and I want to see my cousins and see what they look like, you know, and just in difference to see like how I've grown up toward them, you know. If there's a really bad difference, you know, or if we're just the same, so then I know I missed out on all that or like it's just different. Cause like a lot of people they like ask me, like they like ask about reserves and stuff like that, but I've never been on one and I don't even know what it looks like, so (Shawna).

Another also expressed wanting to travel to both her parents reserves sometime in her future;

Um--- I would travel maybe. Well---I've never been on a reserve ever before in my life. So probably [father's

reserve], [Mother's reserve] (Amanda).

Clearly, they understood the importance of their own heritages and roots. Although some recognized that much of their culture had been lost, or they had limited access to learning more about it, they acknowledged it was both important and worthwhile preserving.

These young women were perhaps also expressing their struggles with their identities as First Nations youth. In the book, Voices: Being Native in Canada (Jaine & Taylor, 1992), a compilation of stories written by First Nations, this theme consistently emerged. For example, in Patricia A. Monture Okanee (1991) story Self Portrait: Flint Woman, she described how she felt as teenager who had not grown up on a reserve:

Particularly during my late teenage-age years, I felt more than lonely, I felt alone and different. I felt caught in the middle. I was half white and the whites clearly thought I was "Indian" and did not want me around. But the "Indians" also felt I did not belong with them. Having been raised off-reserve, I really could not be an "Indian". For many years I believed the middle was nothing but lonely (p. 128).

Admittedly, Canadian society has, for the most part, rejected and diminished First Nations peoples ways of being and knowing and attempted to extinguish their cultures and traditions through forced assimilation. Added to this, is the dominant culture's overall rejection of those who have assimilated, leaving many First Nations peoples feeling as if they do not belong any where. Providing Better Lives for the Next Generation

All of the youth interviewed wanted to have children in the future. Although the number of children desired varied somewhat, it was important to all the these young women that they have children in the future. As this youth explained; ,

I want more kids. The doctor says I can't really have- I don't know, I was having a lot of problems there and the doctor's saying at first I am not sure if you can have kids anymore. And there's like, don't say this I want more kids. I want lots of kids. Have as many kids as I can. {Laughs} At least five, six the most {laughs} (Lisa).

She later described one of her greatest hopes for the future as;

Just kids. Some more kids. Cause I still wonder if I am able to have kids cause the doctor really scared me about that. That's one thing I think about. Am I allowed, can I get pregnant? I want more kids. I am hoping for more kids. One of the things I really want is to have more kids cause I don't want my daughter to be the only one there (Lisa).

The others also indicated that they anticipated being parents in the future: "Yeah. Later, later though. Not now. Probably two only" (Amanda); "Just one or two" (Kate); and,

I want to have maybe like two, like one or two, and then the rest are going to be foster children. Like I really, really, that's one of the things I really want to be a foster parent (Shawna).

The most significant theme which arose with regards to having children in the future, however, was a strong desire to give their children better lives than their own.

Most of the young women expressed wanting to provide their children with lives that were better than their own. To provide their children with lives that were free from the destructive forces which had been in their lives:

. . . . and if I have kids I want, like I want a baby but not now, but I know later on in my life I'll want to have kids and I want to have a good life for them. I don't want them to grow up around, you know, watching people drink and do drugs, stuff like that (Kate).

She further explained that she would bring up her own children, "A lot better than my mom. I'd discipline them and, you know, teach them and what not, be more involved with them" (Kate). This young woman explained; "My dad's on that road yet. He drinks lots,

does drugs. And its something I don't want for me and my daughter" (Lisa). She explained what she would do differently than her parents had as, "Just, ah, physical abuse. Like I remember getting hit when I was a child" (Lisa).

This young women also wanted a better life for her children;

. . . . like my kids, I want to see them grow up good, like you know, I don't want to see them having to go live on the streets, you know, having to do prostitution or, you know, dealing drugs or anything like that. Like I don't want to see them do that like cause that's bad, like why should they like have to do that, you know, like there's no point, like I mean I see the only reason that people are doing this is for more money, right. But, you know, people can go get a job they can have money that way but their just lazy they don't want to do it, right? I mean, I don't want to see my kids like, you know, like doing really bad and like, you know, doing these things that I don't want them to see, you know, that's just not how I want it (Shawna).

There was a real sense that somehow that they could make it better and easier for their own children than it had been for them. A desire to hopefully protect their children from enduring some of the things had during their childhoods.

This was also not limited to their own children, and many expressed wanting to work with children in their future and to somehow improve their lives:

Because like there's a lot of children on the streets that have like nowhere to go, right. And it's sad because like, you know, they have nowhere to go and then they end get up getting into bad things, you know because they just have nothing, like something happened with their parents or you know their parents kicked them out or something or their parents are, you know, doing these things that the kids can't handle and, you know, I just want them to be happy. I think that's what's important (Shawna).

She went on to explain further why she felt it would be important in future to help other children;

It's just cause in my- like when I was a child like a lot of people helped me, you know, cause like I was in foster homes and, you know, in hospitals and its just like I want to help

people, I want to help children too, like I don't want them growing up having this rough life or whatever. And like I want to be foster parent, and I want to be a nurse and all this, like I want to I've kids to (Shawna).

One of the other young women also explained why she believed she would be able to help kids like herself in the future;

Cause it'd be easier to understand the kids like because I grow up with all this kind of stuff that most kids are growing up with and what not but who knows the world could change by then. . . . (Kate).

They have an deep understanding that children should not have to experience hardships, perhaps as they had in their own childhoods.

Perceived Needs

The youth perceived needing various things in ordering to obtain their desired futures. Most significant of these were the need of support from others and the need to change or improve themselves.

Support From Others

Mostly, these youth expressed their predominate need as support from individuals in their lives. One young woman described this as support she felt she needed from counsellors and her family;

The counsellor that I had she's a really good counsellor. Like she's a sexual abuse counsellor, she's a drug and alcohol counsellor and--- I don't know--- she's a counsellor for all different kind of things. And it really helped me and I used to go see her and I don't know why I quit going. I don't know why I stopped going to see her at her office. Um, I don't know--- just a lot of good counselling would help and myself really trying to help myself. And it's like lately I haven't been doing that just turning towards alcohol and drugs. Um, hanging out with the family more often (Sarah).

Another saw the most important support as coming from family and friends:

Um---I don't know---just friends and family around on the reserve, I guess. Yeah. Support from friends and family (Sarah).

This one described the following individuals as the important sources of support in her life;

Well, like Mary's [One-to-one Worker] helping me a little right now. My boyfriend's helping me. Yeah. Support (Amanda).

Only one of the young woman referred to the need for money in facilitating the achievement of her future goals,

Um, Probably need money so--- Hopefully I'll get my grade nine done here now, by the end of the year if I don't go up to Burns Lake I'll be getting a job. I have a trust fund to so (Kate).

These youth appear mostly to need and desire to have people in their lives who accept, encourage and support them.

Need to Change/Improve Self

Overwhelming, however, most youth perceived themselves as being the most instrumental factor in achieving their future goals. Almost all the youth made reference to the need to change their current lives. This one emphasized changing her life now so she would be able to pursue her educational goals;

Like I know in my mind I have to go to school it's just a part of me that has to get there, that I have to get up and go because I know I have to. Like I can't like- what am I going to do, stay home and sleep? Meanwhile I could be at school learning and passing my tests and getting better at my grades and then before I know it, you know, hopefully graduate (Shawna).

She further explained;

It's just maybe like my life, my social life, maybe I have to like cool down on that cause I am like out partying like every night even on school nights I am out and that's going to be- that's like a bad habit for me going out every night so, you know, maybe I should just like sit home or like, you know, like have a couple people over like watching T.V. or movies or something, you know, or maybe just say "okay, well I'll go to school like every week and then on the weekends I

can go out with my friends, you know, lower it like that instead of going out every night partying until like five six in the morning and having like one or two hours of sleep and not being able to get up and go to school (Shawna).

This young woman also referred to the need to try and help herself now in order to improve her chances of obtaining her future goals;

. . . .and myself really trying to help myself. And it's like lately I haven't been doing that just turning towards alcohol and drugs (Sarah).

Being more motivated, in particular, was one of the ways that these young women felt they needed to change:

Just the motivation and um motivation. Like I can't get up at 7 o'clock and be mobile about anything. Just mope around the house. I don't know what it is. Before I used to think it was just because of my health. My health was really off but now I just, I don't know, I mean people just get up, "time to go," or something its like, "yeah, whatever." I don't know, I think there's I lot of times I wish I could be in high school, wish I could have a lot of friends, like a lot of the high school kids do. Be there. But I know I can't change the past. I don't know what could motivate me, I don't know (Lisa).

Just hoping I can be more motivated and more up going and be able to do anything I want with no problems. I don't know just hoping I have a job and I am somewhere (Lisa).

I know that for me to get there I have to be motivated. I have- if that's what I want, I have to go and get it. I can't just sit there and wait for it to come to me, you know (Shawna).

Just not getting there {laughs} that's all I am scared of but I know that if in my mind I really want to do it that I can. Its just that I have to be mot-i-vated {laughs} (Shawna).

This suggests, as had some of their other perceptions, that they believed that their success in the future depended most on their own personal strengths.

Although not unexpected for individuals of this age, this perspective unfortunately does not acknowledge the many

historical and current circumstances which may severely disadvantage them from achieving their future goals. As a result these young women will likely attribute any failures in their future lives to personal weakness which will continue to diminish their self esteem and self worth.

Summary

In the end, most of the youth just simply wanted to have meaningful lives and be happy in the future. It seems appropriate to conclude this section with the voices of the women themselves. These final quotations reflect the general desire of all the participants to be happy and have fulfilling lives.

Hoping that I am somewhere, not just anywhere, somewhere.
And I can be happy about, rather than just having a kid and being happy about that (Lisa).

And I want to live, in a house and have like- I want this life, but not like perfect but good enough so I can live and be happy, so like when I am old like, you know, I like have all these children and I like want them to like say thank-you, you know, for like helping me and like watching them grow up to be good and do something with their lives, you know, not being on the streets addicted to something (Shawna).

She later further explained,

I want a good life. I want to be happy, I want to make other people happy. I want to grow old and have good memories, you know, of all the times I've lived and the people that, you know, [that I met] (Shawna).

In the end, these young women simply hoped that they would be happy in the future.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research set out to provide understanding and insight into the future outlooks of a few young First Nations women living in an urban environment. Through this endeavor, it was hoped that some of the factors contributing to the nature of their outlooks would be revealed. It was also hoped that this exploratory research would raise some questions and reveal the importance of paying attention to this ignored and marginalized population.

It is believed that the future outlooks expressed by these young women begin to help fill the existing void of available information about this population. Although it was not the intention of this project to utilize these findings to generalize about this population's experiences or perceptions, the themes which emerged can be useful for improving our understanding about this population.

The fact that even among this small group of women, there were evidence of suicidal thoughts, sexual and physical abuse, lack of success in school and drug and alcohol abuse should suggest that an unacceptable situation exists that social work needs to address. Based on these interviews, and the existing literature, some general recommendations with respect to better meeting the needs of this population will be made. The findings of a recent study, entitled The Voices of First Nations Youth: First Nations Youth Needs in the Strathcona and Downtown Eastside Area of Vancouver (Grunberg, 1992), will be used to support some of these recommendations.

This chapter will outline some of the ways social work could

respond to better meet the needs of these young women. The need for collective responses to changing the conditions affecting these young women will be discussed. An outline of some considerations with respect to social work counselling with female First Nations youth will be provided. This is followed by a discussion of some of the specific issues faced by First Nations women, as were revealed in the interviews and the literature review. A brief discussion about some of the directions social work should be taking with respect to developing programs for this population will then be presented. This chapter concludes with suggestions of areas in need of further research.

A Need For Change

Social work as a profession needs to acknowledge the problems and biases within its structures and organizations and work towards altering these. The historical role of the social work profession in the colonization process needs to be recognized. As Chris Walmsley (1993) explains; "Social workers legacy with respect to First Nations peoples has been viewed as part of the problem more frequently than as part of the solution" (p. 148). Social work needs to reflect on its current approach to practice with First Nations peoples. Responses to the issues facing First Nations peoples need to be different than those which occurred in the past.

A Collective Response

As was apparent from the literature review and the interviews, the issues facing this population are extensive and complex. In addressing these, social work as a profession needs

to reconsider its present approach to social work in general. As Ben Carniol (1990) explains;

The practice of conventional social work today, based as it is on workers carrying certain caseloads of individuals and families, means that the professions role seems inevitably confined to adjusting clients to prevailing social conditions- minimally improving their lot perhaps, but seldom changing it (p. 114).

Through collective efforts, social work needs to focus on addressing the structural inequalities, which create and maintain the conditions that so profoundly effect this population.

In order to really address the issues facing young First Nations youth, the First Nations community needs to receive "their full and fair share of personal power, material resources and social opportunities" (Carniol, p. 115). To achieve this, social work as a profession needs to emphasize collective efforts and community development approaches that work toward altering the current deprived situations of First Nations peoples. Carniol (1990) explains;

. . .such social work practice moves away from the central position of implicit power over clients towards encouraging clients to take matters into their own hands by forming political and support groups (p. 115).

The intention of these groups is to acknowledge and address the political and social roots of their circumstances (Carniol, 1990).

Efforts need to made that facilitate and empower the First Nations community to define the needs of their own youth and to create their own solutions. The emphasis should be on community development or community organization interventions that will effect long lasting changes for First Nations youth in urban areas. Lee (1986) defines community organization in the following

way:

Community organization is that social intervention which through the facilitation of collective action on the part of the clientele, seeks to maximize the ability of disadvantaged people to affect their environment so that they are able to meet their psychological, social and material needs. This intervention involves the creation of representative organizations which can develop the power and resources to change inadequate institutions and laws or build new ones that will be more responsive to their needs and those of all human beings (p. 3).

Social work practice needs to work towards strengthening communities and connecting people with similar problems. The goal ultimately being to empower First Nations people to create long lasting and real changes in their communities.

Greater Representation

As was shown in the statistics presented earlier in the literature review, and reflected in many of the interviews, First Nations youth come into to contact with social services and corrections agencies at an alarming rate. However, First Nations peoples are severely under-represented in these agencies as service providers (Allgaier, James & Manuel, 1993). The representation of First Nations peoples in these agencies needs to be increased, especially at the decision making levels.

Community organizations need to incorporate First Nations peoples in the front line decisions which effect their youth. As well, they must ensure that their interventions are consistent with First Nations peoples' goal of achieving self government.

Social Action

Addressing the issues faced by this young population extends far beyond merely providing culturally- sensitive interventions at the immediate level. It requires effecting policies which

address the wider contextual structures which disadvantage this population in countless ways. Pence (1988) explains the purpose of policy:

Policy are typically seen as the instruments used by societies to improve social conditions and to protect against and offset the impact of economic industrial and other forces (p. 197).

He acknowledges that, "the challenge is therefore to identify social policies that extend opportunity for individuals and enhance their well-being" (p. 197). As social workers, we need to focus our interventions at all the levels which affect these young people's lives. These include dealing with, and combating, issues such as racism, sexism, discrimination, oppression, and colonization. Most importantly, however is the realization that policies which influence First Nations peoples' lives need to be developed by, not for, aboriginal people.

Social workers need to continually advocate for the right of self determination and sovereignty for First Nations peoples. Although a detailed discussion is not within the scope of this paper, the fact remains today that the sovereignty of First Nations in this country was never fully extinguished (Cassidy, 1991). As Cassidy (1991) explains:

Non-Aboriginal Canadians must come to grips with our history of colonialism. Once we do so, we can join in true partnership with First Nations to finally create one Canada based upon respect for the self determination of all peoples (p. 13).

The answer to addressing the needs of this young generation, and the generations to come, largely lies in returning the power and control, which was never relinquished, to First Nations people to determine and guide their own lives.

Cassidy (1991) quotes a First Nations leader in his discussion of what needs to occur for this to become a reality,

It is all so simple, George Erasmus and other First Nations leaders maintain. It is only a matter of Canada accepting its own Constitution, of accepting Section 35 which recognizes and affirms existing aboriginal and treaty rights. It is only a matter of political will on the part of provincial and, most importantly, the federal governments. It is all so simple, and yet progress is so slow, it often seems as if it will never come at all (p. 2).

As new generations struggle to overcome the devastating consequences of colonization, such a response is long overdue.

Social workers need to incorporate into their practices social action which advocates for the rights of First Nations peoples. This includes any social action which addresses First Nations peoples' rights to have control and power over their lives and communities, to have land claims addressed and resolved and to free them from systemic racism, discrimination and oppression. Any pursuits which address these needs, and work towards influencing policy, have a great potential for altering the conditions faced by young First Nations females.

Social Work Counselling with Female First Nations Youth

Although counselling is by no means the ideal method of resolving the issues facing this young generation, social workers still most commonly deal with clients on a one-to-one basis. As it is believed that this trend will continue for some time, this section is included to address this existing situation. This is not to imply, however, that social workers should focus solely on improving their practice at this micro-level. The emphasis must continue to remain on permanently changing the conditions which effect this young population. However, it is believed that social

workers, at this level, could become more culturally appropriate in their practices and better meet the needs of young First Nations women.

It is also imperative that non- Aboriginal social workers, whenever possible, provide services to First Nations clients only when invited to do so by First Nations individuals, groups or communities. If First Nations communities or individuals are available to provide similar services this should occur. At minimum, social workers should continually consult with the First Nations community with respect to the effectiveness and appropriateness of their practices.

Many of the present practice models, ideas, and tools available to social workers are largely euro-centric in nature and simply do not fit very well with respect to practice with this population. As a result, social workers need to continually evaluate their effectiveness and appropriateness in cross-cultural situations and commit themselves to providing more culturally-sensitive services. Social workers need to seek out opportunities to learn more about First Nations models of healing and to incorporate them, when appropriate, into their practices with First Nations clients.

It is imperative for social workers to acknowledge that being a competent cross-cultural worker is as much a process, as it a learning of skills and tools. Essential to this process is an awareness of one's own values and background. Social workers must be committed to on-going self evaluation and reflection throughout their careers. Social workers must explore and challenge the values that direct their practices.

It is important that social workers incorporate an understanding of First Nations culture and values into their practices. They need to, however, simultaneously maintain respect and openness to their clients individuality and uniqueness. It must be recognized that each client is an individual and may be at a variety of different levels in terms of their own development and awareness. This was evident even among the few young women who participated in this study. Each of the young women were at different stages of developing their First Nations identity. Although through these interviews it was apparent that involvement in their cultures were important, each had experienced different degrees of connection to this.

Any social work practice with First Nations peoples needs to incorporate an understanding and knowledge of the collective experience of colonization on First Nations peoples. Although it is acknowledged that First Nations peoples represent a variety of distinct cultures, values and experiences, it is their collective experience which should form the bases for working with First Nations peoples. This includes understanding that the dominant culture has largely benefited from the historical and on-going destruction of Native peoples' lands, cultures, traditions, languages and ways of lives. Non- First Nations social workers need to recognize and respond to the colonial values which they have inherited.

Social workers need to utilize models of practice which are capable of contributing to the decolonization of First Nations peoples. Not only do social workers need to deliver their services ethnically-sensitively, they need to continually check

their actions to ensure that they are not merely perpetuating the continued oppression of First Nations peoples and performing yet another task in the process of colonizing First Nations peoples.

Although it was not unexpected that these young women were relatively unaware of the political, social, and economic factors which could impede the achievement of their future goals, counselling which addresses this could potentially be empowering. In this respect, a feminist counselling approach can offer a productive method of addressing the issues faced by this population. A feminist approach looks more at the clients ideas, feelings and behaviour rather than fixing blame on the client for her situation (Carniol, 1990). Carniol (1990) explains;

...such a focus recognizes that the various forms of discrimination against oppressed populations become internalized so that women, children, and men who use social services tend to believe they are incompetent or failures (p. 119).

This was apparent in many of the interviews with the young women in this study. Many of them repeatedly attributed their circumstances to personal failures or lack of personal strength.

I suggest the utilization of two specific skills, adapted from a feminist counselling approach, with work with young First Nations females. These include the skills of "positive evaluation" and "social analysis" (Russell, 1984). Although developed primarily for counselling women, its my personal belief that these two skills can be useful with all First Nations clients. The focus, in the case of female First Nations clients, would be on both the oppression of First Nations peoples and the the oppression of women. Applied to work with young First Nations females, these skills aim to reveal the issues associated with

sexism and racism.

The first skill of positive evaluation involves, "conveying to clients that they have attributes and abilities that are unjustly devalued by themselves and by the society in which they live." (Russell, 1984, p. 55). When applied to female First Nations clients, this would involve assisting the client to recognize that her negative self-image is largely a product of the prevalent negative evaluations of First Nations peoples and women by society. Negative stereotypes about First Nations peoples are abundant. The young First Nations client needs to begin to understand how these persistent and negative stereotypes have likely been internalized and how they may be effecting her life.

The second skill, and perhaps the most important, is that of social analysis. This involves,

...assessing social and cultural restraints impinging internally and externally on clients. The skill includes the use of this assessment in assisting clients to restructure cognitively their world through recognition of social influences (Russell, p.75).

This entails incorporating a structural analysis into the counselling process. In other words, putting peoples' experiences into the context of their treatment and positions within society.

In this case, helping young First Nations females understand the impact of racism and discrimination in their lives. Also, redefining their distress as a normal reaction to the tremendous oppression and destruction which have been inflicted on First Nations peoples through the process of colonization. The goal being to clearly expose the social barriers which have infringed on their development and contributed to their present

circumstances.

This approach to counselling is quite different than the traditional approach of narrowly focusing on the client. It strives to link the personal to the political and offer alternative strategies to dealing with people's situations. A feminist counselling approach to work with female First Nations youth offers a more productive approach to dealing with their issues.

Issues Confronting Female First Nations Youth

The interviews and literature review highlighted that there are multiple issues confronting this population that social workers need to be aware of and knowledgeable about. Specific factors relevant to youth, females and First Nations must be combined in work with female First Nations youth. Social workers must recognize these young women's disadvantaged status in society based on their age, sex and race. The multitude of challenges they may be faced with as a result of these need to be acknowledged. Although there are numerous others, two specific issues of relevance to female First Nations adolescents will be discussed here.

Importance of Involving the Family

As is often the case when working with youth in general, the family needs to be supported and involved when any work is occurring with a teenager. The great emphasis that these young women placed on the importance of their family relationships suggests this may be particularly important for First Nations youth. The Voice of First Nations Youth study (Grunberg, 1992) noted that: "The importance of respecting family needs, making

family counselling available and including parents in the process of working with youth at risk, should be emphasized" (p. 19). It is clear that for healing to occur among First Nations youth, healing must also occur in their families and communities.

Sexuality

As well, due to their gender, social workers need to be aware of some of the additional issues that young people face as women. Knowledge is necessary in the areas of teenage pregnancy and dealing with the issues faced by women who have been physically or sexually abused by men. As was described earlier, one of the young women highlighted the serious results of sexual abuse when she spoke about her on-going nightmares and her use of drugs to escape the pain.

Her experience, unfortunately is not an isolated case among First Nations youth. As Rick Ouston (1993) explains in his article;

It is difficult to contest that Canada's native Indian children were magnets for pedophiles. Church workers and teachers flocked to residential schools to feast on easy prey, as sickening numbers of recent criminal convictions attest. How many like-minded individuals used the adoption process to legally acquire their own victims is not known (p. 20).

As a result of adoptions and residential schools, cycles of sexual abuse have become serious concerns for many First Nations communities. It is a serious issue currently affecting far too many young First Nations women today. Social workers need to be aware that the genesis of these cycles were a direct result of the dominant culture's intrusion into First Nations' children's lives.

The majority of the teenagers in this study had also

revealed having been pregnant. Although obviously not a representative sample, other research has shown that female First Nations Youth are at a high risk of becoming pregnant (La Prairie, 1984). When working with female First Nations youth, social workers must assure that they receive adequate access to birth control methods and information. However, more importantly the reasons for taking such risks needs to be dealt with.

Programs

The evidence suggests, both from the statistics and the interviews conducted for this research, that female First Nations youth are overwhelming involved in criminal activities, substance abuse, street life and are often not in school and not working. As well, it appears that they are routinely exposed to violence, family breakdown and death. Despite this, very few services or programs currently exist in Vancouver which are specifically designed to meet the needs of young female First Nations youth. Although it is clear that developing programs and services merely offer band-aid solutions to much larger structural problems, they can potentially elevate some of the suffering encountered by this population.

General

The multitude of issues confronting these young women suggests that programs which are holistic in focus and address the underlying issues (such as poor self-esteem) confronting these young women would be useful. Throughout the interviews it was apparent that these young women experienced many things which would diminish their self-esteem and worth (for example, violence, abuse, lack of success in school). Creative, and

culturally-appropriate projects need to be undertaken which give these young women opportunities to be successful and to build their self images.

Programs such as 'street theater', which allows young people with no acting experience to become involved in all aspects of the creation of a theater production, provide unique avenues for building self-esteem in young people. Such innovative programs allow indirect opportunities to improve negative self-perceptions among youth.

Specific

The themes which emerged in the interviews suggest several specific areas that programs and services may be required. For example, programs designed specifically for female First Nations youth in the areas of drug and alcohol, recreation and job training would be useful. As well as these needs being reflected in the interviews, The Voice of First Nations Youth study (Grunberg, 1992) also emphasized the need for improvement in these areas.

Drug and alcohol

The interviews suggested that drug and alcohol abuse was a serious concern among these young women. Vancouver has relatively few services which address the drug and alcohol concerns of First Nations youth. Grunberg (1992) reported that over ninety percent of the respondents felt there were not enough adequate programs in place to help First Nations youth with drug and alcohol problems.

More facilities designed specifically for youth, and preferably for females, are needed. Drug and alcohol programs for

these youth should reflect existing First Nations models of healing. Existing services such as Hey-Way'-Noqu Healing Circle, an out-patient treatment and counselling service which incorporates traditional cultural components, provide a good model for developing such programs (Grunberg, 1992).

Recreational Facilities

The youth in this study clearly lacked involvement in leisure or recreational activities. Grunberg (1992) also found in her study that, overwhelmingly First Nations youth reported that there was not enough to do, they had too much time on their hands and had few places to go. More access to supervised facilities for First Nations youth is required. Also, First Nation youth need to be consulted and opportunities provided for such things as teen events, sporting events and cultural activities (Grunberg, 1992).

A specific recommendation made by the Voices of First Nations Youth study was that First Nations youth workers, or culturally- sensitive youth workers, be available in community and recreational centers. These workers would be responsible for liaising with First Nations youth in the community and encouraging their involvement in available activities. It is my personal belief that this would be an important aspect in successfully involving First Nations youth in recreational or leisure activities.

Job Training

The lack of involvement in employment and the limited ideas about the opportunities available to women revealed in this study, suggests there is likely a great need for job training

programs that are specifically designed for female First Nations youth. Programs which provide career planning and educate young First Nations women about the large variety of employment opportunities available to women would likely be useful. These programs would also need to take into account not only the specific needs of females, but also First Nations youth who live in urban environments.

The Voice of First Nations Youth study (Grunberg, 1992) also concluded that there was a need for more summer job programs and job preparation programs for First Nations youth. As well it was suggested in this study that access be improved to the relevant information regarding upgrading opportunities that are available through employment and community centers (Grunberg, 1992). The interviews conducted here also suggested that this would be useful. Three of the youth, specifically mentioned that they intended pursuing upgrading.

The most important aspect for social workers to consider, however, is that these programs should not be designed for First Nations peoples, but with, or even better by, First Nations peoples. It is essential that interested First Nations individuals (including youth), groups and communities be involved in the creation of any new services in these areas. The collective identity of First Nations peoples needs to be recognized and they must ultimately be allowed to design and develop programs which meet their needs and be provided with the resources to deliver these (Allgaier, James, Manuel, 1993). In the end, however, costly services and programs will do little to solve the problems faced by this young generation if the basic

inequalities that are at their root continue to be ignored.

The Need For Continued Research

As anticipated, this research revealed the necessity and urgency for social work to continue to improve its of understanding of this marginalized population group. Relatively little is known about this population. Social work as a profession has made few attempts to understand the issues facing young First Nations individuals in cities, provide services which can adequately meet their needs or influence policies which effect their lives. This research was only able to, on a very small scale, begin the process of filling an enormous void which presently exists in the field of social work.

With all research projects comes a call for more and continued research. Without belaboring this, this research did reveal many areas in need of further research. In particular, it would be valuable to further explore such areas as these young women's relationships with men and the issue of grief and loss.

My initial area of interest with respect to conducting this research was, in fact, to look at their relationships with men. Many of the young First Nations females I have worked with previously have disclosed serious difficulties in their relationships. It suspected, based on this and what the young women said in this research, that many young First Nations women are not experiencing healthy, stable relationships. Research in this area could confirm whether this really is a serious concern for First Nations females and gather information relevant to providing services in this area.

Also, it would be useful to know the extent female First

Nations youth are being faced with losing friends or family members. Answers to questions such as the following could be of great use: What are the effects of these repeated losses in their lives? How do they deal with grief and loss issues? Are there any services which address these issues?

Quantitative work, as well as qualitative work, is needed as still relatively few statistics are available which accurately reflect the scope of the problems facing this population. Accurate statistics on pregnancy rates, alcohol use, involvement in the justice system and the other areas highlighted in this research would be useful. Although research which improves our understanding of this population would be useful, it is ultimately more imperative to begin addressing the issues we already know are faced by this population.

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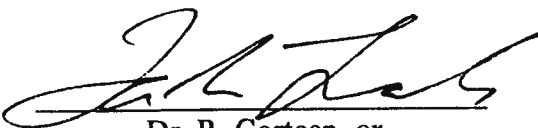
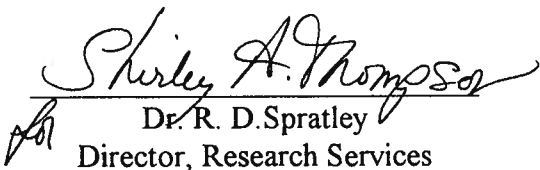
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Certificate of Approval

<small>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</small> Yellow-Bird, M.	<small>DEPARTMENT</small> Social Work	<small>NUMBER</small> B93-0788
<small>INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT</small> UBC Campus		
<small>CO-INVESTIGATORS:</small> Dolman, C., Social Work		
<small>SPONSORING AGENCIES</small>		
<small>TITLE:</small> Female native adolescents' perceptions of their futures		
<small>APPROVAL DATE</small> JAN 26 1994	<small>TERM (YEARS)</small> 3	<small>AMENDED:</small>
<div style="padding: 10px;"><small>CERTIFICATION:</small> <p style="text-align: center;">The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.</p><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 20px;"><div style="text-align: center;"> Dr. R. Corteen <i>or</i> Dr. I. Franks, Associate Chairs</div><div style="text-align: center;"> Dr. R. D. Spratley Director, Research Services</div></div><p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures</p></div>		

Interview Guide

- 1) Could you describe what an average day looks like in your life presently?
(probes)
 - work
 - school
 - relationships
 - leisure time
 - participation in cultural activities
- 2) Could you describe what your an average day might look like when you are thirty years old?
(probes)
 - work
 - school (attending or will have attended)
 - relationships (married/children)
 - leisure time
 - participation in cultural activities
- 3) What do you think will you need to get there?
- 4) What do you fear most about your future?
- 5) What do you hope for most in the future?

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PARENT/GUARDIAN INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

For the Research Project Titled: Female Native Adolescents'
 Perceptions of their Futures.

Researcher: Corinne Dolman, M.S.W. (Candidate)
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Thesis Advisor: Michael Yellow Bird
 Phone: 822-3520

I, _____, hereby consent/ do not consent to my daughter, _____, participating in an in-person interview (of approximately one hour) to be conducted by Corinne Dolman. I understand that my daughter's participation is completely voluntary and she may chose to withdraw from the study at any time. Further, her participation, or withdrawal, will not jeopardize any services she may be receiving from any agency (now or in the future) in any way.

I understand that the interview will be audiotaped and that the audiotape will be destroyed upon completion of this project. All identifiable information will be held in confidence by the researcher and all individual, identifiable information will be omitted from the final document. She will be paid \$10 upon completion of the interview. Should I have any questions regarding this study, I am aware that I can contact either of the above named persons at anytime.

My signature is an acknowledgement of my receipt of a copy of this form and my consent to allow my daughter to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Interviewer's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



School of Social Work
2080 West Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2255 Fax: (604) 822-8656

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

For the Research Project Titled: Female Native Adolescents'
Perceptions of their Futures.

Researcher: Corinne Dolman, M.S.W. (Candidate)
University of British Columbia, School of Social Work.
Phone: 734-6741

Thesis Advisor: Michael Yellow Bird
Phone: 822-3520

I, _____, hereby consent to an in-person interview (of approximately one hour) to be conducted by Corinne Dolman. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and I may chose to withdraw from the study at any time. Further, my participation, or withdrawal, will not jeopardize any services I may be receiving from any agency (now or in the future) in any way.

I understand that the interview will be audiotaped and that the audiotape will be destroyed upon completion of this project. All identifiable information will be held in confidence by the researcher and all individual, identifiable information will be omitted from the final document. I will be paid \$10 upon completion of the interview. Should I have any questions regarding this study, I am aware that I can contact either of the above named persons at anytime.

My signature is an acknowledgement of my receipt of a copy of this form and my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Interviewer's Signature: _____ Date: _____



School of Social Work
2080 West Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2255 Fax: (604) 822-8656

LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

Dear _____,

My name is Corinne Dolman and I am a graduate student at the University of British Columbia (School of Social Work) and an employee of the Vancouver Intensive Supervision Program (formerly known as J.I.S.P). **I would like to invite you to participate in a research study exploring the future outlooks of Female Native adolescents from age fifteen up to, and including, age nineteen.** I am interested in learning how you view your future in the areas of work, education, family/marriage and leisure time. The purpose of this study is to better understand your future outlook and to improve our knowledge in this area.

Although your name was obtained from your past participation in the Vancouver Intensive Supervision Program, this study is not related to your involvement in that program. Further, choosing to participate, or not to participate, in this study will have no impact on any services you may receive from this program in the future. I have not been given access to any information through which to contact you. This letter has been sent to you by the coordinator of the program and I will only have contact with you if you chose to call me, at the number listed below, or if you leave a message with the program coordinator that you are interested in participating.

The research will be conducted through in-person interviews which will be audio-taped and will take approximately one hour of your time to complete. **You will be paid \$10 for your participation** (to be received upon completion of the interview). You must have your parent or guardian's written consent to participate if you are under age nineteen. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may choose not to answer any question(s) or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

All identifying information will be held in confidence by the researcher (with the exception of new disclosures of child abuse which by law must be reported to the Ministry of Social Services.) Any individual, identifiable information will not appear in the final document.

Should you have any questions or are interested in participating in this study **please feel free to contact me at 734-6741 or the program coordinator of the Vancouver Intensive Supervision Program, Lana Morley, at 435-8910.** Further information regarding this study can also be obtained from my thesis advisor, Michael Yellow Bird, at 822-3520.

Vancouver Metro Intensive Supervision Program



Foundation
Of British
Columbia

November 28, 1993

School of Social Work,
University of British Columbia,
2080 West Mall,
Vancouver, B.C.

To Whom It May Concern,

Corinne Dolman has requested access to former/current clients of our agency in connection with her MSW program at U.B.C.

I have had an opportunity to read the "research intent" of the project and to discuss the research with Corinne. I have also discussed the project and the issue of client access with Mr. Dave Keillor of the B.C. Corrections Branch.

Provided that the project proceeds as outlined in the "research intent" we are pleased to provide access to former clients of our agency. We assume that approval of the School's human subject committee as well as faculty approval of the actual research questions, will occur prior to client and parent contact.

We are prepared to consider the question of access to current clients as a separate matter at some future point should this be required.

Call me at 435-8991, if you require further information.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Kissner
Executive Director

cc D. Keillor



School of Social Work
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Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2255 Fax: (604) 822-8656

NOTIFICATION REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

My name is Corinne Dolman and I am a graduate student at the University of British Columbia, School of Social Work. **I would like to invite you to participate in a research study exploring the future outlooks of Female Native adolescents from age fifteen to, and including, age nineteen.** I am interested in learning how you view your future in the areas of work, education, family/marriage and leisure time. The purpose of this study is to better understand your future outlook and to improve our knowledge in this area.

The research will be conducted through in-person interviews which will be audio-taped and will take approximately one hour of your time to complete. **You will be paid \$10 for your participation** (to be received upon completion of the interview). You must have your parent or guardian's written consent to participate. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may chose to not answer any question(s) or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

All identifying information will beheld in confidence by the researcher with the exception of new disclosures of child abuse which by law must be reported to the Ministry of Social Services. Any individual, identifiable information will not appear in the final document.

Should you have any questions or are interested in participating in this study **please feel free to contact me at 734-6741.** Further information regarding this study can also be obtained from my thesis advisor Michael Yellowbird at 822-2255.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Ethnic Identity:
4. Living arrangements:
5. Economic status (Low, Medium, High):
6. Martial status:
7. Dependents (Yes/No):
8. Alcohol/Substance Use (Frequently, Occasionally, Never):

Note: This information will be destroyed upon project completion.

