

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

RENEWED SPIRIT IN WINNIPEG'S NORTH END:
AN EMERGING ABORIGINAL YOUNG ADULT
CO-CREATIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE UNITED CENTRE OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY

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WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

JUNE 2014

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis took inspiration, guidance, support, and supervision. With thanks to research participants, North End Community Ministry, and former Board member, Mary Richard, a respected elder and friend who passed too soon, I remain inspired that healing between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples is possible. With thanks to the Returning to Spirit program I am inspired by a process facilitating healing and reconciliation between church leaders and residential school survivors.

Thanks to Prairie Jubilee spiritual direction program and my spiritual director, Sr. Laurette Doiron for guidance in spiritual practices opening my heart to face pain and grief in my own healing. This has proven essential to better understand the complex grief and trauma Canadian Aboriginal children and youth experience.

Thanks to Chris Wells, University of Winnipeg for expanding my awareness of Christian and traditional spiritual misunderstandings in Canada. Thanks to James Christie from the University of Winnipeg for broadening my understanding of Christian and interfaith dialogue needed for global healing and reconciliation.

Thanks to Ko'ona Cochrane for her support in the interview process and to Indigenous Family Centre for providing facility space for the interviews.

I would also like to thank Professor Jane Barter Moulaison from the University of Winnipeg for her willingness to be my thesis supervisor. Her direction, feedback, support and supervision have been invaluable in the completion of this project.

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the Winnipeg youth movement, “Meet Me at the Bell Tower” (MMBT), offers a new form of spiritual, cultural, and political renewal.

Qualitative data drawn from interviews of youth leaders in this movement suggest four characteristics that attract youth to this community and make it a powerful force for social change. These characteristics are: (1) an affirmation of urban Aboriginal experience, (2) provision of positive alternatives to violence (3) the renewal of community spirit, and (4) the empowerment of subsequent leaders. Underlying these characteristics of MMBT is a reclamation of traditional spiritual teachings that reinforce positive identity, offer spiritual practices that are life-giving, and generate positive outcomes through relationship building and community renewal.

Since the inception of Meet Me At the Bell Tower, participants report significant individual and community transformation from violence to one of non-violence and from despair to hope. Such renewal of self and community in North End Winnipeg (one of the most impoverished neighbourhoods in Canada) raises hope for the future. MMBT members believe that their experience and their leadership model can succeed beyond their local context. This thesis therefore concludes with several observations on what the Canadian Church (specifically, the United Church of Canada) may learn from this transformative movement.

INTRODUCTION

I am a Non-Aboriginal ordained minister of The United Church of Canada. My experience serving primarily middle class congregations includes working with youth groups and providing youth with volunteer opportunities to develop leadership skills. Youth groups and youth volunteering is a challenge in middle class congregations where youth report many competing options for their time. In contrast, in a context of poverty in Winnipeg's North End, I experience weekly Aboriginal youth-led Bell Tower intergenerational gatherings. Aboriginal young adults invite local people to ring the community bell, share stories, build relationships and grow community pride. Youthful passion for a safer community invites intergenerational participation to become the change needed to stop local violence and isolation.¹

North End Winnipeg Aboriginal youth live amidst oppression. Poverty, homelessness, overwhelming unresolved grief from murders, suicides, escalating numbers of missing and murdered women, and a lack of healthy relationships are daily struggles.² Weekly community gathering is a living laboratory for relationship building, grieving and sharing good survival choices to make it through the week. Gatherings give youth and the community at large a place to voice concerns or celebrations, to share traditional teachings, to pray, to make announcements, to engage people in other community activities, to help organize, and to develop cooperative leadership skills. All who gather are invited to become

1. Meet Me at the Bell Tower-Stop the Violence, "We are a community united to be the change and STOP THE VIOLENCE. Every Friday at 6 p.m. @ the North End Bell Tower. Together we are ONE!" <https://www.facebook.com/northendbelltower> (accessed April 27, 2013).

2. AYO movement "Breaking Stereotypes and Creating Opportunity" blog offers information on challenges, information on issues, and specific opportunities to respond positively and pro-actively. <https://ayomovement.com> (accessed April 27, 2013).

“friends” on Facebook, Twitter, blogs or to follow the wider community through websites. Building relationships and co-creative leadership is building community capacity. Young adults are passionate about transforming oppression into opportunities.³

This qualitative research project documents the experience of North End Aboriginal young adults’ intergenerational initiative, “Meet Me at the Bell Tower,” which started in November of 2011. This is one of several initiatives generated from Aboriginal Youth Opportunities (AYO), which started in March, 2010. The AYO website describes activities it has begun including “an anti-violence movement that rallies every week, acknowledging our challenges, but celebrating the goodness.”⁴

The AYO website also includes a description of who they are and what they aim to do:

We began in March 2010 and committed to making our voices heard. We have developed relationships with organizations, media partners and businesses in order to empower our members. This group is simply young people volunteering and sharing their gifts with others. We listen to the ideas of young people, resource them, and love them until they become reality. We are committed to helping our North End to heal and will work with those who share our vision to provide ABORIGINAL YOUTH with more OPPORTUNITIES!⁵

A quote under the AYO website photos reads “We are committed to representing ourselves in a positive way, sharing our gifts and bringing unity back to our community.”⁶ This thesis seeks to show how MMBT is doing precisely this.

3. TED talk, “Oppression to Opportunity” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXJOQYxxV2Y> (accessed April 27, 2013).

4. AYO: Aboriginal Youth Opportunities, “Who Are We,” AYO website, <http://www.ayomovement.com> (accessed April 27, 2013).

5. Ibid. (accessed April 27, 2013).

6. Ibid. (accessed April 27, 2013).

This thesis aims to analyze North End Winnipeg youth's perspectives shaping the creation and sustenance of co-created community leadership through MMBT. MMBT offer local solutions to a history of oppression, marginalization, poverty, and silencing of Aboriginal voices. MMBT is generating positive outcomes in Winnipeg's North End. This project offers their story: It is a story of positive contributions by urban Aboriginal youth from North End Winnipeg, one of the most impoverished neighbourhoods in Canada. It is also a story that has lessons for others, particularly for the church, as the youth involved are engaged in spiritual and community practices that are transformative for themselves and others. MMBT is of particular relevance to the United Church of Canada (UCC) as research documents teens respond to environments that remain in touch with their needs for friends, music, freedom, authenticity and significant ways to belong. The decreased focus on UCC children and youth responsive programs from 1960 – 1990 shows a parallel decrease from ten percent teens identifying with the church in 1984 to one percent in 2008.⁷ At a time in which traditional United Church communities are failing to attract young participants, this group is attracting and growing youth participation in activities that include religious ceremony and meaning.

This research contributes to literature on urban Aboriginal youth-led community capacity building where little currently exists. Youth's perspectives on violence as an issue they choose to address reveals a commitment to steady evolution and change supported by reclamation of their identity as Aboriginal persons. North End Winnipeg Aboriginal youth see their methods and processes as transferable and duplicable in other Canadian contexts.

7. Reginald Bibby, *A New Day: The Resilience and Restructuring of Religion in Canada* (Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2012), 34.

Meet Me at the Bell Tower can stand as a model for community healing and reconciliation supporting right relationships into the 21st Century.

The participants selected for this qualitative research project are all part of Aboriginal Youth Opportunities and are frequent participants in Meet Me at the Bell Tower. Appendices 1- 4 identify the University Human Research Ethics Board protocols followed to conduct this qualitative research project. Ten were considered and eight consented to be part of an individual interview and a plenary focus group interview of all participants. All the interviews were done at Indian Family Centre, an organization familiar to all participants. At the time of writing this thesis, the Centre has renamed itself as the “Indigenous Family Centre,” which will be the name used in this document. In addition to the youth, who have decided to remain anonymous, Ko’ona Cochrane, an Aboriginal leader known to all participants, was present for the interviews.

This qualitative research project used data generating questions to identify what (i) attracted youth, (ii) kept their attention, (iii) invited them into closer affiliation and (iv) offered hope for future aspirations. Interviews with participant responses were recorded, transcribed, collated and four major themes with subthemes emerged. At the request of the participants primary source quotes in the thesis are written in italics to reflect “a collective voice” rather than the voices of single participants. Plain print quotes identify secondary sources. The use of terms “Aboriginal,” “Indigenous” and “Native” reflect the context of different primary and secondary sources.

This qualitative research project shows youth were attracted to the movement because of shared urban Aboriginal experience. Their attention was kept through MMBT’s unique co-creative leadership and the effective use of social media. They were invited into closer

affiliation through renewed spirit—that is through a transformation of their perceptions of themselves, their communities and their spiritual heritage. Their hope for future aspirations arises from this as they experience the positive outcomes of their work together. The areas of common response reflect the original purpose of this research project: to see what North End Aboriginal young adults can teach churches and society about contemporary community building. In the Conclusion, lessons drawn from MMBT are shown to tie into hopes of earlier writings from Aboriginal theologians.

The thesis is thus organized into the four major themes identified from the interview responses. Chapter One will examine urban Aboriginal experience and the context of violence where the young adults leading Meet Me at the Bell Tower live. Chapter Two will delineate stages of leadership development and community capacity building transforming violence to non-violence through co-creative leadership. Chapter Three demonstrates the relevance of traditional spiritual teachings for 21st Century leadership development in renewed spirit. Chapter Four outlines what Meet Me at the Bell Tower has learned to support other organizations wanting to engage youth. The 21st Century Teachings for self-determined leadership from North End Winnipeg Aboriginal Youth Community Leaders offer new ideas.

This qualitative research project demonstrates that the MMBT movement has implications beyond its immediate circle. In this thesis, I will demonstrate how MMBT offers us a model for the creation of a new kind of intergenerational community—one which has the potential to achieve what has been thought as “impossible.” Their collective success reinforces a common hope as their learning is shaping a better future for North End Aboriginal children and youth. The additional hope is that their collective knowledge offers a transferable community response tool. Members of MMBT see this as a fitting end: they

believe that any context willing to listen and collaborate with local children and youth leaders can face community challenges to create a happier future together.

CHAPTER ONE

URBAN ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH

This chapter concerns itself with experiences of urban Aboriginal youth through common subthemes identified throughout the interviews. These are: (1) Colonialism and Racism, (2) Poverty, and (3) Violence. Within the category of violence, there are also discrete types of violence addressed; these include gang violence, sexual violence, isolation, and suicide. In this chapter, I will examine some of the secondary research conducted on issues affecting urban Aboriginal youth in Canada, while I will also present the testimonies of the youth within this context.

1. Colonialism and Racism

Participants in this study are well aware of the impact of Canada's history of colonialism on Aboriginal peoples. They perceive the unresolved pain of parents, grandparents, and elders who are survivors of residential schools.

The United Church was involved in approximately 10 per cent of the Indian residential schools. The number of United Church-related schools ranged from a high of 13 in 1927, to six in 1951, and four in 1966. In 1927, the United Church was also involved in the operation of 42 day schools in Aboriginal communities. As with the other Christian denominations involved in the running of residential schools, the United Church saw its mission as one in which Christianizing involved the imposing of Canadianized, west European culture.¹

Participants witness the pain relived by family and community members through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process. They understand the links between

1. *Justice and Reconciliation: The Legacy of Indian Residential Schools and the Journey Toward Reconciliation* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2001), 14.

historical trauma against Aboriginal people, unresolved emotional issues and violence directed against them and others in the neighbourhood.

Participants also make the connections between Canada's Indian Act and discrimination against Aboriginal women as they were denied their roles as parents, spiritual teachers, and decision-makers.

Our political systems began with how we mother. In pre-contact times, children were powerful spiritual teachers because they had only recently come to the physical world from the spiritual world. Children were respected as persons....They were treated with gentleness, patience, compassion, and kindness, and we had the support of extended family and communities. They were not endlessly controlled, but allowed freedom within our extended families and Clans to experience life in a responsible manner and to discover their gifts.²

Legally mandated separation of Aboriginal children over generations steadily devastated the spirit of Aboriginal women, parents and communities. The youth I interviewed were also quick to see another link between historical collective intergenerational grief, a lack of individual and community spirit, and potential for positive change now.

As North End youth awaken to the reality of a strong Indigenous heritage prior to European contact, they see that they do not have to repeat the unhappy lives of their parents or grandparents. The young people want a collective reclamation of positive Aboriginal identity. Their call to stop the violence is a first step. In calling to stop the violence and protect the children, they are affirming traditional Aboriginal values that treasure children and have mutually respectful relationships at their core. Aboriginal North End Winnipeg youth see potential for better relationships going forward.

2. Leanne Simpson, *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008), 208.

The youth's call to stop the violence in order to create safety for Aboriginal children quickly gained community support. All ages are eager to grow healthier in order that this and future generations of Aboriginal children can have real hope for equal access to safety, education, employment and family stability. Moving forward requires understanding how colonialism in Canada is an on-going reality.

Three unique aspects of the settler society in Canada...First, the First Peoples of Canada continue to experience ongoing oppression as the result of hundreds of years under colonization. The Indian residential schools were one aspect of a larger project to absorb or assimilate Aboriginal people. The legacies of colonialism and of the residential schools system continue to this day... Second, denial of the truth about Canada's relationship with Aboriginal people includes myths that rationalize Canada's continuing exploitation of Aboriginal people...racist myths continue to justify the child-like status of Aboriginal people in Canada. Third, because of the destruction of culture, language, and identity and the legacy of abuse from the residential schools, aboriginal people must deal not only with anger towards their colonizers/adversaries but also with internalized colonization/self-hatred and ongoing abuse in their communities perpetuated by their own community members.³

A history of oppression, denial of the truth of Canada's relationships with Aboriginal peoples and intentional efforts to destroy Aboriginal culture, language and identity have intentionally disconnected Aboriginal peoples from the land, sustainable economies, positive identity and hope for equal quality of life. Historical oppression documented by Geoffrey York in *The Dispossessed* includes Nineteenth Century treaties and Twentieth Century northern industrial developments. Manitoba land claims made in the Nineteenth Century are still being negotiated in the Twenty-First century. Provincial and federal governments have regularly acted against

3. Marlene Brant Castellano Linda Archibald, Mike DeGagné, "Reconciliation in the Context of a Settler Society: Healing the Legacy of Colonialism in Canada," in *From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools* (Ottawa: the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2008), 49.

the recommendations of local Aboriginal leaders regarding northern development projects.

Since the 1950s previously self-sufficient Aboriginal economies have been reduced to communities with high unemployment, decreased health, and escalating crime, violence, and gangs. For example, Moose Lake Manitoba had a thriving traditional native economy prior to hydro flooding in 1963 and 1964. The loss of natural resources and stable jobs was replaced by crime, violence and gangs by the late 1970s. Lack of local employment contributed to negative behaviors among community and influenced out migration from reserves to Winnipeg.⁴ Other reserve communities have also experienced people relocating to Winnipeg in hope of employment, education upgrading, life skills and job skills for employment in local industry. For some with trades skills, industry imports employees rather than hiring locally. Aboriginal peoples without equal access to employment and life-sustaining income cannot achieve self-sufficiency or equal quality of life with mainstream Canadians. Reduced health in impoverished communities means some relocate for medical and social services. Many Aboriginal people have relocated to Winnipeg since the 1960s in hope of more opportunities. Winnipeg has the largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada.

Residential schools both traumatized generations of Aboriginal children and youth and provided inadequate quality of education opportunities.

The establishment of Indian residential schools as a strategy of cultural assimilation was a lethal mechanism for asserting colonial state hegemony, and Christian churches and organizations fully participated in its implementation....Catholic, Protestant, and Anabaptist denominations enthusiastically took on the main administrative and educational leadership of

4. Geoffrey York, *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada* (London: Vintage UK, 1990), 108-111.

these “schools” (more accurately described, in many cases, as prison labor camps for Indigenous children and youth), where abuse, punishment, the relentless destruction of Native culture, and death were inflicted upon the bodies, minds, and spirits of the “students.”⁵

This effect was recognized by The Aboriginal Healing Foundation and later, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

For over a century, under the authority of Indian agents and enforced by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Aboriginal children were taken from their families and incarcerated in residential schools. There was no recourse for the parents, families or communities in this process.... traumatic disconnection is understood as the source of most human suffering.⁶

Survivors’ accounts document systemic generational oppression of Aboriginal children in residential schools resulting in emotional problems contributing to lesser quality education, lower graduation rates and fewer employment opportunities than for Non-Aboriginals.

Denial of the truth of Canada’s relationship with Aboriginal peoples is increasingly documented. In *A Fair Country*, John Ralston Saul argues that Canada’s uniqueness comes from over four hundred years of First Nations’ influence on European ideas that followed. “We are a people of Aboriginal inspiration organized around a concept of peace, fairness and good government.”⁷ However, he notes that Canada has

5. Dave Diewert, “White Christian Settlers, the Bible, and (De)Colonization in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together* (Waterloo: Herald Press, 2013), 128.

6. Debbie Chansonneuve, *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2005), 43.

7. John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), xii.

8. John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), 9.

“a politicized denial” of the first two hundred fifty years of Canadian history.⁸ First Nations as the senior founding pillar of the civilization of Canada offered values of mutual dependency and partnership to provide quality of life for all. This was adopted by Non-Aboriginals until late in the nineteenth century. From that time Victorianism, nationalism and racist assumptions steadily eroded Canada into amnesia for its past.⁹

Today, the web of relationships First Nations nurtured between culture, language and identity is increasingly recognized as the way forward to support diversity and multiculturalism. Repeated efforts to disconnect Aboriginal peoples from their sacred relationship to the land, each other, and assimilate to the ways of newcomers have failed. Thus, the continuum of problems urban Aboriginal people face is “in one way or another, a product of the experience of and the effects of colonization.”¹⁰

Residential schools were a key “instrument of colonization.”¹¹ This policy of assimilation separated Aboriginal children from their parents, extended families and communities for over a century. The first phase from the mid 1800s to 1910 aimed to prepare First Nations children to join the “lower fringe of the dominant society.”¹² The second phase from 1910 to 1951 was a segregation approach designed to “civilize and Christianize” them according to Euro-Canadian values they could take home and teach their families. From 1951 the goal of integration was to absorb Aboriginal children to

9. . John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), 9.

10. Jim Silver et al., “Building a Path to a Better Future: Urban Aboriginal People,” in *In Their Own Voices: Building Urban Aboriginal Community* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2006), 13.

11. Ibid., 20.

12. Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples From Earliest Times*, 3rd ed. (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2002), 315.

mainstream schools.¹³ Residential schools provided a final separation within Aboriginal families. Children removed from families and home communities quit learning how to support each other in healthy relationships:

In the context of residential schooling, “killing the Indian” meant dis-connecting children physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually from their language, culture and their communities and also, but most painfully, from their own sense of identity as being Indian. ... The profound loneliness and grief arising from multi-layered dis-connections and accumulated losses are directly linked to the most acute problems facing Aboriginal families and communities today.¹⁴

The legacy of residential schools is one of the most prominent themes that participants note as they consider the lingering effects of colonization within their lives. According to them, the North End Aboriginal community continues to deal daily with the intergenerational effects of the residential schools and colonialist policies that removed children from their culture for over one hundred thirty years.¹⁵ All the participants in this study know neighbours, friends or relatives who are still struggling with painful childhood residential school memories that interfere with healthy relationships.

The historic and contemporary challenge for Aboriginal people is to sustain a positive identity and not internalize the European-based assumption of Aboriginal inferiority embedded in Canadian systems and institutions designed to exclude them. Racist comments and regular negative public portrayals of Aboriginal people make avoiding internalized oppression a daily exercise. For those who internalize the false Aboriginal inferiority stereotype there is the danger of self-abuse and escalating negative

13. Debbie Chansonneuve, *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2005), 34-35.

14. *Ibid.*, 44-45.

15. *Ibid.*, 34-35.

behaviors which, if observed by Non-Aboriginals, reinforce their perceptions of Aboriginal inferiority.¹⁶

In October 2013 James Anaya, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, made a statement upon concluding his visit to Canada. An excerpt reads:

From all I have learned, I can only conclude Canada faces a crisis when it comes to the situation of Indigenous peoples of the country. The well-being gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada has not narrowed over the last several years, treaty and Aboriginals claims remain persistently unresolved, and overall there appear to be high levels of distrust among aboriginal peoples toward government at both the federal and provincial levels.¹⁷

A history of colonialism and racism keeps two worldviews distanced and mutually misunderstood. Unexamined assumptions of Non-Aboriginal superiority continue to inform attitudes, practices and systems designed to disrespect, discount and discriminate against Aboriginal peoples. Youth participants from Winnipeg's North End say: *"We need to decolonize our relationship with one another. We have to quit thinking that just because I have this background I am better than you."* While colonialism and racism go unresolved, poverty for urban Aboriginal children and youth places extreme limitations on their health and wellbeing.

2. Poverty

16. Jim Silver et al., "Building a Path to a Better Future: Urban Aboriginal People," in *In Their Own Voices: Building Urban Aboriginal Communities* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2006), 20.

17. James Anaya, "Statement Upon Conclusion of the Visit to Canada by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples" (United Nations Human Rights: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, October 15, 2013).
URL: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/ipeoples/srindigenespeoples/pages/sripeoplesindex.aspx> (accessed October 31, 2013).

In 1996, Lezubski, Silver and Black concluded that poverty reached “catastrophic levels” in Winnipeg. More than half of inner city households had incomes below the poverty line and four of every five Aboriginal households were below it:¹⁸

We believe that what we have documented is the continued growth in our midst of what might reasonably be thought of as “third world” living conditions. Growing numbers of people in Winnipeg’s inner city, and in Winnipeg as a whole, are struggling to make do in these inadequate and steadily worsening conditions.¹⁹

The catastrophic levels of poverty have been described by Kazemipur and Halli as a “new poverty.” “The new poverty is about social exclusion, racialization and spatial concentration and is associated with inadequate housing, lack of access to a wide range of service and high levels of crime and violence.”²⁰ Silver notes this new poverty is “spatially concentrated racialized poverty” and Winnipeg’s North End is described thus: “labour force participation rates, levels of formal education and median incomes are low... while rates of unemployment, proportions of single-parent families and the incidence of poverty, as measured by incomes below the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut Offs are high.”²¹

Poverty is an extreme concern in Winnipeg’s North End for children and youth. Participants echo the strains of living without money in a consumer culture. *“We’re sick of the injustice this government has put on Aboriginal people and not only Aboriginal people but below the poverty line people.”* One youth emphasizes the struggle. *“When*

18. Jim Silver, *Solutions that Work: Fighting Poverty in Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2000), 27.

19. Ibid., 27.

20. Ibid., 28.

21. Jim Silver, *Good Places to Live: Poverty and Public Housing in Canada*, (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2011), 12.

you're living in poverty you only know what your basic needs are and you only feed your basic needs.” On reflection, a participant expands: “Money is the issue. I don't even want to talk about money because it gets me so mad. I'm sure money gets everybody mad. Without money we just work. Our heart is our money. All of our hearts are our money. Our feelings are our money because we give that to the community.”

Urban Aboriginal participants link poverty and never having enough money for basic needs with constant experiences of violence in the North End.

3. Violence

Participants recognize that some poor families (Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal) access community resources for essentials that strengthen their ability to shape a slightly better quality of life. However, for those lacking resources and support networks, poverty is linked, according to the participants, with many social ills like child apprehension, addictions, incarceration, missing and murdered relatives, illiteracy, poor housing, overcrowded housing or no housing. These social ills can lead to violence.

The connection between colonization and internalized oppression that gets expressed as lateral violence contributes to an ever-present potential for violence. Lateral violence is described as “the shaming, humiliating, damaging, belittling and sometimes violent behavior directed toward a member of a group by other members of the same group.”²²

22. Jane Middleton-Moz, *Boiling Point: The High Cost of Unhealthy Anger to Individuals and Society* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications Inc., 1999), 116.

One outcome of the residential school history is that Aboriginal children helpless to fight their powerful oppressors turned their anger toward each other. Adults abused as children learned survival tactics through *lateral violence*.²³ For residential school survivors with unresolved abuse issues, stressful situations may cause overwhelming feelings to surface that cause them to react and use lateral violence with those closest to them.

The participants that I interviewed discovered at some point during their political awakening the significance of the concept of lateral violence. They recognize that gang membership, sexual abuse and domestic violence that some of them may have experienced first-hand are forms of lateral violence. As one of the youth puts it, “*It is our experience of violence that connect us.*”

Statistics Canada 2012 reports that Winnipeg has the highest violent crime severity index in all census metropolitan areas in Canada. “Homicide is generally recognized as a country’s barometer of violence.”²⁴ For 2011, Winnipeg had the highest homicide rate for the fifth year in a row. In November 2013 a Winnipeg newspaper reported that “about 1000 young people-aged 12-24 are treated at Health Sciences Centre emergency department each year for injuries due to violence. And one in five will return to the ER within a year—be it as a result of a gunshot wound, stabbing or some other attack.”²⁵ The program being launched to support young people affected by violence

23. Debbie Chansonneuve, *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2005), 41.

24. Statistics Canada. 2012a. *Crime Severity Index Values for 239 Police Services Policing Communities over 10,000 population, 2011*. July 24, 2012. URL: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012/article/11692-eng.htm#a3> (accessed November 23, 2013).

25. Larry Kusch, “Stomping out Youth Violence: Health Sciences Centre ER Launches Unique Program,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 19, 2013.

recognizes they also “suffer from anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. ...Many are impoverished, lack adequate housing and “a sense of belonging.”²⁶

Violence is everywhere and travels with these young adults as a constant anxious experience. One participant describes inner city life as “*constantly watching over one’s shoulder.*” Another notes always feeling anxious as well as “*victimized and helpless.*” Personal anxiety mirrors a sense of communal helplessness from problems too large for the individual.

Gang Violence

All participants report that gang violence has affected them personally. Gangs affect everyday life. These young adults recount that ten years ago, gangs prevented children from playing in the streets and saw the elderly, children and youth as easy targets to rob. One participant noted that gangs had a lot of the things that most kids were deprived of: community, money to do and buy things, and freedom to move. This elevated gangsters into role models for some children. As Jim Silver argues, Winnipeg’s street gangs are “a form of resistance to the social exclusion of Aboriginal youth, to the lack of opportunities for them in the institutions of the dominant culture in which the colonial assumptions still prevail.”²⁷

26. Larry Kusch, “Stomping out Youth Violence: Health Sciences Centre ER Launches Unique Program,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 19, 2013.

27. Jim Silver, *In Their Own Voices: Building Urban Aboriginal Communities*, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2006), 24.

Yet another participant described witnessing an event showing how difficult it can be for youth (particularly youth who have experienced violence) to even step outside from a public place in the North End, given the presence of gangs within the community.

Just last week we had a boy who was shot in the back lane a couple of years ago come to see his brother graduate from the Boys and Girls program. He can walk these days. He couldn't walk for a long time. He's going through a series of operations so he can walk now but slowly. So he was standing at the front doors and waiting for his grandma to pick him up and he opened the door a crack and saw a group of boys standing on the other side of the street. He just closed the door and said: "I can't go out there because those boys are waiting for me." So, he was stuck. He's a teenager who doesn't quite know what to do to get out of that situation. One staff went out to tell the grandma to come to the back door in the back of the building. So he went home that way. As soon as he was gone we opened the front door and the group of boys was gone. So there's a communication through cell phones or word of mouth or the color of clothes... It's a horrible dance of violence.

For youth who may require the support of Winnipeg Police Services to deal with groups of potentially violent peers like the previous situation, there is a history of tension and strained relationships. The memory of Matthew Dumas remains a vivid one for many of the participants. When police responded to a north end robbery and break-in Matthew Dumas was running away from the area. One police officer tried to stop him. Matthew had a screwdriver and a second police officer warned him to drop it. Matthew did not drop it, but kept moving towards the second officer. Winnipeg Police are trained to shoot armed persons within 7 metres. Less than 2 metres away from the second officer, Matthew was shot twice January 31, 2005. He was cleared of any involvement of the robbery and break-in but died from the shooting.²⁸ With violence so common and individuals having little capacity to stop it, the community relies heavily on police services. This makes the police a necessary but feared presence most people try to avoid.

28. "Dumas Shooting Still Haunts Officer" in *The Canadian Press*, Sat. June 14, 2008. <http://www.winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/dumas-shooting-still-haunts-officer-1.301963> (accessed March 19, 2014).

Another story illustrates how police in uniform cues the community of nearby danger and to keep their distance. Winnipeg City Police were invited to Meet Me at the Bell Tower (MMBT) one evening and arrived before any of the community members. In uniform, police automatically communicate to the locals that violence is near, with the likelihood someone will be arrested soon. Local people take this as a signal to stay away from the police and let them do their job. So, the presence of uniformed police at MMBT kept local people away.

A quick-thinking youth leader saw what was happening, grabbed a Frisbee and started playing Frisbee with a police officer. This provided a new awareness. Police were not present at MMBT to arrest anyone. The police officer protested to the youth there would likely be complaints for “a policeman playing” while in uniform. The youth leader recognized the police department needed to receive complaints that day. The youth leader playing Frisbee with the uniformed police officers “*rebranded their presence as a relationship-building role.*” Police were not there to arrest anyone, but the community would not know that without the youth’s action shifting the common perception anticipating violence to this new possibility of a peaceful presence.

Youth’s hope for peace in Winnipeg’s North End became action to stop the violence following two particular deaths that drew the community together in 2011. Participants explains how Meet Me at the Bell Tower (MMBT) began:

After there were a couple of deaths, pretty violent deaths that happened in the community of young people that we were all very familiar with, and knew and saw everyday. We had been working with them every day for a few years. One of them was a gang-related stabbing and the other was a suicide. These things have been happening for a very long time and the proximity of them was very close together and it just hit everyone really hard. Youth felt they had to do something to show they were no longer going to let violence just keep happening.

In each of these cases, the Meet Me at the Bell Tower group walks a fine line. They neither wish to alienate gang members or those related to them, nor do they wish to reinforce fear and isolation within their communities. Similarly, they wish to remain critical of police forces which have at times displayed racist and violent power toward youth, yet they are also in need at times of their protection. In coming together and in assuming a non-adversarial approach to both police and gangs, they have managed to carve out something of a safe space.

Sexual Violence

Gang-related deaths, suicide and threats to life through commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth are concerns for the participants in this study. In North End Winnipeg, violence against women and young girls is common and of particular concern. The Elizabeth Fry Society notes eight out of ten young Aboriginal women will experience violence, and that the mortality rate for sex traded girls is forty times the national average.²⁹ Justice for Girls International report notes “In Canada, levels of violence against Aboriginal girls are startling and Canadian statistics demonstrate that girls are disproportionately sexually and physically violated by men in their families and communities.”³⁰ Further, homeless young women are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, sexual trafficking and drug abuse, with homeless Indigenous women and girls at higher risk of systematic murder/disappearance. Native Women’s Association of Canada

29. Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba, “Working with Women, For Women“ URL: <http://www.efsmanitoba.org/Facts-Sheet.page> (accessed November 7, 2013).

30. Rebecca Aleem, “International Human Rights Law and Aboriginal Girls in Canada: Never the twain shall meet?” (British Columbia, 2009), 4. URL: http://www.justiceforgirls.org/international_hr/international%20Human%20Rights%20%of%20Indigenous%20Girls.pdf [accessed Nov.23, 2013]

observes that Aboriginal girls fifteen and older currently experience violence at three and one-half times more frequency than Non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four with Indian status are predicted to be at five times more risk of dying because of violence than Non-Aboriginal women. Of note for this study: the majority of Aboriginal girls and women are murdered in urban locations.³¹

Participants are regularly affected by stories of young girls and women in their neighbourhood who are missing, have been murdered, or are targets for commercial sexual exploitation. They know treatment of Aboriginal girls and women is wrong, heart-breaking and totally contradicts Aboriginal sacred teachings respected place for women in Creation. The Aboriginal worldview respects women as equals to men.

Complementary roles and responsibilities for both ensure relationships nurture the children and community's wellbeing.

In North End Winnipeg, participants see many strong Aboriginal women and a few Aboriginal men providing leadership aiming to help Aboriginal children and youth move forward toward better life choices. Each report of another Aboriginal girl or woman who is missing or murdered means new layers of grief for those who were friends, family, neighbours or children. Native Women's Association of Canada identifies four hundred forty children who have lost their mothers as numbers of missing and murdered women escalate.³²

31. Native Women's Association of Canada, "FACT Sheet: Violence against Aboriginal Women," Ottawa: Evidence to Action, 2010. URL: http://www.nwac.ca/files/download/NWAC_3D_Toolkit_e_O.pdf (accessed Nov.23, 2013).

32. Native Women's Association of Canada, "FACT Sheet: Violence against Aboriginal Women," Ottawa: Evidence to Action, 2010. URL: http://www.nwac.ca/files/download/NWAC_3D_Toolkit_e_O.pdf (accessed Nov.23, 2013).

Whenever another Aboriginal life is diminished, the resolve of some to stop this trend sharpens, while for others, this pattern of unending grief threatens to separate them from their community. Participants observe how people without hope often isolate themselves. Isolation is a subtle form of violence that affects many members of the participants in this study.

Isolation

Grief, poverty, and/or fear of violence can make the retreat to isolation seem a good option. Unfortunately, isolation can be a step toward suicide or can increase the vulnerability of members of the community and thus is a form of violence in itself. Life within the city can contribute to isolation, but that isolation is itself a product of colonization as many Aboriginal youth were separated from family at birth or early childhood through actions of Child and Family Services. Some children and youth targeted by gangs may live with parents who are fearful themselves. School and mainstream institutions can also be unwelcoming isolating places. Daily life may require the individual to repeatedly navigate uncertainty where potential violence is constant.

Isolation for self-preservation reduces the threat of violence. Yet people not daring to go outside or connect with neighbours do not know or learn to trust those who may be a potential support. When it is unsafe for children to play in the streets or for elderly to go shopping because of violence in certain areas, people stay inside as much as possible, especially after dark. For some North Enders, poverty and fear of violence makes life a self-isolating existence.

One participant reports: *“North End people without family connections full of bottled up feelings from grief and violence have no safe place to release the burden of emotions.”* In the recollections of participants on growing up in the North End, the most common stories told were of the area’s violent past. This created a “sense of foreboding” that their life could only repeat the despair seen in parents and grandparents. Past, present and future seemed hopeless. Yet education about colonial history and awareness of the effect of such history upon personal histories often has a transformative effect as youth interpret their experiences. As one participant explains:

Before I started learning about my history I only knew what I saw around me. I felt a sense of foreboding like when I grow up I don’t know where else I can go. I don’t know where else there is. I know that there are scary things here. I know that TV is different and that there are families that are happier, clean and it’s just different and I don’t know how to get to those places. I don’t know if I even want to. I know about here. I’m comfortable and I know how to play my cards here. Since my people started learning about the history of what happened in Canada, this sense of believing I was inherently bad or my people were inherently bad or there was some sort of plague over us was explained. And, I felt like I don’t have to follow the path that my mother took or my dad. I can really just do whatever I want. It was the difference between having an unhappy life and having a happy life.... the difference between going to university or not, or having a baby really young or not... knowing there were different paths that I could choose.... Knowing I had a choice at all. It’s still something I struggle with as an adult. I don’t know what the options are because I don’t have my parents and family to look to... my experience is limited.

Positive change seemed a dream. One participant reported, *“I never knew that it would be possible to walk down the street and feel safe.”*

When the organizers sent the initial invitation to a Meet Me at the Bell Tower gathering, one of the leaders feared no one would respond. Yet over forty people attended the first night. A great affirmation for everyone who showed up was the mutual discovery they were not alone with their concerns about violence in the North End. One observes,

“Gathering people in the North End allows people to get out of their own heads and feeling like they were crazy and alone with their helpless feelings.”

Every MMBT gathering reinforces local people’s confidence that no one has to consider themselves lacking anymore because of the feelings they experience as a result of being poor or anxious from never-ending violence. They know they are no longer alone. For too many Aboriginal children and youth with no supports, no place to live, no food and no safe place, the energy and resilience to face the challenges of racism, poverty, violence and isolation can prove too much. The total loss of hope for life amongst Aboriginal children and youth is reflected in much higher suicide rates than for Non-Aboriginal children and youth. The threat to life is highest for young Aboriginal girls and women.

Suicide

High rates of suicide and self-injury among Aboriginal people are symptoms of the complexity of social, cultural, economic and psychological dislocations flowing from the past to the present. Colonial relations are at the root of distorted Aboriginal lives as individuals and communities. Suicide, like law breaking, alcohol and drug abuse and family violence, is an expression of the burden of loss, grief and anger experienced by Aboriginal people in Canadian society.³³

Among the consequences of childhood sexual violence against girls is increased risk of smoking, alcohol and drug dependence. For girls sexually assaulted before the age

33. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. *Choosing Life. Special Report on Suicide among Aboriginal People* (Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1995), 2.

of sixteen, studies also link their increased risk of attempting suicide.³⁴ Sexual abuse is one of the legacies of residential schools that contribute to some young Aboriginal girls leaving home as early as nine years old to commercial sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation predisposes them to sexual violence and the risks of addictions noted above. What Aboriginal children and youth are experiencing in Winnipeg's North End reflects the prophetic words of Chief Jean-Charles Pietacho submitted to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada 1996:

Collective despair, or collective lack of hope, will lead us to collective suicide. This type of suicide can take many forms, foreshadowed by many possible signs: identity crisis, loss of pride, every kind of dependence, denial of our customs and traditions, degradation of our environment, weakening of our language, abandonment of our struggle for our Aboriginal rights, our autonomy and our culture, uncaring acceptance of violence, passive acknowledgement of lack of work and unemployment, corruption of our morals, tolerance of drugs and idleness, parental surrendering of responsibilities, lack of respect for elders, envy of those who try to keep their heads up and who might succeed, and so on.³⁵

In Canada, adolescent suicide has increased four-fold in the past forty years and is the second leading cause of death. Of concern again is that First Nations youth die of suicide at five to six times the rate of the Non-Aboriginal population.³⁶

Risk factors related to suicide identified in the Pikangikum Report included mental illness as well as themes participants in this study identified in their interviews.

Substance abuse, broken relationships, lack of parental caring, rejection, public

34. Cohen and Maclean, "Prevalence of Violence against Women: Canada" in *BMC Women's Health* 2004 4 (Suppl 1) URL: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6874/4/S1/S22> (accessed Nov.23, 2013).

35. Chief Jean-Charles Pietacho cited in Ernest Hunter and Desley Harvey, "Indigenous suicide in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States," in *Emergency Medicine* 14 (2002), 38.

36. Bert Lauwers, "The Office of the Chief Coroner's Death Review of the Youth Suicides at the Pikangikum First Nation 2006-2008", Ontario: Ontario Minister of Child and Youth Services, 2009), 41-45.

disparagement, risk-taking behavior, depression, familiarity with a friend or family member who completed suicide, sexual abuse, trouble with the police, and school difficulties are present in rural and urban indicators for Aboriginal youth suicide.³⁷

Participants identify that the suicide death of a peer was significant to spur their action to create MMBT. All the participants are familiar with peers whose lives end in suicide. An October news story reported that for Manitoba in 2011, ten children committed suicide as well as another eleven youths eighteen and nineteen years of age. About half of these deaths are on reserves, reinforcing that more Aboriginal children and youth than Non-Aboriginal commit suicide. Further, The Children's Advocate notes an alarming statistic from the past two years defying all previous understandings of gender incidence with suicide. In Manitoba, for the past two years girls have taken their lives at more than twice the rate of boys.³⁸

Those in this study are aware that the temptation for friends to copy the suicide option escalates whenever a suicide happens. They are frequently stepping in to respond in supportive ways to peers. They observe that anyone considering suicide needs to be reminded they are not alone. Youth go into "automatic" rally mode when friends start creating a frenzy of despair. Participants know that gathering for support, calling or texting by cell phone, sharing hopeful options by Facebook and generating life-giving options together helps everyone move through each emotional wave together seeing and co-creating new possibilities along the way.

37. Bert Lauwers, "The Office of the Chief Coroner's Death Review of the Youth Suicides at the Pikangikum First Nation 2006-2008", Ontario: Ontario Minister of Child and Youth Services, 2009), 42.

38. Gordon Sinclair, "Native youth suicide stats numbing: More females die because hanging preferred method," in *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 8, 2013. URL: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/native-youth-suicide-stats-numbing-218798411.html?viewAllComments=y> (accessed October 19, 2013).

North End Aboriginal youth, children and adults are aware of their collective history of colonialism, racism, poverty, violence, isolation and suicide. Aware of the challenges, they seek to be more informed, united, strengthened and committed to collaboratively shape a better future. This common history is leading Winnipeg's North End youth and their community beyond personal and collective fear and isolation to discover new feelings of safety and protection within gathered community. Relationship building is primary as MMBT rallies the community to stop the violence.

CHAPTER TWO

**RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE – AN ABORIGINAL YOUNG ADULT
CO-CREATIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL**

This chapter is a description of the unfolding work of responding to the issues identified in the previous chapter, particularly violence, in the movement that is known as “Meet Me at the Bell Tower.” This chapter therefore describes the emerging Aboriginal Young Adult Co-Creative Leadership Model and its effective use of social media. This group, although loosely structured, are united by four key values that participants identify in shaping their leadership model. The four values are: (1) Value for the worth of every person, (2) Value for relationships, (3) Value for education, awareness sharing and skill development, and (4) Value for self-direction as foundational to leadership development and community capacity building.

Within the value of self-direction emerges a three-step sustainable MMBT leadership development process described as “Engage, Encourage and Empower.” Valuing relationships and developing self-directed leaders within community demonstrates the potential for this model to provide sustainable youth leadership development ensuring continuity for community capacity building.

Youth’s effective use of social media will be discussed to demonstrate how they have made community leadership development and community capacity building sustainable processes through sharing, celebrating and ever-expanding networking relationships.

1. Value for the worth of every person

Chapter One highlighted the history of negative experience generations of Aboriginal peoples have endured. A participant reflects a common misperception: *“Just because we have poverty doesn’t meant that we’re bad.”* Participants recognize that they have been disconnected with friends and socially and economically isolated. Such recognition marks in many cases a starting point into community leadership. Facing a lack of opportunities for social activity and employment and the constant option of joining gangs, many chose to help themselves by creating Aboriginal Youth Opportunities (AYO). They thereby opened a new door of possibilities for their collective future.

Consciously choosing not to repeat violence, they set out on an unexplored path to create a new non-violent option. They wanted positive opportunities for activity and social connection. So, in 2010 they created Aboriginal Youth Opportunities (AYO), a peer support group for young people in Winnipeg’s North End. One participant names it as *“a group of friends who like to help the community. We had no name so we call ourselves Aboriginal Youth Opportunities and we try to get opportunities for youth.”*

AYO places primary value on each AYO member and their relationships to one another. AYO supports youth engaging, encouraging and empowering each other to develop skills and improve opportunities for employment or voluntary service. AYO members quickly learned the value of mutual dependency and partnerships. They gained confidence with projects benefitting the community: local street banners,

a local newspaper and networking through social media. As youth continued to grow, learn and work alongside community individuals and organizations to achieve small project goals, they began to see broader community concerns needing attention.

When concerns about violent deaths of peers shook the youth and the community, the youth were ready to step into the leadership role. Coming from an experience of normalized violence and not seeing improved outcomes from many well-intentioned externally designed programs in their lifetime, the youth named the need to stop the violence.

Just as they had gathered AYO friends to create positive activity, they now transferred learning, skills and energy to gather with the whole North End community. The idea of gathering a community group at the Bell Tower to talk about how the community could stop the violence seemed a good idea to several youth. AYO members came up with the idea for MMBT to get the whole community moving forward. They chose the Bell Tower site as a familiar community gathering space and built on an earlier relationship affirming ritual.

Several of the AYO leadership team formerly worked at Ndinawe, a local youth resource centre. When a favorite youth leader was moving on, youth wanted to mark their sadness at saying goodbye while also demonstrating their gratitude for the relationship they had shared. The ritual of ringing the bell at the Bell Tower began that day. It marked the youth's transformation of grief to celebrate the good that life offers through sharing meaningful supportive relationships. Each week at MMBT, after acknowledging current concerns and celebrations, the ritual bell ringing sounds

the presence of the youth and the joy of relationships in Winnipeg's North End community.

MMBT is facilitated by members of AYO's leadership team. These young adult leaders were ready to partner and take on complex issues such as violence, poverty, isolation and despair among youth. This became the Meet Me at the Bell Tower (MMBT) movement.

2. A Value for Relationships

MMBT is a weekly peace building activity for North End Winnipeg that occurs on Friday night at 6 p.m. at the corner of Selkirk Avenue and Powers Street. Initially MMBT invited anyone who cared about stopping the violence to rally around the Bell Tower on Selkirk Avenue. The youth questioned whether individuals and organizations working together for community could succeed where externally designed programs and projects from Non-Aboriginals had not.

MMBT began as an anti-gang rally effort, but quickly transformed to a pro-community movement. As one of the leaders of MMBT asserts:

At the beginning we were becoming gang-like to stop other gangs... That did not compute and we quickly realized we needed to change to raise awareness about violence and the community. MMBT became a call to compassion by and for the community.

One participant describes MMBT as *“as an effort to stop the violence in our community through relationship building and community building.”*

Over forty people of all ages and backgrounds gathered, talked and listened to each other at the first MMBT in November 2011. Common concerns and common hopes became clear. The community's commitment to learn more about root causes and responses to violence began in earnest. To discern what new possibilities had not yet been explored and why programs designed by people from outside the community had not achieved desired change, the group decided to focus on a theme each week. Nothing is off limits if it can clarify what is contributing to violence and help identify what might stop it.

Originally MMBT met outside. Now, with local partnership support from the Indigenous Family Centre (IFC), MMBT now gathers people both outside and inside. Outdoors, the megaphone announces current events, celebrations and concerns. A weekly photo captures the event that will be posted on social media after MMBT. The community bell is rung. Then, people move to the IFC to share prizes, more announcements or discussions and plan for the following week. New information is passed forward through word of mouth and/or social media.

At the weekly gatherings, participants discuss scenarios familiar to real situations community residents experience. Then, examples of alternative responses to repeating violence are offered, critiqued, explored, and evaluated for their benefit or lack of benefit. Topics have been wide ranging— from food security, to missing and murdered women, to neighbourhood walks, to grief support circles following youth suicides, to feasts, to fire dancers and entertainment, to celebrations of births and remembering those who have died. Celebrations and concerns of life in the North End continue to draw regular attendees and new people every week. Collective

wisdom sharing, focused presentations, speakers, politicians, local questions and visitors' reflections have all contributed to the weekly conversations. Insights lead to more ideas that get considered, explored and tested in the community.

The North End community as a whole includes indigenous and ethnic diversity. MMBT youth leaders are inclusive. They recognize the value and teachings of elders, of traditional teachings and teachings from other ethnic backgrounds. MMBT adults watch out to ensure the children at gatherings do not run into the street or get hurt. Working together to discover who each individual is and how they can collaborate and cooperate is a new dimension of relationship building being led by North End youth.

Youth leaders bring experience from funded programs and projects—for better or for worse. Many government-led programs in the North End failed to embody the inclusiveness that MMBT enjoys. Many projects targeted specific groups and had parameters that excluded other parts of the community. Youth at MMBT see inclusion as necessary for building healthy communities: they want to know who all their neighbours are, where they come from and what knowledge they can share to help the children grow.

Since MMBT is not dependent on any government funding, has no mandate or limiting conditions from other funding agencies, it is free to welcome all people and explore all perspectives and ideas to stop violence. This open nature of the MMBT gatherings is different from anything participants had previously experienced. This makes it possible for people of all backgrounds to participate. Depending on the theme for MMBT, North Enders may also include Jewish, Russian, Ukrainian, South

East Asian, African, East Indian, Jamaican and other neighbours in attendance. Youth are willing and eager to learn all they can about options from anyone with ideas that have not yet been tried that might help them stop the violence.

The youth's open approaches have rallied an increasing base of support. This ethnically diverse community has contributed to collective discernment and encouraging innovative solutions through the MMBT movement. Participants report this is totally new:

We're such a unique entity. There is no limit to thought. We're not confined to anything, no organization chart. ... We are open to the possibilities. We go beyond Aboriginal people. As we grow we are including more people, other Aboriginal organizations but we're not just looking at one segment of society. We're more inclusive... Maybe that's the inspiration of our ancestors. We have a sense of fairness for everybody. Inclusiveness is for everyone.... We are greater than our individual selves. MMBT is providing that for people in the community outside of school and institutions.

It doesn't matter if one's background is Ukrainian and can explain the significance of the painting on a decorated Easter egg, if one is Jewish, Christian, Ethiopian, East Indian, Philippine or from whatever background. Diversity is valued. Diversity offers potential ideas many North Enders may not yet have had tried. Sharing from ethnic participants broadens local perspectives:

I wish there were more opportunities for more than just Indigenous cultural participation. One of the things we have learned at Bell Tower is that there is much commonality across the different spectrums. The Ukrainian story and this Ukrainian teachings Holy Man sounds exactly like the teaching of respect. There are so many types of knowledge that are present inside of these different ethnic groups and different types of spirituality. MMBT is like an open door.

Aboriginal children, youth and North Enders want to know about common values to help everyone collaborate to stop the violence and shape a happier neighbourhood.

One participant notes MMBT has expanded a narrow perspective to a global

perspective. *“MMBT has provided me with a group of people where I can ask questions and be told things I would never have even considered. I really appreciate that a lot. I’ve gone from being a micro thinker to a macro thinker.”* MMBT gatherings are introducing North End people to local neighbours as well as neighbours from across the city and beyond. Everyone is welcome who comes peaceably to support MMBT collective effort to stop the violence.

MMBT is modeling the change it wants for the community. This is also new. It’s not a future promise. It’s happening with each weekly gathering as people dare to share what isn’t working in their life, what is working, how they found help or what they need help to figure out to get through the next week. Within the group there is usually wisdom to keep moving one forward. If not, the group figures out whom to ask to find out where help can be found. Gathering people in community, getting to know each other, crying together, sharing happy moments, and failing together is creating safe space for community building. Widespread community interest in stopping the violence increases attitudes and behaviors reinforcing expectations for safety for everyone.

Participants identify a particular hope that stopping the violence will create more opportunities for children to grow with less fear and anxiety from violence than was their experience. Recognition that children and youth in the North End have very little capacity to stop actual violence, MMBT takes steps to build relationships with the Winnipeg police services, CopWatch and others who can help create a positive response network of support. This is also new. Then, when a situation of lateral violence occurs, local people have some idea of who and where to access support.

Meeting resource people at MMBT breaks down barriers to accessing resources previously unknown or feared. *“If they have a face, a name and somebody they shook hands with who won home grown lettuce last week, it puts that personal touch and creates space for relationship.”*

Many young people are more comfortable with Winnipeg Police as a result of MMBT efforts. This is important. One participant explains why:

The kids understand they can approach police officers. So, when that kid is 15 years old and needs help they don't run away from the police. They run to them. If we want to make our communities a safer place breaking down those relationships between the people and the police are going to be absolutely crucial.

MMBT is committed to giving children and youth safe space to create positive relationships. At the Bell Tower a group of young girls are learning how to make friends and socializing on a weekly basis. They are learning how to be more respectful of each other, of Aboriginal women leaders and elders as wise teachers. For parents bringing children to Bell Tower, there is an awareness of the entire community watching out for their children. For example, if a child steps onto Selkirk Avenue any peer, youth or adult at the gathering may guide the child back into the safety of the gathered group. This is new.

MMBT is also committed to giving children and youth a louder voice in the community through growing leadership skills to shape the change needed. Children are encouraged to share their ideas and accomplishments through the megaphone, to test out talents like speaking or singing in front of a group, and to ring the large bell on Selkirk Avenue.

There is symbolism in ringing the bell each week. Its loudness reminds the gathered group of the challenge to keep working together to make their concerns heard in a way that can make a positive difference. Seniors living near are encouraged by the youth's bell ringing as a reminder of their respect for elders. Children are invited to ring the bell and their efforts to overcome fear to climb the ladder, use their muscles to grab the rope and ring the bell gives cause for everyone to cheer them on. One participant reflects his thoughts as he watches a child take the risk to climb the ladder:

Climb that ladder. Use your muscles and let the noise of that bell ring out. Because that's your voice and look! Everyone loves it! We're there to give them a sense of empowerment that they can continue to ring bells in their own lives moving into the future. And they can create space like the Bell Tower has created space...anywhere that space is needed. And I think that's what we realize now is that we need space to create community.

Some describe MMBT as a spiritual, cultural and political movement building relationships that offer a "family" within the community many have never known.

One participant notes that "Now, it's actually like a family and we never used to have that before." Another participant notes this is a huge extended family introducing children to groups formerly unknown and perhaps feared by North Enders.

"You become more of a human being to certain age groups of people...I see people I know on TV a lot more now. I recognize a lot more people on the news."

The energy, initiative, inclusivity, flexibility and commitment to a healthier community represent the youth's intentions to reclaim a positive heritage and identity. Reclaiming mutual dependency and partnerships affirms traditional indigenous ethics, youth do not see valued publicly. Youth are demonstrating self-determination (as individuals supporting committed community) as the way forward. To achieve a

stronger healthier community and improved hope for well-being, MMBT's goal to "Stop the Violence in the North End" keeps evolving through the ever-changing possibilities of new relationships.

Youth leaders reclaim Indigenous respect for their human lives by placing the highest priority on valuing each other with a special focus to create more safety for the children. Youth leaders reclaim the collective Indigenous value for responsible community leadership by aiming to provide quality intergenerational relationships as foundational for healthy community. The value for relationships, and partnerships reflecting mutual dependency offers positive experiences for social connection and identifying shared goals. Reaching to achieve shared goals always requires more education, awareness sharing and skill development.

3. Value for Education, Awareness Sharing and Skill Development

At MMBT a weekly transformation occurs. People who may feel alone on a daily basis gather as collective mutual support to stop violence every Friday evening. MMBT transforms individuals into a community-wide "family" co-creating safe space. The MMBT North End "family" gathering values the participation of every person, listens deeply to the concerns anyone needs to express, and supports the ideas shared to help. MMBT offers a positive experience of "belonging" that transfers into caring behaviors "family" members share as they meet on the street between MMBT gatherings.

When people who have never known what “belonging” to a family means, there is a heightened interest to learn and do more for others. Adults try to figure out how to implement what will support the children and youth to increase safety, health and wellbeing in the coming week. Children and youth may bring their ideas to get feedback from the community whether to test out their ideas or not. Some return every week to witness to the importance of having a place where they belong. Every week the community bell rings it continues to mark the grief that continues in the community while also recognizing that as long as the community gathers, violence is being challenged as an unacceptable norm for the North End. As one participant puts it: *“Now, everyone looks out after each other. When we’re on the streets everyone says hi to each other. Now people take initiative to stop violence when they see it because MMBT has given them that drive.”*

The ongoing information gathering, critique and analysis at MMBT keeps this group evolving. The initial goal to stop the violence has generated some expected and unanticipated results. Gathering, listening to others share common fears and concerns about violence is actually helping people name the desire for safety aloud. Learning that one’s individual fears are common to others validates experience, honors a common identity, breaks down isolation and sometimes offers helpful safety tips.

At MMBT gatherings participants articulate concerns and ideas to test out potential solutions. Each idea has potential to create learning opportunities for the youth. Between gatherings there may be additional opportunities to link with community mentors, attend local events, listen to speakers, participate in other neighbourhood education activities like food security, safe food handling, gang

prevention strategies, anger management or life skills. Every new learning adds possibility to the next MMBT gathering.

As youth identify ideas or activities they want to pursue, they often discover some additional learning is required to bring their idea to life. Their ideas and their questions can lead them back to MMBT where next steps can be identified with help from the “family.” The process of choosing to engage oneself to help the community often marks a transformational journey for children, youth and adults who have only heard about self-actualization before MMBT. Some participants identify personal change since participating with MMBT. *“I’ve become less violent myself. I am more aware of how much of an impact I’m having on the community.”*

One participant observes that changes in her own behavior have stimulated her to invite others to attend the Friday gatherings. *“I have been kind of spreading the word about Bell Tower hoping some of the children I meet at school might begin to see some of the influence Bell Tower has had on me and that it will rub off on them.”*

MMBT recognizes the little goals achieved on the way towards the big goal of stopping the violence. Accomplishing goals is recognized immediately to provide encouragement to keep individuals and the community moving forward. MMBT reinforces the value of every effort to each success supporting the community through its gatherings and on social media. Social media sharing also encourages others to join the MMBT gatherings, share their ideas and explore more possible solutions to end violence.

North End individuals coming together to create safe space for the children are making a positive difference. This is new, appreciated and creating a sense of

security not just felt by local people but identified through local police statistics and reported by Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN)¹. Crime and violence statistics were reported to have decreased in North End Winnipeg during the first year of MMBT. This affirmation reinforces the value for each individual and the whole community continuing its self-determination efforts to stop the violence.

MMBT is ready to guide anyone willing to help the community with its process for leadership development. Just attending MMBT one has the invitation to learn how to speak, to organize the group, or to volunteer with routine tasks. For those wanting to stretch more, MMBT has a process to grow the skills, find the knowledge and gain the experience needed for successfully achieving larger goals. It is a three-step process towards mentoring self-directed leaders.

4. Self-directed Leadership

One participant describes that the significance of MMBT lies in its focus on mentorship for young people. At MMBT youth are encouraged to learn how to transfer knowledge into life application. This integrated experiential learning is positive preparation in self-direction for the children and youth. They are gaining confidence in their skills and abilities to lead in the safety of a supportive group.

Participants see MMBT leadership preparation is equipping leaders to be self-directed and capable of adapting and transferring their skills beyond MMBT in other

1. APTN. "APTN Investigates PART 2". URL: <http://www.aptn.ca/news/2012/12/17/aptn-investigates-bell-tower-part-2/> [accessed April 27, 2013].

public forums. Finding their own solutions to the problems they face is especially important given that the history of “experts” coming in to the North End to “help” the community has proven unsuccessful:

I don't want MMBT to ever become some disconnected body of helpers who are just helping those people over there. I never want us to help people over there. I always want us to help us. So guess what? If you're over there, come over here and sit down with us and make the plan. Then, we can help you.

North End youth are claiming ownership over their own solutions to make life better.

They are willing to work with partner organizations to increase the chance for positive outcomes:

Our kids are leaders today. If we as a community stand behind our kids today they will become our leaders as empowered and healthy adults. Imagine? Empowered and healthy adults in our communities instead of young people that are challenged through education, CFS and justice systems. Instead of having to rely on those systems for socialization, they have places like the Bell Tower. It's like a launching pad and a connecting place for further opportunities in their future.

MMBT leadership is fluid, flexible and always shifting to serve those gathered. Leadership is a role but no set person is assigned to a role. As one participant says, “ *I don't believe any one person is a leader at MMBT because everyone does it collectively. No one is head of the household. Everyone is. Everyone takes a part in leading.* ” One or many people can step into the role to achieve identified goals. In fact, the community respects that some people have more or less awareness of political concerns that may make some people better equipped to lead on some issues than others. Fluid leadership allows those best able to speak on behalf of the group to step in and out of the leader role as appropriate.

To learn to lead at MMBT a process has evolved to strengthen one's leadership skills and capacity to implement ideas aimed to create positive change.

It is a process that differs from most organizations because funding is not the criterion determining whether an idea will be tested. It is really up to the participants' motivation to follow through. MMBT's goal is to stop violence. Persons presenting an idea to MMBT gatherings will receive feedback and advice whether to pursue their idea, who to talk to, and how to get started. The person with the idea then has to generate, present, negotiate and sustain partnerships to take an idea forward. Three steps outline the process required to practice self-directed leadership. It's experiential component invites youth to learn with realistic feedback for one's efforts.

Step One: Engage

When a youth has an idea, MMBT has devised a process to test it that requires whoever has the idea to see if there is support to make it work. For example, as one of the youth leaders puts it:

I'll use the example of the 24-hour youth space because it's recent. I'll ask "Do you want to do something? Do you believe that it is possible? And they say, "Yes!" Now that I've got the yes to both those questions I get to say: "Do you have any money? And they say "No!" And I say, 'That's okay. Let's get our supporters together and we start with the AYO family, which includes the Family Centre, and includes larger organizations like the United Way of Winnipeg and we start shopping this idea around to see who also believes in the same idea.' Once we have a group of people who all believe in the same idea we have what could be technically called a steering committee in Western understanding. And the first thing we look at is not monetary value but "in kind" contributions. This young man who wants to champion this project is willing to put in 15 hours per week. Even though he has to work, even though he has to do everything he also has to do to survive, he is willing to volunteer 15 hours per week to make sure that this becomes a reality. Okay United Way, 'What can you put on the table because this young man has 15 hours per week?' Alright individual member of the community, 'What have you got to match this boy's commitment?'

Step Two: Encourage

MMBT offers concrete feedback and tips on which partner organizations may be most likely to offer support. MMBT can have a peer go with someone when they are making their first “ask” to a partner organization. Other basic information is shared regarding how to present oneself, how to present the idea, how to say thanks to those who listen whether support is received or not. Finally, MMBT prepares new leaders to deal with critique and feedback as important information to improve on an idea:

We put that emphasis on the people that if you want this idea to survive it's your idea. And that's been real challenge for me... I let these young people take over their ideas. It's been an immense learning experience for me in letting these young people actually make mistakes and getting out of the way so that they can fail. And it's hard for me to watch my kids fail. Because that's how I feel about these young people... like they are my kids. I don't want them to fail. I want to set them up for success. The whole point of AYO and the Bell Tower is to set up our young people for success. That's why the community stands behind the children. No matter what the children want, community members are there to enable and empower to make it so.

The opportunity to have mentorship support while learning how to be a leader is emphasized as one of the cornerstone practices making MMBT so attractive and effective. It is also helpful for new leaders to have the experience of not achieving what is desired immediately. Failure builds patience, stamina and stronger skill sets.

Step Three: Empower

But failing is part of that too. Our kids have to learn how to fail in a good way so that they can succeed in a good way. I am not interested in letting our young people grow up in this rose coloured world where they think that anything is possible because it's not. It's only possible if they work hard, if they take ownership of these ideas and work in cooperation and in partnership with other people. So, to the youth who don't go out and seek those

partnerships, unfortunately they have a great idea and it never went anywhere. And that's a lesson for them. I want them to feel disappointed and I want them to be hurt because that disappointment and that hurt is going to be fuel for their fire in the future. When those young people now want something else to be successful, they are going to have to take their experience and use those failures to inform their future success. But we can't do that if we start with money. That's the lesson.

Such a process offers a double benefit to the youth. For many youth, this may be the first feedback of value for their skill, talent or service. Being thanked by the community for sharing time and talent often encourages them to offer more.

This Co-Creative Leadership Model can be described as a form of learning self-directed leadership. Personal goals and their implementation are directed by participants to support community goals. The community goal of stopping the violence is shaping expectations for a community wanting to stretch far beyond historical limits imposed through colonization, racism, poverty and violence.

One participant notes personal ongoing commitment to keep the community healthy. This commitment is an additional sign of strength for sustained leadership increasing long-term community capacity building:

I make sure there is no hate. When it does happen I just straight out address it and say, This is not the place or time to have those messages...MMBT has become really famous and other people are not scared to come here anymore. Ever since the Bell Tower has started there has been a decrease in crime and violent crime... not just because of Bell Tower but because of other community initiatives as well...And like the gang members, now they have morals. They let kids play on the streets. That was never happening 10 years ago.

Historically, the North End of Winnipeg shaped by colonization and racism, poverty, and violence has proven inadequate to prepare Aboriginal children and youth to step into leadership to address those concerns. Yet in MMBT children, youth and young adult leaders are creating the life lessons they need to be the change they want

to see directing their community into a healthier future. MMBT is effectively supporting leadership development through practices reinforcing self-direction. It is providing fluid leadership for MMBT, transferable to other settings and foundational to increasing long-term community capacity building for the North End.

Social Media

Youth celebrate every success through social media. Social media shares information, insights, methods and opportunities beyond those getting the first-hand experience. This affirms and reinforces the value of relationships as a path to expanding education, awareness sharing and skill development that returns many positive experiences for youth stepping up to serve in the community.

Participants use social media to report MMBT highlights for children. MMBT has friends, familiar faces, and a safe place to gather for fun. This is new and different compared to what they have heard from the past. With MMBT identified as the family many have never known, it encourages regular connection, care and concern for each other. This new-found hope in how to be “family like” community support is contagious. The youth have made extensive use of social media to spread this hope:

MMBT is networking with other communities and other initiatives to bring their stuff to MMBT. All of that is spewn out through the North End through our collective... we email from MMBT and it's just like talking to each other. We've become one big social network.

In valuing the worth of every person, valuing mutually dependent relationships and partnerships, valuing continuing education and sharing what is learned that is making life better, and valuing self-direction to equip others to make

their own lives better, MMBT is modeling ways to live with respect for the Seven Sacred Traditional teachings and traditional indigenous ethics. Participants in MMBT link their work with reclaiming healthy spirituality. The next chapter will discuss the relationship between stopping the violence and healing through reclamation of spirituality.

CHAPTER THREE

RENEWED COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Renewed community spirit is the result of Aboriginal young adults reclaiming traditional spiritual teachings to help them heal as they aim to stop the violence. Participants reflect Aboriginal Youth Opportunities' strategy to empower Aboriginal youth by acquainting them with the Seven Sacred Teachings and the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel is a teaching tool that can be referred to "when explaining rules, processes and consequences with Indigenous youth."¹ Participants understand the Seven Sacred Teachings provide a spiritual foundation for positive relationship building similar to the Ten Commandments for Christians or the Five Pillars for Muslim communities.²

Initially, the traditional teachings help Aboriginal youth frame a positive self-identity.

In the centre of the Medicine Wheel, is the Self. You are in the middle because you must look in all directions. You must be centered and grounded and understand that you are in the middle of something larger. The teaching of Humility is very important here.³

When an Aboriginal child or youth can embrace oneself as positive, the desire for positive relationship building often follows. Aboriginal Youth Opportunities offers this definition of relationship: "the term used to describe the connections and associations that people build with one another. When they follow the 7 Sacred Teachings they are healthy and positive."⁴

1. Aboriginal Youth Opportunities, *Arrows: Youth Engagement Strategy 2013* (Winnipeg: Aboriginal Youth Opportunities, 2013), 37.

2. Ibid., 37.

3. Ibid., 39.

4. Ibid., 17.

Youth with a positive self-identity challenged community's silence and tolerance of violence as a norm. This was detailed in Chapter Two with the discussion of the Aboriginal Young Adult Co-Creative Leadership Model.

In this chapter, renewed community spirit will be discussed as an outcome of the traditional spiritual teachings under four discrete headings. (1) Traditional spiritual teachings reinforce positive self-worth. (2) The teachings give rise to mentored action through the transformation from violence to non-violence. (3) In addition, the potential for the community shift from violence to non-violence is examined in relation to the potential for renewed community spirit. Finally (4), the effective use of social media will be shown to enhance the transformation from MMBT to the wider community.

1. Traditional Spiritual Teachings Reinforce Positive Self-worth

Reclaiming traditional spiritual teachings is the foundation of renewed North End Winnipeg community spirit. Many participants observed how MMBT awakened “new” understandings of “old” teachings.

Rev. Mervin Wolf Leg of Siksika (Blackfoot) Nation (Alberta), a traditional spiritual person from childhood, offers this introduction to traditional spiritual teachings:

[T]he teachings of the wheel affirm a balance in life between the physical, mental or intellectual, emotional and spiritual realms. In, through and around these four aspects or realities of one's existence is God. ... Within the Siksika understanding, God at the centre of the circle takes on an expanded meaning and is 'centred' in each of the four domains of life, and holistically, as well.⁵

5. Joyce Carlson, “Session One: Connecting with Personal Loss: Grief in the Aboriginal Community,” in *The Dancing Sun* 5 (1994): 6.

Rev. Wolf Leg emphasizes that the medicine wheel has layers of meaning depending on one's age and experience. "The spiritual aspect of our being is the source of energy to do things such as sing, art, go to school, get up in the morning-and raise families. Once this energy is in us and put into action in the world, the Creator blesses the world."⁶ Wolf Leg discusses different stages of life and the importance of intergenerational relationships loving and strengthening the community. Grandparents have knowledge and wisdom to help counsel children and youth. Youth mature to adults who can care for grandparents who become elders. Elders counsel adults to help them parent. The cycles repeat and shift as life moves on for everyone moving through life's stages. Everyone always has a place and purpose for belonging in this worldview. Having a positive place to belong is attractive to Aboriginal youth.

Sometimes the image of the circle of concentric circles is used to reflect human life connections and interrelationships. With the Creator at the centre of the circle, the next circle represents oneself, the next one's family, the next one's community, and finally the whole created world holds all of creation. The whole of creation includes plants and the whole cosmos.⁷ Rev. Mervin Wolf Leg notes that traditional teachings and the circle image respect the importance of living with balance in creation and with the Creator. Traditional teachings aim for interconnectedness within the entire community.

Just as the North End youth describe self as the middle circle of all relationships, Martin Brokenleg also notes "the number four has sacred meaning to Native people who see

6. Joyce Carlson, "Session One: Connecting with Personal Loss: Grief in the Aboriginal Community," in *The Dancing Sun* 5 (1994), 6.

7. *Ibid.*, 7.

the person as standing in a circle surrounded by the four directions.”⁸ Drawing on fifteen thousand years of Native American child-rearing philosophies “designed to nurture caring, respectful, and courageous children”⁹ Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern offer their Circle of Courage youth programming principles reinforcing ancient holistic teachings focus on the spirit of belonging, the spirit of mastery, the spirit of independence and the spirit of generosity. Contemporary youth development research supports ancient holistic teachings as relevant to all children.

Traditional teachings are attractive to North End Winnipeg youth because they emphasize the need for their participation in the community to be part of balancing the health and wellbeing for the whole. Youth want to be engaged and mentored to get experience in developing skills to support their community. In *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*, the authors contrast Native American childrearing practices using positive discipline with the ethnocentric European obedience training model where “vassals obeyed lords, priests obeyed superiors, subjects obeyed kings, slaves obeyed masters, women obeyed men, and children obeyed everybody.”¹⁰ In contrast to the traditional teachings respect for self in balance with others and creation, traditional Western perspective of balance is often depicted with the narrow image of a weigh scale suggesting that out of balance means winning for some and losing for others.¹¹

8. Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern, *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future* (Bloomington, Indiana: Solution Tree Press, 1990), *Ibid.*, 45.

9. *Ibid.*, 136-137.

10. *Ibid.*, 32.

11. Joyce Carlson, “Background for Leaders: Journeys in Spirituality: Stories from Christian Indigenous People,” in *The Dancing Sun* 6 (1995): 2.

Participants experience the outcomes of historical misunderstandings between traditional and Western ways. Aboriginal peoples, especially Aboriginal children and youth, have not received equal opportunities for over 150 years. 21st century young Aboriginal adults experience reintroduction to traditional spiritual teachings and egalitarian perspectives as a positive source of identity, as defining a place where they can belong and contribute their energy and talents for the benefit of the whole community. Living the teachings encourages young people to keep living into their positive identity which includes doing what they can to stop the violence. Reclaiming their sacred foundation offers a unifying source of spiritual support for the long-term community vision.

2. Traditional Spiritual Teachings and Transformation from Violence to Non-Violence

The traditional spiritual teachings inform the four behavior changes leading from violence to non-violence. This is a commitment to do major healing work where non-violent behaviour has rarely been modeled or taught. Participant comments link the sacred teachings with their personal renewal of spirit and their hope for broader community renewal:

I believe we can try to incorporate some of our sacred teachings into everyday life...not only love but humility, courage, truth, honesty, wisdom and trust or respect. I think that if we all start living the Seven Sacred Teachings not only will this be a better place to live, this life and this land will be a better place for our future generations to come. If we all live that way, I think that we can break down the divide and come together. I know that sounds cheesy, but ...I know it can happen because you know I never knew that it would be possible to walk down the street and feel safe, but it has happened... I will make that my dream, my goal. And if I can't do it to the world at least I can start here in the North End.

Traditional teachings help young people reclaim positive identity, reduce violence personally, and discover commonality with others willing to reduce violence communally.

One participant describes his growing spirituality and the evolution happening at MMBT:

Spirituality can't be confined. It's something that is universal... It is our hope...that a reflection of us is a very glimpse of what God is, the love, the hope, the compassion, the beyond your own self.... It's in our ways to come together, call me a tribe or whatever. We are greater than our individual selves.

Aboriginal Youth Opportunities began with a sacred ceremony guided by women elders. Some youth actively participated in the annual Medicine Walks with *Kookum Kaa Na Da Maa Waad Abinoojiiak* Council (Grandmothers Protecting our Children) and wanted to do more. The women elders encouraged the youth to reinforce their personal growth and healing. The women elders continue to support youth relationship building efforts in MMBT:

MMBT is an initiative of AYO. AYO is very much a spiritual movement that began in ceremony with young people coming together. To me MMBT similarly came together with a different concept of spirituality in mind. MMBT spirituality lies in our intention and what we're hoping to accomplish. By laying out that intention it creates a spiritual pathway so to speak as to where we're going to go. We never have any idea of how... but we lay that spiritual objective of where we're going to get to a peaceful community and though we have no idea how we're going to get there, we include things like smudging, drum songs, round dances, and cultural activities like egg teachings... I think we are taking spirit and different forms of knowledge and trying to honor them at Bell Tower...especially because we don't feel like they are honoured elsewhere.

Participants identify ancestral teachings as foundational to their personal growth and development. The flexibility of the teachings and their application to youth's lives keep it relevant, fresh and engaging to youth. MMBT participants identify four behaviour changes marking the individual's journey from accepting the experience of daily violence as normal to rejecting violence and cultivating non-violent attitudes and behaviours. A discussion of these four changes will link each one to traditional spiritual teachings. In completing this journey another potential youth leader emerges. Each new leader attaining non-violence as a

way of being offers, in turn, new hope and support to the community. In what follows, I will trace common patterns in this journey among the participants in this study.

Individual Awakening

Showing up is a significant first step for many individual youth. Leaving home on a Friday evening at 6 p.m. is a choice many people did not make before MMBT. Fear of violence kept many isolated inside at home with anxious thoughts, especially as dark approached. In moving beyond habits of fear and isolation, individuals demonstrate their commitment to stopping violence and exploring non-violence within safe community space:

Bell Tower has been going on for over a year now. Bad things still happen. There have been murders, suicides, assaults and robberies. Things still happen. But now, people don't have to be thinking, "Why is this all happening to me? They no longer have to be alone with that."

MMBT introduces practices that enable people to reclaim balance, wholeness, connection and purpose. *"MMBT is a nice place to go where there is no need for the social excuse of drugs or alcohol to gather. The excuse is that we have a common interest and we want to do something positive together."* Participants described their own personal changes and observations of changes in others as they learned to practice non-violence:

MMBT is a group helping the North End in positive ways. There's already been lots of changes. Certain parts of the North End are getting better. One of the rules is that no one is allowed even to play fight at MMBT. It is still considered an act of violence and it's defeating the purpose of the Bell Tower.

The self in relation to community

Attending MMBT raises awareness and decreases the stigma of internalized fear many previously carried in isolation. Belonging to a positive group creates a sense of safety in numbers and presents a real alternative to violent patterns of behaviour:

I believe that kids will have a sense of hope, a sense of belonging and a sense of community after coming to Bell Tower. I remember when kids around here before MMBT didn't have that. And, they were like I want to be a gangster when I grow up. Now since Bell Tower, kids have a new hope in their lives. This has shed a new light on different things for kids to be.

MMBT is a place to belong. Some describe MMBT is like the family or tribe they have never known:

MMBT is a place where you can just hear about what's going on. They talk about everything. It's nice to feel connected to everything that's happening. If you have something to say, people will listen to every word and support you in every way they can. People are really helpful, generous and resourceful. Their skillset of resources is kind of different because of this community than maybe anywhere else in Winnipeg. It's a really specific feel when you get there that is sort of serving like a family. Christmas, Thanksgiving or any of those usual "family" traditional things you have at the Bell Tower.

Self-assertion as personal and spiritual transformation

Individuals who share ideas to help MMBT stop violence will be guided to test them out experientially with mentor support. Specifically, youth are given opportunities to live the spiritual teachings they have been taught:

Schools are introducing the Sacred Teachings but there is little opportunity to live them. MMBT provides mentorship leadership. [MMBT] is a place where youth are applying cultural teachings to actions. We're more about action than what we say.

At MMBT, youth participate in ceremonial practices like smudging, pipe ceremonies, and sharing circles. Such practices give meaning to youth and enable them to cope with various stresses and hardships:

As a community we are still very much dealing with the intergenerational effects of the residential schools and colonialist policies that have removed children from their culture for many years. When our young people and our children are reconnected with their culture they have coping skills to deal with the inevitable tragedies that our community deals with.

In practicing and integrating their culture, youth are more likely to have the spiritual sources to sustain non-violent relationships with others and are also less likely to inflict harm upon themselves. Such transformation has a collective effect that will now be explored.

Renewed community spirit

For every investment in welcoming children and youth to MMBT, the more community spirit grows:

MMBT has given me something to do around the North End. I've been trying to get involved and I haven't been doing anything... like rowdiness. I can think about more opportunities and that gives me hope. Every Friday when MMBT meets they hang up the hope sign.

Such individual transformation has a cumulative effect. MMBT gathers the combined hope and energy of youth with community to prepare leaders committed to community wellbeing:

Everything that has led to Winnipeg becoming what it is, all the people spending their lives, all of those are the forces behind what is leading MMBT. I guess it's our common hopes and dreams that are moving it forward to whatever we want it to be. It's like a self-determination thing. As long as people here are leading it and looking at how other places are similar or completely different they can pick and choose what they think will work here.

Participants observe previously unimagined positive changes happening as they reclaim traditional spiritual teachings and implement values of mutual dependency and partnership.

They see the positive difference MMBT makes through this Aboriginal Young Adult Co-Creative Leadership Model:

MMBT is exactly what I needed as a human who lives in this community. It became a public venue where a lot of us with shared concerns, shared feelings and experiences could talk about things. People were actually excited to talk and offering solutions and being part of those solutions was really exciting! It's something everyone has been wanting for a very long time but it never really happened.

This reinforces motivation to keep honing skills to be more effective change agents and to tell their story more widely.

3. Potential for Renewed Community Spirit

Over a decade ago Vine Deloria wrote: “The demonstration of non-violence is the ultimate expression of expectation, because it opens the possibility of discovering that one is not alone-which is the only affirmation we have of our existence.”¹² It seems that his words are being lived out in the thoughts, actions and collective commitments being inspired and shaped through MMBT.

Participants see their community’s pattern of grief, despair and hopelessness shifting to one of increasing hopefulness as people come together, name what needs to be addressed, support those who are hurting and find ways for individuals and / or community to make life better. Positive outcomes reinforce motivation and commitment to keep gathering, sharing through social media and engaging new leaders to keep strengthening community capacity. New North End leaders are mentored through this behavior change process. Participants want everyone to experience this potential for positive individual and community change by becoming part of this transformation:

MMBT has become a community platform. I keep wondering how we can use this platform to engage children and youth in this community and how to mobilize community people into action to start solving some systemic issues? I think of MMBT as Rally Training 101. If we go to anything at the Legislative Building or somewhere it’s almost always MMBT people helping facilitating and co-ordinating.

12. Vine Deloria Jr. *For this Land: Writings on Religion in America* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 50.

Reclaiming traditional spiritual teachings as a base is grounding an evolving cycle of behaviour change possibilities contributing to renewed community spirit. Stories of personal and communal transformation continue to emerge reinforcing the value of focusing on positive community development. Participants believe their experience can be repeated in any community or organization willing to invest in youth leaders and applying values for relationship and partnership building to achieve common goals.

These youth are motivated to set new goals, encourage others, and to keep this renewal process going. MMBT keeps expanding its circle of support and thus, its community capacity. This increases spirit:

Our intention is to stop the violence. And statistically we have done so. So, we are a spiritually actualized group. Spirit is about Creation and that is what we do a lot of at Bell Tower. Sometimes if we want a solution to stop the violence we have no choice but to get political with the institutions. Sometimes we have to deal with community politics and have drama right here between landlords and former tenants or cranky neighbours or rival gang members. Yet, MMBT is a place of peace...

Bell Tower is a weird "Peace Zone" like Switzerland in the middle of Canada in the middle of Winnipeg and it's really funny. Even when we have difficulties...we can use the gathering to say "Hey, there's little kids over there...Knock it off! And it works!" It's our consistency. Most of the time it works.

Spiritually, culturally and politically MMBT has given power to all the people who come here to grab their reality and their future and say. "This is what we're doing and we're doing it." It's really just grabbing our future and making it what we want it to be.

MMBT prepares leaders who reinforce MMBT's objective. These leaders were first to name violence as no longer tolerable. They chose to seek local solutions to overwhelming historical problems where others had given up:

We have zero tolerance for any violence at MMBT...lateral violence, physical violence, emotional violence. We are marching around one of the most statistically violent neighbourhoods in this country yelling through a megaphone. Just in case they can't hear us, we have signs telling people that they are going to stop the violence no matter what, because our community is amazing!

Participants have a larger vision to help them eradicate violence on a broader scale. They want to decolonize inequitable relationships between Canada's Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples. They offer new leadership from Traditional egalitarian understandings to speak, live and act out of their own heritage as a positive force for change benefitting the whole community:

Youth are bringing traditional knowledge to the community. When there was a death they coordinated a sacred fire. They know enough teachings to get people together for a pipe ceremony at Thunderbird House. They are fulfilling their roles according to traditional methods of community governance from an indigenous perspective. Young people were to challenge the status quo, to let decision-makers know when things didn't work anymore. We're restoring our young people's role as integral participants in decision-making for our community, whether that is deciding what theme for Bell Tower next week or how we create a 24-hour space for youth to be safe and stop these suicides.

If there are people marching around the streets with signs and making sounds the whole community hears you they know you're there and there is the presence of people. The more ears and eyes the more you can perpetuate non-violence without the police—which is nice. ... It is a more friendly less oppressive encouragement towards non-violence.

Their aim is a shift to wholeness for everyone. Their leadership is inspirational.

They are discovering they must learn to be the change they expect. To do that, they embrace traditional teachings and practices as they move through the steps of behaviour change.

Recognizing one is not alone MMBT offers the invitation to be part of this community, affirming their existence as Deloria prophesied. Belonging can motivate willingness to give away time, energy, ideas and commitment to projects on the way to the main goal of stopping the violence.

Every youth who makes positive changes in her life, every project success, and every gathering that awakens hope for change raises community spirit. Participants report the surprise and joy they experience witnessing change happen as a result of MMBT and their

partnership efforts. Reliant on relationships and partnerships with elders, community leaders, MMBT has kept developing methods and processes consistent with traditional spiritual teachings. They are transforming themselves and others in the process. Thus they offer resourceful innovative leadership always seeking new possibilities:

Have you heard of hip/hop genius? That is basically what this is. It's a philosophy that if you don't have what you need to do what you want to do, you go hip/hop genius. You figure out another way to do it. It's just about being resourceful which is just about everything MMBT has done.

MMBT affirms other traditional teachings as well: they remember the sacredness of land and space by gathering in an outdoor location (the Bell Tower), even when it is – 40. Their weekly rituals include lamenting their grief for all the young Aboriginal children, youth, men and women suffering, lost and prematurely dead while also claiming life as good and celebrating loudly. They listen to the women elders. They learn how to give away what is theirs to share for the benefit of the whole. These traditional sacred teachings are keeping them grounded, positive and hopeful for steady community renewal.

MMBT remains consistent with the value of hospitality from traditional spiritual traditions. They welcome cross-cultural, interfaith and multi-ethnic perspectives through mutually respectful relationships. MMBT models openness to right relationships when commonly shared goals require the combined potential resources of everyone to expand solutions to stop the violence. Traditional spiritual teachings offers Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples an egalitarian alternative to patterns of hierarchy that have proven unsuccessful globally and increasingly irrelevant to children and youth. The traditional teachings' radical equality offers hope for healing and reconciliation. MMBT demonstrates adaptability and relevancy of traditional spiritual teachings for MMBT and the wide diversity of community it connects. MMBT adds to five hundred years of proven adaptability and

relevancy of traditional spiritual teachings as a way of life guiding human beings to co-create health and wellbeing for the whole.

4. Effective use of Social Media

MMBT celebrates and extends the positive impact of renewed spirit through the effective use of social media. MMBT broadcasts its accomplishment via social media and witnesses to the creative leadership of Aboriginal youth from Winnipeg's North End model. This allows young people to share with others and keep the good news circulating. One participant notes different ways information is shared, including "*Facebook, on Twitter, on Tumblr, on all those social networking media networks and on our website*" Additionally, MMBT leaders are "ready" to speak at gatherings and lead a group of people. They know how to record events, post in exciting ways and share the good news of the improved quality of life they are shaping. They keep their social media sites current, colorful, creative and attractive to potential youth recruits. This is essential to reaching the long-term goals stopping violence and creating more health and well being for next generations of Aboriginal children and youth.

Participants see links from reclaiming ancestral teachings to achieving desired outcomes in practical ways. MMBT reinstates a community decision-making role for children and youth as relevant practice in North End Winnipeg. Valuing relationships, ongoing flexible experiential education and self-directed action to improve community well being over the long term, MMBT is providing hope that participants never imagined possible. MMBT is part of transforming North End Winnipeg's long history of collective

grief, despair, and diminished community spirit. MMBT is serving as transformative spiritual community to young Aboriginal people.

For those who choose to attend, to belong, to make the personal shifts to non-violence, and to see and believe the positive transformations and renewal of community spirit, there is great hope that this is just the beginning. In this egalitarian worldview lies potential for healing, reconciliation, and collaboration to narrow the gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples living in Canada. In youth lies the energy to co-create new relationships to make it happen. They have much to teach. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT CAN MEET ME AT THE BELL TOWER TEACH THE CHURCH?

What explains the success of this community? Why has it succeeded when more formal and better-funded organizations have failed? And what might the church learn from this experience; how is spirituality enacted in a manner that touches youth's lives here when the church has failed at doing the same?

Meet Me at the Bell Tower (MMBT) is successful because it offers space where speaking about present day life-threatening violence experienced by North End children and youth (predominantly Aboriginal) stimulates local ideas for solutions. The common urban Aboriginal experience participants identified in Chapter One—including colonialism and racism, poverty and violence—stimulates MMBT leaders to find effective solutions to change their known reality. Learning to live traditional sacred teachings reinforces respect for Aboriginal children as persons. This encourages non-violent attitudes and behaviors. The more people learn to share and care for each other non-violently, the better the community is as a place to belong. People coming to MMBT identify this community as the “family” they have never known. Open to anyone sharing the non-violent way of being, MMBT welcomes diversity. Collective sharing of ideas in partnerships discerns the best ideas to receive resources. Trusting each person's human capacity to listen, respect one another and behave in non-violent ways in partnerships, MMBT helps Winnipeg's North End expand safe space and generate hope previously unimagined by the participants.

Other more formal and better-funded organizations, including The United Church of Canada, have failed to see, listen, respect or effectively include the spiritual gifts of

Aboriginal peoples. Former United Church Moderator Rev. Stan McKay reflects. “The whole history of “mission” in previous generations was acted out from a “we-they” perspective. It was a kind of paternalism that was blind to the incredible strengths within the community.”¹ The experience of one participant emphasizes how adults and funded organizations remain blind to the possibilities of different perspectives youth bring:

We operate from where our ideas are our currency. A lot of times when I am talking to an adult group I'll hear them say “Oh yah we'd like to do it, but we can't even think about it until we get money on the table. The difference between the way AYO and MMBO operate is “What do you want to do?” The money is not the reason not to do something. Money is not a reason not to do something. NEVER! Seriously. That's the one thing we can teach people.

MMBT is successful because it is responding to real human need for social well-being and overwhelming issues related to premature deaths, unresolved grief and bereavement. Coincidentally, these are the major areas identified by Reginald Bibby's research confirming the importance and relevance of religion for human beings.

Bibby's research also shows academic scholarship was wrong to equate declining mainline Protestant church attendance with an overall decline in religion in Canada. Canadians want ministry that responds to spiritual, personal and relational needs.² MMBT demonstrates how to be responsive to human needs in North End Winnipeg. Bibby encourages mainline Protestant churches consider new outlooks, new approaches and new partnerships to “rethink the times and your roles, and re-channel your energies.”³

1. Stan McKay, *Journey from Fischer River: A Celebration of the Spirituality of a People through the Life of Stan McKay* (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1994), 61.

2. Reginald Bibby, *A New Day : The Resilience and Restructuring of Religion in Canada* (Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2012), 48.

3. *Ibid.*, 45.

MMBT may be able to help churches by offering new learning about children and youth whose enthusiasm, flexible leadership and social media literacy can readily adapt to ever-changing community needs while embracing respect for diversity. MMBT invites churches to reclaim a committed engagement with children and youth by listening to their concerns, providing experiential opportunities to take responsibility with mentored support and recognizing their valuable ideas keeping leadership accountable and transparent.

Aboriginal young adults reclaim several aspects of traditional spirituality to affirm their collective heritage because they have not experienced it as valued elsewhere. As Stan McKay puts it, “generations to this day, were denied the freedom to affirm their own culture because the teaching of the church was that everything in Aboriginal teaching was wrong and had nothing to do with the God who loved the world.”⁴ With traditional values as a source and base for its outreach efforts, MMBT is able to transform youth’s lives in material as well as spiritual ways through its co-creative community leadership model. MMBT is successful because it demonstrates traditional teachings are relevant for claiming positive self-worth and identity. Further, it teaches non-violence and the value of strengthening human relationships in community to face life’s challenges. This experience also echoes Stan McKay’s experience with Aboriginal communities. “I have always believed that the cultural values of Aboriginal communities have been more Christian than what we call the European, where people are taught to be more individualistic.”⁵

The communal traditional way of being offers an effective positive alternative to the more individualistic European obedience training which has resulted in internalized

4. Stan McKay, *Journey from Fischer River: A Celebration of the Spirituality of a People through the Life of Stan McKay* (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1994), 80.

5. *Ibid.*, 68.

oppression, isolation, hopeless judgmental attitudes and negative behaviors recycling colonialism, racism, poverty and violence. Participants are working to end futile patterns. Learning their Aboriginal heritage is grounded in positive ways of building relationships steadily surprises them with new possibilities. When people gather, talk, listen, respect and cooperate to make life safer for the community's children, hope becomes tangible. They are embracing this positive human affirming spirituality because it is relevant and responsive to their need to stop the violence.

Traditional spirituality

MMBT grounds itself in Indigenous spirituality long outlawed in Canada's history. This foundational Canadian worldview seeks balance and completeness in the universe as fundamental. Indigenous ethics respect the value of every aspect of Creation and the responsibility for human beings to take responsibility to properly ensure long-term sustainability of resources to provide for succeeding generations. *"I think we are taking spirit and different forms of knowledge and trying to honour them here at Bell Tower... especially because we don't feel like they are honoured elsewhere."*

In *The First Nations: A Canadian Experience of the Gospel-Culture Encounter*, Stan McKay identifies the church's single-minded approach to being Christian in North America. This attitude was one of "constant culture genocide" to Indigenous cultural ways.⁶ In aligning with Indigenous perspectives, MMBT rejects historically imposed narrow Western perspectives including those of missionaries and the church condoning colonialism, racism,

6. Stan McKay and Janet Silman, *The First Nations: A Canadian Experience of the Gospel-Culture Encounter* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), 1.

poverty and violence against Aboriginal peoples. North End Aboriginal children and youth empower themselves with whatever community partnerships will strengthen wholeness and share the expectation for a more hopeful future that is non-violent. MMBT demonstrates a respect for people over profits with a particular message that all children deserve violence-free space to live and grow.

Using the circle and/or medicine wheel framework, children and youth claim their place in spiritual, cultural and political circles to offer leadership through innovative creative and flexible skillsets. The circle framework is a sustainable and renewing methodology adapting to life's ongoing cyclical change and transformation. Valuing the worth of each person to contribute to the benefit of the whole, every mutually beneficial relationship is also respected. Extending their reclamation of positive identity through community gatherings and social media, the inclusive hospitality of the Indigenous worldview enables healing at the individual and community level.

Thus, MMBT models how to be a community of spiritual renewal. One participant notes, *"It is important to acknowledge Indigenous ways of childrearing."* Another adds:

Indigenous spirituality is integrally such a significant part of the Bell Tower as a community still dealing with intergenerational effects of residential schools and colonialist policies that have removed children from their culture for many many years. When our young people and our children are reconnected with their culture they have coping skills with which to deal with the inevitable tragedies our community deals with.

Renewed community spirit in Winnipeg's North End is grounded in reclamation of traditional sacred teachings through the Young Adult Co-Creative Leadership Model at MMBT. MMBT's new forms of community reclaim the wisdom of Indigenous sacred teachings taught inter-generationally and inclusive ethics valuing sustainable relationships for the long-term benefit of all.

Youth repeat the example of sharing wisdom, skills and experience through their gatherings as women elders have taught them. Women elders offered sacred ceremony in respect and encouragement of AYO supporting each other to live in a good way rather than joining gangs. MMBT extends that. *“MMBT is about Indigenous way of raising a community. All ages are important. MMBT is a place for vigils, memorials and ceremonies honouring life. It creates a spiritual cycle so the energy flows continuously. There isn't a break.”*

Sacred ceremony gives individuals and/or community a way to offer respect for all life's seasons. MMBT organizes feasts to celebrate life that continuously changes and moves forward. Youth at MMBT organize intergenerational sacred circles to allow time and attention for listening together when youth need to collectively grieve the death of another friend, neighbor or relative. They take time at MMBT to reflect on what has been learned and choose themes every week to prepare for what remains to be done to achieve peace, health and wellbeing for the community.

Reclaiming traditional Indigenous sacred heritage, identity, and purpose is positive for the youth:

I feel liberated by language, ceremonies and teachings. ...If kids can learn more about culture, if there were more ceremonies and sweat lodges it would actually give them a really good chance to show who they are and learn about it and see what it could lead them to or how it could help them. It is really helpful.,

MMBT respect for traditional spiritual teachings helps youth transform negative internal attitudes and shame from colonialist and racist discrimination to positive self-esteem.

“MMBT is a place for young and old to reclaim culture with the same information. Youth are seeing culture as a strength in Winnipeg's North End.” When the truth of a positive Aboriginal heritage is learned negative shame-based self-perceptions can be released.

“Learning about my culture has been transformational in my ability to trust what I can or cannot control.” One participant observes that culture keeps kids out of gangs, off the streets and is something to do in spare time.

Aboriginal youth learning the positive history and contributions of Aboriginal peoples are inspired to be all they can be. MMBT respects the Seven Sacred Teachings, the Medicine Wheel and traditional roles and responsibilities for youth. As the youth learn sacred ways and practices they discover options for guiding their behavior to positive options:

Sacred teachings and culture give youth practices to check their own behavior to monitor decision-making skills. To have love, respect, wisdom, honor, humility, courage and truth ingrained in the actions of these young people allow them to be more effective community organizers and self advocates. Personally they are much more healthy because they can communicate what’s going on with them.

They want to share their best self with others. *“We have a strong culture. We love each other. We’re respectful of each other and would like Non—Aboriginals to do the same.”*

Another participant says, *“We go beyond Aboriginal people as we grow. We could teach a sense of fairness to Non-Aboriginals.”*

Sacred practices ground them to live in this good way of peace-building. The more engaged some become with sacred practices as part of living a good way, the more positive relationships with friends, neighbours and family are. Hope for life increases as this intergenerational collective rediscovers a proud Aboriginal heritage, a positive self-identity, and sacred practices to self-monitor life-giving behavior. Community spirit rises with the expanding feeling of “belonging” with the extended MMBT “family” who care about them, listen to them and try to make life better through mutual support.

Learning the positive values for human relationships and how to offer personal gifts and talents to improve life for self and others can be a first step to self-directed goal setting.

Teaching youth to set their own goals is about encouraging youth leadership development, long-term community capacity building, and shaping a new culture for the 21st Century. *“Our kids are our leaders today. AYO has developed youth engagement training. MMBT is a launching pad and connecting place....”*

Collaborative Leadership

MMBT offers a place of consultation and collective listening that is then shaped into a community plan. MMBT believes in youth as leaders. Youth are attracted to what is relevant, pays attention to their concerns and offers ways they can contribute to solutions that will make a positive difference for themselves and others:

MMBT is really exciting and something that everyone has been wanting for a very long time but it never really happened. All the reasons why MMBT started are related to spiritual, cultural and political. What I think is most interesting about MMBT spiritually, culturally and politically is that it combines all three things. There’s something really new now and I think MMBT is one of quite a few different things that is happening in different parts of Canada which is starting a new culture in Canada. I’m curious to see in the future how a movement like MMBT is going to be seen because it’s becoming a new version of Aboriginal North End Winnipeg Canadian Manitoban thing. Very specific to 21st Century.

An unfulfilled hope remains. *“It would be nice to have more programs where they could help people so there wouldn’t be as many suicides.”*

These youth demonstrate incredible returns for a community when youth have safe space to gather, where their concerns are listened to, their knowledge and skills for non-violence are developed, and they are encouraged to participate as leaders through the MMBT leadership processes. As they learn to work with this process they contribute by addressing

substantive issues in their own voices with their own ideas tested in partnerships with people of more means, experience and stability.

Participant comments describe MMBT as unique in its capacity to provide experiential opportunities, support, and feedback for personal growth and development, leadership training and community responsibility. This open door forum invites youth to grow beyond self to serve the community. MMBT is attracting, teaching and launching flexible innovative creative youth leaders, youth groups and community-based partnerships to shape a more positive path into the future. *“MMBT has made a difference in Winnipeg and not just Winnipeg, but other parts of Canada as well. Ever since Bell Tower there’s certain places adopting the Bell Tower program.”*

Youth-led Solutions

MMBT challenges adults, organizations, church and society to listen to the children and youth to get on track with quality of life outcomes that actually make a difference children and youth can experience sooner than later. MMBT is both a critique of what is not working and an invitation to Canadian church and society to partner in mutually beneficial ways. By combining fresh approaches from 21st century Aboriginal youth leaders with resources and experience from Non-Aboriginal peoples there is great potential for seeing complex issues from new perspectives and addressing complex issues on a larger scale. MMBT offers a local example of challenging status quo and community engagement around concerns for wellbeing. The energy of the youth combined with the wisdom and resources of

established structures offers potential for communication and information gathering forums related to safety, health and wellbeing in other contexts of diversity.

This qualitative research project demonstrates how MMBT's focus on relationship building as the starting point for subsequent action sustains engagement, and broadens ideas and possibilities for renewal and produces desired outcomes. Collective experience prioritizes issues. Collective knowledge strategizes solutions. Sustaining weekly MMBT gatherings and effectively employing social media keeps a broad network informed.

The hope of MMBT youth for equitable relationships benefitting all people sharing resources echoes previous words of hope written by Native theologians. "Christians must permit the same right for other peoples that they have claimed for themselves."⁷

William Baldrige thus makes a prophetic call for a spirituality of sacrifice in order to change the colonial legacy of Christianity. What is needed, he argues, is the sacrifice of colonial patterns of power for the sake of right and equitable relations:

Today, Christianity stands in need of the courage to fulfill the work of Christ. We stand in need of the courage to follow him into self-sacrifice. The fulfillment of Christianity will come, indeed it is coming, through the sacrifice of colonialism for hospitality, through the sacrifice of imperialism for invitation, the sacrifice of power for service, the sacrifice of fear for fellowship, the sacrifice of isolation for the world for the joy of living at peace with mother earth. Through self-sacrifice, Christianity can fulfill the promise of Christ's birth: glory to God, peace on earth, good will throughout creation.⁸

MMBT youth do not know much about Christianity nor the promises of Jesus to the poor and outcast. They do know how unequal life is for poor Aboriginal children and youth. They know how hard they must work to make life better and they are prepared to commit

7. James Treat, *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 78.

8. William Baldrige, "Reclaiming our Histories" in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 90.

themselves to be part of finding solutions. Their lived example as the leaders in courage and self-sacrifice to make the change from violence to non-violence and peaceful community is reflective of what Jesus lived and taught in the institutions and outside surrounded by nature. These young people without church instruction are modeling the focus for leadership long proclaimed in institutional churches for those who claim to follow Jesus the Christ. MMBT knows community history, acknowledges the pain, and in faith steps out trusting that together with others and Creator they can realize new possibilities. They are demonstrating the hope Native theologians lift up.

MMBT is an example of the memory coming back, of a safe place to gather people who were once wounded and vulnerable to shape a new wholeness to benefit all. It is alive and evolving traditional spiritual teachings to be lived out as relevant practice for the 21st Century, and thus it invites us all—Christian and non-Christian alike—to dare to imagine a new kind of spiritual community. MMBT’s actions exemplify the words of William Baldrige. “Our anger must be sacrificed to love as we reaffirm our spiritual heritage and offer it up for the benefit of all our relations.”⁹ MMBT goes beyond talking to show a positive way forward through new methods and processes able to transform violence into non-violence. Traditional spiritual teachings shape this positive way of being in relationship which is also renewing spirit and a sense of North End Winnipeg unity.

The voice of youth through MMBT names violence and historical sources of anger to find a new way to love. Aboriginal young adult leaders setting out to represent themselves in a positive way, sharing gifts and demonstrating the power of living into the expectation of

9. William Baldrige, “Reclaiming our Histories” in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 91.

non-violence are bringing unity back to their community. In doing so, they guide MMBT to precisely live into the words of William Baldrige. Ultimately, they offer a teaching to Canadian churches and society how to sacrifice anger to love by reaffirming traditional spiritual heritage to benefit “all of our relations.”¹⁰

Recent scholarship challenges the peacemaker myth of settler identity. “The inconsistencies in our national story-the real histories and lived experience of Indigenous peoples-mark the disjuncture between the peacemaker myth and the violence that actually forms the foundation of Indigenous-settler relations”¹¹ Add to this, the complicity of churches in destroying Indigenous culture and religion and the need for the church to attend to a transformation of settlers from colonizers to allies becomes apparent. “The violent nature of our relationship is revealed most starkly in the history and legacy of the residential schools.”¹² These words reinforce participants’ experience. Again, the words of Stan McKay are instructive of misunderstandings needing to be addressed:

Churches have difficulty acknowledging that the history of imperialistic mission and the lack of connectedness to the earth go together in many ways. Until society and governments have a sense of the difference between peoples and affirm the truth of the giftedness of all people, the giftedness of Aboriginal peoples in their relation to creation will not be seen.¹³

MMBT has much to teach. The question is: Can the Canadian churches be open to learn from those historically oppressed and offering a courageous compassionate inclusive vision for the future? For churches and/or groups in Canadian society wanting to engage

10. William Baldrige, “Reclaiming our Histories” in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 91.

11. Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, (Toronto: UBC Press, 2010), 115.

12. *Ibid.*, 235-236.

13. Stan McKay, *Journey from Fischer River: A Celebration of the Spirituality of a People through the Life of Stan McKay* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1994), 100.

youth leaders, encourage community engagement, and/ or live into reconciled relationships, MMBT and its Aboriginal Young Adult Co-Creative Leadership Model has much to share. The youth see MMBT as duplicable anywhere local people gather with openness to respectfully listen to local youth willing to challenge the status quo and truly listen to youth name what is not working. Where this openness exists what MMBT keeps learning can contribute to positive change.

The MMBT community models a non-violent way of mutually beneficial relationships to end colonial practices, racism, and poverty that feeds the cycle of unrelenting violence still prematurely ending life. MMBT reveals the truth of thousands of years of tested Indigenous philosophies that have always sought peaceful and mutually interdependent relationships. People must be able to recognize what is not working and publicly name it. When a community names a problem and shares gifts to address the problem, what is needed can often be found through other relationships and partnerships. Truth telling and self-examination helps people know where they can help. MMBT has discovered that the Seven Teachings of respect, love, humility, courage, honesty, wisdom and truth support individual and communal healing. Social media expands the learning and widens social networks.

This new kind of youth-led intergenerational community is strong because it is creating mutually beneficial relationships aiming for long-term safety, equality and peaceful coexistence among human beings currently caught in cycles of violence.

CONCLUSION

This thesis documents the experience of North End Aboriginal young adults' intergenerational initiative "Meet Me at the Bell Tower." Its analysis of current life circumstances for urban Aboriginal youth makes Meet Me at the Bell Tower (MMBT) an effective critique of colonialism, racism, poverty and violence. Participants in this research have identified these forces that have shaped their lives as unfair, ineffective, life-threatening, and irrelevant to making their lives better.

In response to the complex life-threatening realities experienced, this thesis reflects MMBT's co-creative leadership model reclaiming traditional spiritual teachings proves attractive to youth, sustainable for community and relevant to address complex 21st century issues. Youth leadership offers methods and practices shaping an alternative way to be, the way of hospitality, compassion and non-violence. With the leadership of Aboriginal young adults, community members are learning how to become self-reliant leaders committed to community well being. Reclaiming a place to belong generates more relationship building.

MMBT's strategy of raising youth voices, energy, and pro-active behaviour to end violence is inspiring the North End community to dare to hope life can be better. Thus, the thesis also documents renewed spirit for North End Winnipeg. Lessons have been learned in this transformation process from violence to non-violence that MMBT can teach the church and community. In this, this thesis detailing the evolution of MMBT, is also a promise for healing and reconciliation beyond Winnipeg's North End.

MMBT models traditional spiritual values for inclusiveness and partnership building to enhance the potential for improving quality of life for everyone. Their courage to name the issue of violence, their commitment to learn what needs to change and their willingness to offer themselves to do what is required models a way to healing. When youth share what they are learning through social media they increase the potential for healing.

Aboriginal youth learning Canadian history identify barriers to equitable relationships in order to demonstrate how respecting traditional spiritual teachings can offer a positive alternative. Relevant methods and practices are shared with their potential for reconciliation. They know the Western Christian worldview aligned with national policies has consistently undermined Aboriginal quality of life, particularly through the residential schools. They continue to experience different forms of Canadian government programs and interventions with limited, participant exclusive outcomes that never address the whole complexity of challenges facing Aboriginal peoples. This is critiqued and challenged by MMBT as not good enough. It offers no hope for long-term positive change.

21st Century Aboriginal youth seek the whole truth of Canada's past and present history in order to shape a better future for themselves and others. Participants now know their lives have value as Aboriginal people. This stimulates an interest in knowing who their neighbours are and wanting Winnipeg neighbours to know them. Finally, there is a desire to meet, talk and work with others who may be able to help stop the violence. They see two contrasting and colliding worldviews that have never worked in partnership for the betterment of everyone as the treaties had intended. Recognizing Canada's

peacemaker myth goes largely unchallenged by Christian settlers and Non-Aboriginal peoples, participants seek to bridge differences by modeling the positive behavior they expect from others. Thus, young leaders learn non-violence and offer hospitality to all attending MMBT (who share in reinforcing attitude of non-violence and pro-community). The first thing MMBT teaches is that youth should not wait for someone else to look to for solutions. They have to find local solutions to address the violence and complex healing issues.

In MMBT youth are encouraged to step into leadership willing to learn whatever is needed to be the positive change required. They demonstrate courage and commitment in naming what is not working with the status quo while simultaneously aiming to create new forms of relationships and partnerships to stop the violence in their community. They have done this by reclaiming the inclusive sacred teachings.

Through sacred teachings they rediscover hope. Traditional spiritual teachings grounded in respect for the land and all Creation are experienced as a surprising positive alternative to anything the participants have ever known before. Traditional Aboriginal teachings are facilitating change from tolerating violence to modeling non-violence. In just over two years transformed attitudes and behaviour shifts have improved the participants' quality of life experience. Many people now feel positive connections to their community.

Such co-creative leadership is improving quality of life and raising hope. The consequence of experiencing this new hope energizes commitment to do more. When this good news is shared through social media it increases motivation and invitation for others to join MMBT. Curiosity from a widening social network embraces newcomers who

bring fresh perspectives and potential for new local solutions to end violence and shape peaceful community.

Traditional teachings are inclusive. They help individuals reclaim positive Aboriginal identity, strengthen self-actualizing behaviours through community building and offer an openness to meeting and partnering with a diversity of people towards common goals. Youth are witnessing personal and communal healing happening through MMBT as people live their sacred teachings. They experience how “belonging” at MMBT transfers to more kindness, civility and safety in the streets. With police statistics reporting a reduction in violent crime, they are affirmed and encouraged that there is much unrealized potential and more to be done. They imagine sustained effort having the potential to shape a mutually beneficial future for everyone, not just some. This creates a contagious joy at MMBT. Applying the sacred teachings, MMBT generates sustained action with current leaders’ commitment simultaneously encouraging recruits and reinforcing their development. Gathering, celebrating ‘belonging’ and steadily providing leadership development which builds community capacity, MMBT keeps working towards more widespread positive change.

These inclusive teachings in one of Canada’s most challenged neighbourhoods are anticipated to be easily transferable. Youth anticipate repeated successes in other communities willing to work in partnership with local youth. MMBT youth challenge other organizations and communities to test the teachings in different contexts to see if their theory can be proven.

Young leaders model egalitarian principles of peace and good governance across cultures. They use safety as the outcome demonstrating improvement in the lives of

Aboriginal children and youth as the measure to keep their leadership accountable to the future. MMBT gives the young and most vulnerable time and safe space where freedom to speak what is working, what is not working and what has to change is possible. Their creative use of social media broadcasts the positive power of self-directed youth for this community and provides a totally public and transparent communication for accountability. MMBT, by modeling its presence and commitment to positive community development, invites other organizations not yet engaging the ideas, energy and relevancy of youth participation to test this approach.

More testing in other communities is needed to verify youth's prediction that these processes are transferable. It remains to be seen whether the imagined potential for new forms of spiritual, cultural and political community building can shape a mutually beneficial future celebrating freedom of religion for both the original peoples of Canada and newcomers. Winnipeg has the International Human Rights Museum here. MMBT offers the possibility of Winnipeg being a living lab for generating non-violence. Imagine global visitors coming to a city of diversity where a history of oppression and violence has been transformed. Imagine Winnipeg being renowned for its co-creative communities arising from young people from diverse backgrounds who demonstrate how positive change can be managed without violence.

MMBT has much to teach the church and the wider Canadian community. Their lives reflect the ongoing and ever-present harmful legacy of the residential schools. This emphasizes the need for healing and reconciliation to continue dismantling colonized relationships. Telling the truth, living with respect for self and others, and requesting youth be offered a place to contribute time and talents to build community capacity,

MMBT models an alternative for new equitable forms of spiritual, cultural and political community building. Traditional teachings and the Aboriginal Young Adult Co-Creative Leadership Model affirm human dignity and respect mutually beneficial relationships in support of growing safe healthy communities for children.

For church and society to heal and reconcile with Aboriginal peoples, it is time for an equal valuing of the traditional teachings, for self-examination of the “settler problem,” unjust church practices and theological traditions still oppressing Indigenous children and youth. Truth telling, relationship building and resource sharing begun by the Aboriginal young adults of Winnipeg’s North End need to be imitated by adults and institutions committed to building right relationships going forward.

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APPENDIX 1: University Human Research Ethics Board (UHREB)
Statement of Ethics Vetting Research office File #HE01502

APPENDIX 1



University Human Research Ethics Board
(UHREB)

Statement of Ethics Vetting

The following ethics proposal has been approved by the UHREB. The approval is valid for one year from the date stated below.

For research lasting longer than one year it is the responsibility of the researcher to obtain Protocol Renewal. Renewal may be granted for one year only, after such time a new protocol must be submitted. Any changes made to the protocol should be reported to the Program Officer for UHREB review prior to implementation. See UHREB Policies and Procedures for more details.

Name of Investigator(s): Adel Compton	Department: Theology
Faculty Supervisor Jane Barter Moulaison	
Co-Investigator(s):	
Title of Project: RENEWED SPIRIT IN WINNIPEG'S NORTH END: AN EMERGING ABORIGINAL YOUNG ADULT CO-CREATIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL - 2013	
Research Office File #: HE01502	Date of Approval: June 20, 2013
Authorizing Signature: 	
Heather Mowat Program Officer, Research Implementation, Ethics and Contracts Office of the Associate Vice-President, Research and Innovation Telephone: (204) 786-9058 E-mail: h.mowat@uwinnipeg.ca	

APPENDIX 2: University Human Research Ethics Board (UHREB) Reviewer's Comments

The protocol is clear and well done. Just a few points that require clarification:

- 1.10: first paragraph suggests that there will be immediate support provided should the discussion generate mental discomfort, but it's not clear who will provide this support. Please detail who will provide this support - someone with training/skills to provide emotional support should issues arise.

- 3.2 & 7.9 - the issue of # to be recruited and # to be interviewed is abit confusing. I understand that there will be 13 Aboriginal young adult leaders invited to participate, and the researcher anticipates that 7 will agree to participate. Correct? If not, perhaps the response to these questions can be made clearer. Also, I do not understand the statement in Q3.2 - 'There is no need for any temporary concealment'.

- 4.9 - it's noted that while the researcher will keep names anonymous, anonymity may not be possible because this group has high profile in their community. I think this should be noted in Q4.9 and that this issue has been discussed with potential participants.

- Q6.4 - there is no link to statement provided in Q1.10 about providing immediate support. Should include that in this section about managing/minimizing risk.

- 7.6 - Is there potential for young leaders to feel coerced and/or pressured to participate with involvement by 2 young co-leaders?

- 12.2 - It appears that the data will be kept confidential but it doesn't appear that the researcher will be able to control that participants will be anonymous due to small number & high profile of activities. Just need to make this clear in response and in consent.

Reviewer #2

Within the section "participant information" it says: "Seven to ten Aboriginal young adult leaders aged eighteen years and older is the number of participants to conduct this qualitative research." A bit later it is stated that: "Thirteen participants will be invited to participate in person." Please clarify how many people will take part in the individual interviews and in the focus group.

Please clarify the recruitment strategy. Are potential participants approached one on one by the researchers or will posters be used? All recruitment materials need to be included in the ethics application.

If interview questions or discussion generates any mental discomfort immediate support is available. Please clarify who will be providing the support if it's needed.

The consent form needs to make the concrete details of participating more explicit. Here's an example of how concrete and specific the information in the consent form needs to be (feel free to use this exact wording):

"This is a two part study where you will be asked to participate in both an individual interview and focus group on the topic of the Winnipeg Aboriginal Youth Movement, "Meet Me at the Bell Tower." We are interested in investigating what the movement "Meet Me at the Bell Tower" can teach the church and the wider community about new forms of spiritual, cultural and political community building.

As a participant in this study, first, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview with myself, XX, and XX. This interview will take place at XX, and will take approximately 1 hour of your time. During the interview I will ask you questions such as XX and XX. Next, you will be asked to participate in a focus group with XX other people. This focus group will take place sometime during the weeks of XX (at a mutually agreed upon time), with up to 13 other people, and will take up to two hours. In total participating in this study will take approximately 3 hours of your time. Both the interview and focus group will be audio recorded."

To the consent form, please remove the statement about why the study is minimal risk.

To the consent form, please add a statement about confidentiality. Specifically, please add that the interview and focus group material will be written up for a paper and that this means that others will read it and that a participant may be identified (especially if they've had a strong social media presence). Also, please clarify that information shared in the focus group is not confidential.

APPENDIX 3: University Human Research Ethics Board (UHREB)
Ethics Protocol Approval #HE01502

APPENDIX 3

From: Heather Mowat <h.mowat@uwinnipeg.ca>
Subject: Statement of Ethics Vetting - Protocol #HE01502
Date: June 24, 2013 at 3:24:24 PM CDT
To: "Adel Compton (ahcompton@gmail.com)" <ahcompton@gmail.com>
Cc: "Jane Barter (janebartermoulaison@me.com)"
<janebartermoulaison@me.com>

Re: Protocol #HE01502 RENEWED SPIRIT IN WINNIPEG'S NORTH
END: AN EMERGING ABORIGINAL YOUNG ADULT CO-CREATIVE
LEADERSHIP MODEL

Dear Adel,

Thank you for your careful revisions in response to the reviewers'
comments regarding this protocol.

Your ethics protocol has been approved and an official Statement of
Ethics Vetting (.pdf attached) has been released to you. As of the date
of this signed form you are free to begin your research.

On behalf of the University Human Research Ethics Board, thank you
and best wishes for this valuable and interesting research project.

IMPORTANT NOTE: A Final Report is required once the research for
this protocol is completed. As policy and procedure revisions are
regularly made, it is important to access the Research website or visit
the Research Office for the most up-to-date forms, policies and
procedures, and current information.

Best wishes,
Heather

Heather Mowat
Program Officer, Research Implementation, Ethics and Contracts
Office of the Associate Vice President, Research and innovation

The University of Winnipeg
515 Portage Avenue (Room 4CM03B)
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3B 2E9
P: 204-786-9058
F: 204-783-8910
h.mowat@uwinnipeg.ca

APPENDIX 4



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

CONSENT FORM

We invite you to participate in a research study conducted by Adel Compton supervised by Dr. Jane Barter Moulaison of the Faculty of Theology of The University of Winnipeg. Adel Compton may be reached at 204 489-2214.

This is a two part study where you will be asked to participate in both an individual interview and focus group on the topic of the Winnipeg Aboriginal Youth Movement, “Meet Me at the Bell Tower.” We are interested in investigating what the movement “Meet Me at the Bell Tower” can teach the church and the wider community about new forms of spiritual, cultural, and political community building.

As a participant in this study, first, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview with myself, Adel Compton, researcher, and an Aboriginal colleague known to you in July 2013 (at a mutually agreed upon time). This interview will take place at Indian Family Centre, and will take approximately 1 hour of your time. During the interview I will ask you questions such as “What is Meet Me at the Bell Tower (MMBT) and what is your understanding of why and how it began?” and “What does MMBT mean to you?” Next, you will be asked to participate in a focus group. This focus group will take place sometime during August 2013 (at a mutually agreed upon time), with up to 13 other people, and will take approximately 3 hours of your time. Both the interview and focus group will be audio recorded. Information shared in the focus group is not confidential.

The interview and focus group material will be written up for a paper for others to read. Participant names will not appear in the written material. All responses will be coded for anonymity. However, since your group has a high profile in the community, in public media and through social media, there is the possibility that participant identities may be able to be identified.

Feedback will be provided to participants through a two page executive summary prior to publishing the thesis. An invitation to all participants to attend the Faculty presentation will be made. Copies of the thesis will be made available through the Faculty of Theology, Graduate Studies and The University of Winnipeg Library.

Data will be stored in a secured Dropbox file accessible only to Adel Compton for five years. When all data is collated, written materials have been accessed for any revisions to complete the project and all phases of thesis writing, data will be disposed of by deleting the audio files and by shredding any written materials.

If you have any concerns about the way this study is conducted, you may first contact the

investigator Adel Compton at 204 489-2214. If that does not address concerns you may contact the University Human Research Ethics Board (UHREB), through Heather Mowat at 786-9058 or by email at ResearchOffice@uwinnipeg.ca.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question(s) and are free to stop participating in the study at any time without consequence. If you have any questions about the research and/or wish to receive a summary of the study's results please contact Adel Compton at email: ahcompton@gmail.com or phone 204 489-2214 or Dr. Jane Barter Moulaison at email: j.bartermoulaison@uwinnipeg.ca or by phone at 204 789-1453.

Please check one: _____ I **do** agree to participate in the study described above. _____ I **do not** agree to participate in the study described above.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. Thank you for your consideration.

* UHREB contact information:

The University Human Research Ethics Board (UHREB) through Heather Mowat
Phone: (204) 786-9058 or ResearchOffice@uwinnipeg.ca

APPENDIX 5: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT:
DATA GENERATING QUESTIONNAIRE

Qualitative Research Project : Meet Me at the Bell Tower (MMBT)

QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Individual Interviews:

1. What is Meet Me at the Bell Tower (MMBT) and what is your understanding of why and how it began?
2. What does MMBT mean to you?
3. How have you changed since becoming part of MMBT?
4. Who is leading MMBT? Does it matter who leads?
5. How is MMBT leadership different from church affiliated youth groups in the North End?
6. Can you give examples of MMBT meetings sharing spiritual, cultural and / or political themes? a) spiritual b) cultural c) political
7. What difference does it make for the North End community when children and youth know about their Aboriginal culture and sacred teachings?
8. Where/ when do Aboriginal youth have opportunities to learn traditional sacred teachings, ceremonies, drum songs and/ or participate in cultural gatherings?
9. Do MMBT gatherings include teachings about spiritual and ancestral traditions?
10. What is the expectation about nonviolence in relation to MMBT? How is that expectation lived out?
11. What positive outcomes have emerged since MMBT began i) in your relationships ii) within the North End community and iii) within Winnipeg?

12. What specific actions, activities, skills, knowledge and experiences are North End Aboriginal youth bringing to community leadership that was previously missing?
13. Would you say MMBT is a spiritual, cultural or political movement? How or why?
14. Do you think you have anything you can teach the wider society? Non-aboriginals in general? The church?
15. If money was no limitation, what youth-led ideas and solutions could be effectively extended or expanded to make existing services and structures better serve North End community and North End youth into the future?
16. How is the knowledge and experience of North End Aboriginal youth being shared with those in the movement or others wanting to learn about it?
17. Any additional thoughts or comments you feel need to be included in reflecting on the impact of MMBT in North End Winnipeg?

FOCUS GROUP

The questions asked of individuals could again be posed to the whole group to review, share and expand on previous responses and collectively identify or reveal synchronistic ideas between the youth. Then these additional questions could be asked.

18. What do Christians and other faith groups need to know about North End Winnipeg Aboriginal youth to create right relationships?
19. What is happening / needs to happen in Winnipeg to effectively shape right relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth in the 21st Century?
20. Any additional comments.....

APPENDIX 6
letter of request

Adel Compton
515-340 Waterfront Drive
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 0M3
April 17, 2013

Indian Family Centre
470 Selkirk Ave.
Winnipeg, MB
R2W 2M5

Dear Michele,

I am preparing to do a qualitative research study and write a thesis as part of my Masters in Sacred Theology program with the University of Winnipeg. This letter is a request to the Board of Indian Family Centre to access space to conduct the research.

My thesis question is: "What can the Winnipeg Aboriginal Youth Movement, 'Meet Me at the Bell Tower,' teach the church about new forms of spiritual, cultural and political community building? How might this group and others like this be serving as "church" or a transformative spiritual community to young in ways that the church has failed to do?"

For the qualitative research I require a space to conduct individual interviews where a youth participant, myself and an Aboriginal colleague will be present. When the 7-10 individual interviews are completed, I will need a space large enough for a focus group including all the participants, myself, and an Aboriginal colleague. I would require an accessible plug in to allow for audio recording all interview sessions. For the focus group it would be great if we could access kitchen facilities to share a beverage and snacks which I would provide.

Since your facility is known to the participants and would help to make the process more comfortable, I am asking for your cooperation in this project.

Please have your Board confirm agreement in a letter of approval sent to me at the return address. If you have any questions, please send an email to ahcompton@gmail.com or phone (204) 489-2214 and I'll return the message as soon as possible.

This research will contribute to a thesis that will be disseminated as a two-page executive summary that will be made available to all participants and to the Indian Family Centre, if interested. All participation in the research is voluntary; confidentiality will be maintained and participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. The thesis will be kept at the University of Winnipeg Graduate Studies office, the Faculty of Theology and the University of Winnipeg Library.

If possible, I would like to receive the Board's consent by May 1, 2013.

Sincerely,


Adel Compton



APPENDIX 7
Letter of Consent

Indian Family Centre
470 Selkirk Avenue
Winnipeg MB
R2W 2M5

Telephone: (204) 586-8393 Facsimile: (204) 582-3131 Email: indianfamilycentre@shawbiz.ca

April 25, 2013

Adele Compton
515-340 Waterfront Drive
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 0M3

Dear Adel

Thank you for your request to our board to access the Indian Family Centre for space to do your research.

Your thesis question, "What can the Winnipeg Aboriginal Youth Movement, 'Meet Me at the Bell Tower,' teach the church about new forms of spiritual, cultural and political community building? How might this group and others like this be serving as 'church' or a transformative spiritual community to young in ways that the church has failed to do?" is of great interest to us as well.

We hope that you would share with us a copy of your executive summary and we invite you to work out the details as to when you need the centre with Michele Visser.

All the best in your work!

Sincerely

Michele Visser
Director, on behalf of the board of Indian Family Centre



Application

00283 - Human Ethics Application - Final

01502 - RENEWED SPIRIT IN WINNIPEG'S NORTH END: AN EMERGING ABORIGINAL YOUNG ADULT CO-CREATIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL

Human Ethics

Status:	Awarded	Original Submitted Date:	05/23/2013 3:14 PM
		Last Submitted Date:	06/19/2013 12:36 PM

Applicant Information

Primary Investigator:

Last Name*	Compton	Middle Name	Adel
	<small>Last Name</small>		<small>First Name</small>
Primary Email:*	ahcompton@gmail.com		
Secondary Email:			
Primary Phone Number:*	204-489-2214		
Secondary Phone Number:			
Address:*	c/o Theology The University of Winnipeg 515 Portage Avenue Winnipeg		
Country:*	Canada	Manitoba <small>State/Province</small>	R3B 2E9 <small>Postal Code/Zip</small>

UW Academic Information

Appointment:*	Not Applicable	Session Start Date	Session End Date
UW Academic Rank:*	Not Applicable		
Faculty:*	Theology		
Department:*	Not Applicable		
Colleague Id:			

Organization Information

Name:*	University of Winnipeg - Research Team
--------	--

Phone: 204-786-9137

1.0 Project Details

1.1 Project Dates: 05/01/2013 05/01/2014
Start Date End Date

1.2 Project Title: RENEWED SPIRIT IN WINNIPEG'S NORTH END: AN EMERGING ABORIGINAL YOUNG ADULT CO-CREATIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL

1.3 Researcher Type: Graduate Student
Indicate the affiliation of the principal researcher to the University of Winnipeg If Other, please specify

Is the proposed research funded?

1.4 Project Funding: No
If Yes or Pending, complete the Funding section below

Researcher's Supervisor (if applicable)

Select from the following drop down list:

1.5 Supervisor: Jane Barter Moulaison

If the person is not in this list, enter the name and institutional affiliation in the fields below:

Last Name

First Name

Institutional Affiliation:

Project Objectives and Design

Provide a summary of the proposed research project.

The summary of your research project should clearly indicate the problem or issue to be addressed, the potential contribution of the research to the advancement of knowledge and (where relevant) the wider social benefit. Use language that is understandable to the general public.

1.6 Project Summary: Aboriginal young adult led community engagement from marginalized North End Winnipeg grounds my thesis question: What can the Winnipeg Aboriginal Young Adult Movement, "Meet Me at the Bell Tower," (MMBT) teach about new forms of spiritual, cultural and political community building? How might this group and others like this be serving as transformative spiritual community to Aboriginal youth? This research question is significant to raise awareness of emerging positive role models for North End Aboriginal youth, to learn what motivates and sustains their activities, to counter negative stereotypes, and to discern better ways for community, church and society to be in mutually beneficial relationships going forward.

Please describe (150 words max)

For Biomedical research, indicate the type of study.

1.7 Type of Study: Qualitative Study

Provide a description of the proposed research project including study objectives, context,

methodology, procedures, etc.

Footnotes and references are not required and best not included here.

1.8 Objectives:

North End Winnipeg renewal led by Aboriginal young adults draws heavily on traditional Indigenous spiritual and cultural sources and reaches forward through effective use of social media.

This qualitative research aims to contribute scholarship where none currently exists. Aboriginal young adult led co-creative intergenerational leadership in Winnipeg's North End offers a model developing local solutions to a history of oppression, marginalization, impoverishment, and silenced collective Aboriginal voices. Consultation with the young adults has been ongoing to design a qualitative research process respecting their experience, knowledge and responsive organizational development innovations. This research project aims to share knowledge of this movement with community, church and society to support positively engaged community-minded young adults contradicting negative stereotypes and regular media reports highlighting Aboriginal deficits.

Please describe (100 words max)

1.9 Context/Literature:

Many Canadian studies document a consistent link between historic trauma experienced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada and an emotional legacy of "relationship indicators" in exceedingly higher than non-Aboriginal incidences of addictions, domestic abuse, suicide and poverty.

Compared to non-Aboriginal children and youth, Aboriginal children and youth lack equal opportunities from birth to death. They experience less stability from their parents, homes and communities, are more likely to be sexually abused, to spend time in care of Child and Family Services, to drop out of school, to have limited employment opportunities or to choose suicide. School curriculums and post-secondary education may further disempower Aboriginal youth.

Aboriginal school dropouts who can't find employment are at high risk of becoming addicted, commercialized in the sex trade, gang-recruited and incarcerated. The escalating numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women highlights a continuous community grief and escalation of fear for personal safety.

For Aboriginal children, youth, and young adults the literature does not identify cause for hope for life. Community, church and social programs have not addressed core systemic gaps reinforcing hopelessness.

Winnipeg's North End young adults ask why this is and rally friends, family and neighbours to stop the violence and find a better way ahead. Their story is co-creating communal hope that life can get better.

Please describe (250 words max)

1.10 Methods:

Community engagement with these youth leaders has been ongoing. Consultation about doing this research named gathering primary resources through individual interviews and a focus group interview of those directly involved in shaping this movement as appropriate. An Aboriginal colleague familiar with the youth, their gatherings and how to respond with appropriate emotional support in the event of any surfacing mental discomfort will be present for all interviews. We identified the Indian Family Centre as familiar space to do the interviews and permission has been obtained. All interviews will be audio recorded. If interview questions or discussion generates any mental discomfort immediate support is available through the Aboriginal colleague described above as well as myself.

Thirteen participants will be invited to find seven to ten participants. Participants are free to withdraw by notifying the researcher orally, in person, or by email with written notification. Participants in this research will be asked to complete a consent form which includes an explanation of the project's purpose, methodology and reporting process. All aspects of the Ethics Review process will be completed prior to initiating the project. Participants are all adults self-identified as Aboriginal. Their identities will be kept confidential as much as possible. There is the possibility that some identities may be deduced since they have been publicly speaking and advocating in many media situations for at least two years and have publicized social media access. These young adult leaders were consulted in designing the research. They reflected their hope that the research would focus more on the merits of their collective work, rather than individual accomplishments. There was no concern should some identities be deduced.

The investigator will gather all the interview data and collate it into themes, effective strategies, promising strategies not yet implemented, and newly imagined strategies / new ways of implementing former ideas with strengthened networking ideas across cultures co-creating positive change.

A two page executive summary report will be reviewed with participants prior to the final thesis findings being published. The completed thesis will be presented to Faculty and copies made available to the Faculty of Theology, Graduate Studies and The University of Winnipeg.

Please describe (250 words max)

**1.11 Knowledge
Mobilization/Dissemination:**

I anticipate findings will name inequalities of opportunities for North End Aboriginal youth as compared to middle class youth from other parts of Winnipeg. Findings will offer a young adult perspective on what is working, what is not working and how things could be improved with youth and young adult input around creative resource sharing, effective partnerships, and effective use of social media within and beyond the North End community. In addition knowledge of the impact of reclamation of a traditional sacred worldview of the Indigenous peoples as it relates to their perspective of positive self-identity, autonomy, voice, healthy relationships and creating safety in community may be shared. A hope is that youth and young adults generating solutions to immediate problems of violence, overwhelming grief, youth suicides, homelessness etc. can offer constructive ideas for effectively engaging mutually beneficial partnerships strengthening a healthier network of accessible resources for Aboriginal children, youth, and young adults going forward.

Research results will report the experience, values and directions identified by the North End Aboriginal young adults as key to transforming the lived experience of oppression to co-creating positive opportunities Aboriginal youth need to find their place in local community and Canadian society.

An executive summary of results will be shared with participants prior to publishing the final thesis report. The participants will also be invited to the final presentation. There is agreement that the final thesis report will be made publicly available through the Faculty of Theology, Graduate Studies and the University of Winnipeg Library.

Please describe (250 words max)

Review

Indicate the type of review you are requesting.

Note: 1 Year Expedited and 2-2-1 Expedited reviews are available only for minimal risk projects. Full review is required for moderate risk projects. See Policies and Procedures for definitions and criteria.

Review Type:⁴ 1 Year Expedited Review

If selecting a 2-2-1 review, indicate why this type of ethics review is necessary for your research.

2-2-1 Review Justification:

Other Approvals

Indicate if all or part of the proposed research has or will receive ethics approval from other Canadian Research Ethics Boards or Canadian Institutions.

Additional Ethics Approval:⁴

If yes to the above, specify and attach letters of institutional approval (pdf format) in the attachment section at the end of this application. Project Details Attachments or confirm that these will be submitted to the Research Office prior to initiating your research.

e.g., school division, university, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

Is this study being conducted under a publicly declared emergency?

Please refer to Chapter 6 Section D - Research Ethics Review during Publicly Declared Emergencies of the TCPS-2 document for further information.

⁴ No

If Yes, are you the lead investigator for this study?

Yes

Will any part of the research take place outside of Canada?

If Yes, please provide location details in the section below.

⁴ No

Research Locations Outside of Canada

Research Team

Funding

2.0 Conflict of Interest

2.1 Are any of the investigators or their family receiving any personal remuneration from the funding of this study that is not accounted for in the study budget?

Personal Remuneration:⁴ No
Including investigator payments and recruitment incentives but excluding trainee remuneration or graduate student stipends

2.2 Do any of the investigators or their immediate family have any proprietary interests in the product under study or the outcome of the research?

Proprietary Interest: No
Including patents, trademarks, copyrights and licensing agreements

2.3 Is there any compensation for this study that is affected by the study outcome?

Compensation: No

2.4 Do any of the investigators or their immediate family have equity interest in the sponsoring company?

Equity Interest: No
This does not include mutual funds

2.5 Do any of the investigators or their immediate family receive payments of other sorts, from this sponsor ?

Other Payment: No
e.g., grants, compensation in the form of equipment or supplies, retainers for ongoing consultation and honoraria

2.6 Are any of the investigators or their immediate family, members of the sponsor's board of Directors, Scientific Advisory Panel or comparable body?

Governance: No

2.7 Is there any other relationship, financial or non-financial, that could be construed as a conflict of interest?

Other Relationship: No

2.8 If the answer to any of the above questions is Yes, provide further explanation and evidence of ethical acceptability.

Summary:

3.0 Participant Information

3.1 Does your research involve contact with a living person or persons?

Participant Indicator: Yes

3.2 Describe the participant(s) to be recruited or population about whom personally identifiable information will be collected.

Description:

The plan is to approach as many as thirteen young adult Aboriginal leaders to have at least seven to ten participants to conduct this qualitative research. I anticipate a mix of male and female participants. These young adult participants will be requested to attend an individual interview from 45 minutes to an hour in duration. A focus group interview with their peers lasting 1-2 hours will be done after all the individual interviews are completed.

It is anticipated that all participants will be residents of the North End living in the community. Thirteen participants will be invited to participate in person. Participants are free to withdraw by notifying the researcher orally, in person, or by email with written notification. Participants in this research will be asked to complete a consent form which includes an explanation of the project's purpose, methodology and reporting process. All aspects of the Ethics Review process will be completed prior to initiating the project.

Participants are all young adults, eighteen years of age or older who have self-identified as Aboriginal. Participants for the project will be volunteering to take part and signing consents before participating. Their identities will be kept confidential as much as possible. No personal names will be attached to individual responses in reporting data.

e.g., Adult users of social media

3.3 Describe and justify the inclusion criteria for participants.

Inclusion Criteria: Participants will be recruited for their participation in the Meet Me At the Bell Tower movement in order to gather primary resources around the research question: What can the Winnipeg Aboriginal Young Adult Movement "Meet me at the Bell Tower," teach about new forms of spiritual, cultural and political community building?

e.g., Criteria: age range, health status, gender
Justification: safety, uniformity, research methodology, statistical requirement

3.4 Describe and justify the exclusion criteria for participants.

Exclusion Criteria: This qualitative research project is set up to create safety and respect for the Aboriginal participants. All participants for this qualitative research will be at least eighteen years of age.

3.5 Will this study involve any group(s) where non-participants are present?

Non-participant: No
For example, classroom research might involve groups which include participants and non-participants

If Yes, answer the following:

3.6 What measures will be taken to ensure that non-participants and their data are not included in the study?

Non-participant Exclusion:

3.7 Describe how appropriate activities for non-participants will be provided.

Non-participant Activities:

3.8 What measures will be taken to address discomfort or disadvantage, if any, arising out of non-participation?

Non-participant Mitigation:

4.0 Aboriginal Community

4.1 Does this research project specifically focus on Aboriginal people?

Aboriginal Community: Yes

4.2 Is there a formal research agreement with the community?

Research Agreement: No

4.3 Provide details about the agreement or why an agreement is not in place or not required, etc.

Please attach any supporting documentation in the attachment section at the end of this application.

Agreement Details: The community being interviewed has no formal government affiliation or formal leadership. Thus concerns around ownership, control, access to and possession of research processes affecting the participants has been addressed through ongoing consultation and collaboration with the potential participants. The investigator has been part of this community engagement and shares the respect for human dignity being modelled by the young adult leaders. The methodology for the qualitative research has been shaped in consultation with the young adult leadership.
Adherence to all ethical standards defined by the University of Winnipeg through its Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans will guide the process for conducting this qualitative research project.

4.4 Does this research project involve obtaining consent from elders, leaders, or other community representatives?

Yes

If yes, provide details explaining how consent will be obtained and from whom. If no, explain why consent will not be sought.

Leadership Consent: Informed written consent will be obtained after i) sharing the purpose of the project, ii) how information will be used, iii) the degree of risk in participating, iv) how names will be kept anonymous if requested, v) how information will be made accessible to participants while maintaining privacy procedures and vi) how participants can withdraw from the study. Written consent will be obtained from all participants before the research project begins. Copies of consents will be given to participants to have contact information of the investigator, thesis supervisor and Ethics committees.

4.5 If leaders of the group will be involved in the identification of potential participants, provide details.

Leadership Involvement: Young adult leaders of the Meet Me at the Bell Tower group will help identify those who are part of their local leadership and meet the criteria of being young adults, eighteen and older.

4.6 If property or private information belonging to the group as a whole is studied or used, provide details.

Group Data: The Meet Me at the Bell Tower group creates shared information for public access through social media including a website, blog and Facebook. This information is publicly available.

4.7 If the research is designed to analyze or describe characteristics of Aboriginal people, provide details.

Group Analysis: This qualitative research project is designed to analyze the young Aboriginal adults co-creative leadership model as it is seen in the "Meet Me At the Bell Tower" movement.

4.8 If individuals are selected to speak on behalf of, or otherwise represent the group, provide details.

Group Representation: Each participant will have the opportunity to speak individually of his/her experience. When all individual interviews are completed, the entire group of participants will be gathered together as part of a Focus Group interview.

4.9 Provide information regarding compliance with relevant frameworks for research involving Aboriginal groups or communities (e.g., OCAP)

Framework: The community of interest for this research has no local government affiliation. It is a loosely organized emerging group without formal leadership. This research aims to respect participants by consulting them in designing methodology, sharing the executive summary prior to publication, inviting participants to be at the final thesis presentation and making them aware of where the research will be accessible and available once published. Having their knowledge documented publicly is a mutually beneficial outcome for participants, their community, the investigator and wider society.

Informed written consent will be obtained after i) sharing the purpose of the project, ii) how information will be used, iii) the degree of risk in participating, iv) how names will be kept anonymous, v) how information will be made accessible to participants while maintaining privacy procedures and vi) how participants can withdraw from the study. Written consent will be obtained from all participants before the research project begins. Copies of consents will be given to participants to have contact information of the investigator, thesis supervisor and Ethics committees.

While the researcher aims to keep anonymity for the project, it may be impossible to ensure due to their high profile in their community. There is the possibility that some of these youth leaders' identities may be deduced since they have been publicly speaking, advocating in many media situations for at least two years and have facebook and website access. The Meet Me at the Bell Tower leaders were consulted in designing the research and the option of identifying participants was discussed. The young adults reflected their hope that the research would focus more on the merits of their collective work, rather than focusing on who has done what. In discussions preparing for this project young adult leaders expressed no concern should some identities be deduced.

4.10 Provide information on how final results of the study will be shared with the participating community.

Sharing Results: Gathered data and findings will be written up in a two page executive summary report for review with participants prior to the final thesis findings being published. Participants will be invited to the completed thesis presentation to Faculty and copies made available to the Faculty of Theology, Graduate Studies and The University of Winnipeg.

e.g., via band office, special presentation, deposit in community school.

5.0 Other Communities

5.1 Does this research involve other self-governed communities or groups?

Community Indicator: No
e.g., Hutterite colonies, communes

5.2 Is there a formal research agreement with the community?

Research Agreement: No

5.3 Provide details about the agreement or why an agreement is not in place, not required, etc.

Please attach any supporting documentation in the attachment section at the end of this application.

Agreement Details:

5.4 Does this research project involve obtaining consent from leaders or other community representatives?

No

Provide details:

Leadership Consent:

5.5 If leaders of the group will be involved in the identification of potential participants, provide details.

Leadership Involvement:

5.6 If property or private information belonging to the group as a whole is studied or used, provide details.

Group Data:

5.7 If the research is designed to analyze or describe characteristics of the group, provide details.

Group Analysis:

5.8 If individuals are selected to speak on behalf of, or otherwise represent the group, provide details.

Group Representation:

5.9 Provide information on how final results of the study will be shared with the participating community.

Sharing Results:

e.g., special presentation, deposit in community school

6.0 Risk/Benefit Analysis**Risk Analysis**

6.1 Indicate the level of risk associated with this research.

Level: Minimal Risk

6.2 Does the research involve any potential risks or discomforts listed below?

Yes

If Yes, complete the section below:

Potential Physical Risks and Discomforts:

Fatigue: No
Participants might feel physical fatigue, e.g., sleep deprivation

Stress: No
Participants might feel physical stress, e.g., cardiovascular stress tests

Injury: No
Participants might sustain injury, infection, side-effects or complications

Potential Psychological, Emotional, Social and Other Risks and Discomforts:

Stress: Yes
Participants might feel psychologically or emotionally stressed, demeaned, embarrassed, worried, anxious, scared or distressed, e.g., description of painful or traumatic events

Fatigue: No
Participants might feel psychological or mental fatigue, e.g., intense concentration required

Social: No
Participants might experience cultural or social risk, e.g., loss of privacy or status or damage to reputation

Economic: No
Participants might be exposed to economic or legal risk, e.g., non-anonymized workplace surveys

6.3 Provide details of the risks and discomforts associated with the research.

Risk Description: I do not anticipate emotional trauma to those participating in this research. However, the potential for some interview questions and discussions to generate mental discomfort exists.

e.g., health, cognitive or emotional factors, socio-economic status, physiological or health conditions

6.4 Describe how you will manage and minimize risks and discomforts, as well as mitigate harm.

Risk Management: As noted in Q1.10 participants have some familiarity with me as a non-Aboriginal community supporter at the Meet Me at the Bell Tower event. They know my background as a minister respecting traditional and Christian teachings and my previous experience as a registered nurse. Since this research involves Aboriginal young adults, additional care is being taken to conduct interviews in familiar space of the Indian Family Centre where the weekly gatherings are held. In addition, individual interviews will occur with an Aboriginal colleague, known to the participants and respected by the community for knowledge, skills and experience supporting situations where mental discomfort has presented. For the Focus Group interview, a traditional Circle format will be used and an Aboriginal colleague will also be present. The combined skills of the Aboriginal colleague and myself will minimize any risks and be immediately able to respond to any discomforts for participants.

6.5 If your study has the potential to incidentally identify conditions warranting medical attention, describe the arrangements made to try to assist these individuals. Explain if no arrangements have been made.

Risk Mitigation: n/a

6.6 If any data were released, could it reasonably place participants at risk of criminal or civil law suits?

No

If Yes, provide details:

n/a

Benefit Analysis

6.7 Describe the benefits (direct or indirect) to the participants and/or the participant's community, from their involvement in the project. If using human biomaterials, describe the benefit to society.

Benefit Description: The participants' commitment to leading their community to better know one another is a story of young adult leaders encouraging collective commitment to improving safety and quality of life in North End Winnipeg. This project affirms the vision, planning, strategizing and organizing efforts of Aboriginal young adults in Winnipeg's North End.

6.8 Describe the benefits to the scientific/scholarly community or society that would justify involvement of participants or human research models in this study.

Academic Benefit: The scholarly community and Canadian society predominantly reports negative statistics and stereotypes regarding the lives of Aboriginal children, youth and young adults. This qualitative research project is designed to reflect the positive pro-active insights and activities of young Aboriginal adults committed to improving life in Winnipeg's North End impoverished community.

6.9 Benefits/risks analysis: Describe the relationship of benefits to risk of participation in the research.

Benefit/Risk Analysis: Participants in this qualitative research study can benefit by being recognized for contributing their young adult Aboriginal relevant positive community-building organizational theory and practice for effective 21st century leadership. These young adults are effectively linking traditional values of respect for human relationships with use of social media to co-create hope for a new way forward.

7.0 Recruitment

7.1 Are there any recruitment activities for this study?

Recruitment Indicator: Yes

If Yes, describe the activities that will be used when recruiting individuals for this study.

An ongoing relationship of the investigator supporting the young adults community engagement activities has led to the plan for this qualitative research project to document what has emerged to date.

Recruitment Method

7.2 How will potential participants be identified?

Identification: Aboriginal young adult leaders contributing to the "Meet Me At the Bell Tower" movement are known to each other and to the community. The criteria for those eighteen and older will identify those eligible to participate.

7.3 Outline how individuals will be approached for participation or screened for eligibility.

Approach: I will arrange to meet with all the potential participants and explain the purpose, methods and reporting process required to complete this qualitative research project. Consent forms will be available for those wanting to sign their voluntary agreement to participate.
It will be emphasized that participation is voluntary. They can withdraw at any time.

e.g., response to advertising, websites, email, listservs, pre-existing records or existing registries, physician or community organization, referrals, longitudinal study

7.4 Indicate the method by which individuals will obtain details about the research in order to make a decision about participating.

Method: Researchers will contact potential participants

Describe the above in more detail.

Once this project has met Ethics requirements, I will arrange with two main young adult leaders to meet with the whole potential group of participants to explain the research purpose, benefits and risks to participants, methods to be used, and the reporting process.
I will have consent forms available for any who are ready and willing to volunteer their participation in this research.

7.5 If contact will be made through an intermediary (including snowball sampling), select one or more of the following:

Note: Selecting answer #3 is not normally an accepted form of contact for an Ethics protocol. It would be accepted only in minimal risk applications and should never compromise informed consent.

Third Party Contact Method:

Select all that apply

7.6 Explain why the intermediary is appropriate and describe what steps will be taken to ensure participation is voluntary.

Third Party Justification:

The two young adult co-leaders of the Meet Me at the Bell Tower value respect for relationships as priority for all their activities. Information about the project has had their input to help design a process that will benefit them. However, the information will also be presented by the researcher with an emphasis on the fact that giving consent is an individual choice.

This is also why thirteen potential participants are being approached. The young adults have expressed interest in this project. However, seven to ten would be adequate to do the study. There is room for some to choose not to participate or to withdraw if they change their mind after they receive all the information.

Participants are not being pressured or coerced to participate.

e.g., if you are asking instructors to provide contact information for their students

7.7 Provide the locations where recruitment will occur, if applicable.

Location: North End Bell Tower or Indian Family Centre
e.g., particular schools, shopping malls, clinics

7.8 If recruitment will take place in a group situation, describe what measures will be taken to guard against peer pressure influencing an individual's decision to participate or not.

Peer Pressure: The participants will be young adults. They will have received information about risks and benefits of participating. Finally, they will be informed that participation is voluntary and withdrawal is an option at any time.

7.9 How many participants do you hope to recruit?

Recruitment Number: 7

7.10 If this is a multi-site study, how many participants are expected to be enrolled by all investigators at all sites in the entire study?

Total Number:

7.11 Provide justification for your choice of sample size.

Justification: This is a suitable number for this qualitative research project.

Pre-Existing Relationships

7.12 Will potential participants be recruited through pre-existing relationships with researchers ?

Relationship Indicator: Yes
e.g., students, employees, family members, clients

7.13 If yes, identify any relationship between the researchers and participants that could compromise the freedom to decline, e.g., professor-student. Describe the measures that will be taken to ensure that there is no undue pressure on the potential participants to agree to the study.

Relationship Description: Potential participants may recognize me as an attender at the Meet Me at the Bell Tower activities and one who listens and values young adult leadership. Participants have the voluntary choice to participate or not.

7.14 For biomedical research involving therapies, procedures and interventions, describe the standard of care in Manitoba for this patient population.

Standard of Care: n/a

Secondary Use of Data

8.1 Does this study involve secondary use of data?

* No

8.2 List all original sources.

Source:

9.0 Informed Consent Determination

9.1 Indicate who will provide informed consent for this study (select all that apply).

Depending on the research topic, some categories of participant may lack the capacity to give informed consent, e.g., children or individuals with cognitive impairments.

Additional information on the informed consent process is available at website link- link to the policy and procedure on the RO website

Consent Determination:⁴ 1. All participants have capacity to give free and informed consent
Select all that apply

9.2 If prior consent is not required or has been obtained by a third party, provide justification.

Justification: All participants will be informed of the purpose, methodology and reporting process for this qualitative research before voluntarily completing a consent form.

9.3 If a participant wishes to withdraw, end, or modify their participation in the research or certain aspects of the research, describe how their participation would be ended or changed.

Termination:⁴ The participant can withdraw from the research at any time. Participation is voluntary.

9.4 Describe the circumstances and limitations of data withdrawal from the study, including the last point at which it can be done.

Data Withdrawal:⁴ Participation in this research is voluntary. No data will be obtained before consent forms have been signed. If a participant is interviewed and then chooses to withdraw prior to the Focus Group, the individual interview data will be eliminated.

9.5 Indicate how participants or their authorized representatives may follow up with researchers and/or UHREB to ask questions or obtain information about the study.

Followup:⁴ The consent form contains contact information for the researcher, supervisor and the University Human Research Ethics Board (UHREB). Each participant will be given a copy of the consent form to retain with the contact information.
If you have any questions about the research and/or wish to receive a summary of the study's results please contact Adel Compton at email: ahcompton@gmail.com or phone 204 489-2214 or Dr. Jane Barter Moulaison at email: j.bartermoulaison@uwinnipeg.ca or by phone at 204 789-1453.
* SCEHRS contact information:
Senate Committee on Ethics in Human Research and Scholarship Program Officer
Phone: (204) 786-9058 or ethics@uwinnipeg.ca

For Authorized Representative, Third Party Consent, Assent answer the following:

9.6 Explain why participants lack capacity to give informed consent.

Consent Capacity:

e.g., age, mental or physical condition

9.7 Will participants who lack capacity to give full informed consent be asked to give assent?

If applicable, please ensure that a copy of assent form is attached in the attachment section at the end of this application.

Assent:

If Yes, provide details:

9.8 In cases where participants (re)gain capacity to give informed consent during the study, how will they be asked to provide consent on their own behalf?

Method:

9.9 What assistance will be provided to participants, or those consenting on their behalf, who have special needs?

Special Needs:

e.g., non-English speakers, visually impaired

9.10 Explain how the study information will be communicated and participant consent/assent will be documented.

Consent Documentation: Participant consent forms will be signed and retained with all original research materials for five years.
Gathered data and findings will be written up in a two page executive summary report for review with participants prior to the final thesis findings being published. Everyone contributing to the process of this research will be invited to the final thesis presentation where conclusions and recommendations will be shared. A completed copy of the thesis will be provided to the University of Winnipeg Faculty of Theology, the Office of Graduate Studies, and the University of Winnipeg Library for future reference.

9.11 How is participant consent to be indicated and documented. Select all that apply.

Informed Consent Method: Signed Consent Form (please attach a copy printed on UW letterhead)

10.0 Deception or Partial Disclosure**10.1 Does this research project include the use of deception or partial disclosure?**

No

10.2 Describe the information that will be withheld from, or the misinformation that will be provided to, the participants.

Description:

10.3 Provide a rationale for withholding information or misinforming the participants.

Rationale:

10.4 Indicate how and when participants will be informed of the concealment and/or deception. Describe the extent of debriefing.

Disclosure:

10.5 Describe the procedure for giving the participants an opportunity to provide fully informed consent after debriefing. Explain if debriefing and re-consent are not viable.

Consent:

10.6 If applicable, indicate how participants may follow up with researchers for further debriefing.

Follow-up:

11.0 Reimbursements and Incentives

11.1 Will any participant in this study receive reimbursement or incentive for their participation?

A reimbursement includes any reimbursement for costs associated with participating in this study, e.g., meals or parking. An incentive would include prize draw, gift card, cash payment etc.

' No

11.2 Describe in detail the expenses for which participants will be reimbursed, the value of the reimbursements and the process, if applicable.

Reimbursement Description: n/a

e.g., participants will receive a cash reimbursement for parking, at the rate of \$12.00 per visit for up to three visits for a total value of \$36.00

11.3 If personal information will be collected to reimburse or pay participants, describe the information to be collected and how privacy will be maintained.

Reimbursement Personal Details: n/a

11.4 Select the incentive types that participants may receive. Select all that apply.

Incentive Type: Not Applicable
Select all that apply

If Other, please specify

11.5 Excluding prize draws, what is the maximum value of the incentives offered to an individual throughout the research?

Incentive Value: Not Applicable

11.6 Provide details of the value, including the likelihood (odds) of winning for prize draws and lotteries.

Incentive Details: n/a

11.7 Justify the value of the incentives offered.

If incentives are offered to participants, they should not be so large or attractive as to constitute coercion.

Justification: n/a

12.0 Anonymity and Confidentiality

12.1 Will the identify of participants or human biomaterials be protected both during and after research?

Identity Protection: Yes

12.2 Indicate how privacy will be maintained.

Data Privacy Method:⁴ **Anonymous** - the information NEVER had identifiers associated with it and risk of identification of individuals is low or very low

12.3 Will the researcher or study team be able to identify any of the participants at any stage of the study?

Participant Identification:⁴ Yes

12.4 If applicable, describe the extent of your confidentiality obligations, e.g., limits on what can and can not be disclosed.

Confidentiality:⁴ Related to point 12.2. The researcher will code all participants responses to provide confidentiality and anonymity. Data will be kept confidential but the researcher may be unable to control that participants will be anonymous due to their small number and high profile of activities with both public media and social media.

12.5 How will the principal investigator ensure that all study personnel are aware of their responsibilities concerning participants' privacy and the confidentiality of their information?

Confidentiality Awareness:⁴ As principal investigator I am taking steps to ensure confidentiality of participants' information during the study. Participant names will not appear in the study. Participant responses will be grouped by themes for reporting purposes. No one will have access to the data except the principal investigator and supervisor. The research data will be password protected.

12.6 What measures will be taken to protect the anonymity and/or confidentiality of your participants? Explain how participants will be informed about any limits on your ability to protect this information.

Protection Measures:⁴ Participants information will be assigned a code and responses will be reported according to common themes to provide anonymity and confidentiality.
I will meet with the participants to explain the steps taken to ensure anonymity. I will re-emphasize to participants the possibility for some public deducing identities if they regularly use the young adults' public website, blogs and Facebook posts.
The young adults were consulted regarding anonymity or publicity on this project and no concern was expressed if identities were deduced.

13.0 Interviews, Focus Groups, and Surveys**13.1 Does this research involve an interview, focus group, and/or survey?**

⁴ Yes

13.2 Are any of the questions potentially of a sensitive nature?

No

If yes, provide details:

13.3 Will you be using audio/video recording equipment and/or capture of sound or images for the study?

Yes

If yes, provide details:

Individual and Focus Group interviews will be audio recorded. This provides data for the researcher to transcribe and analyze following the interview data-gathering process.

14.0 Use or Production of Creative Works**14.1 Does this research involve the use or creation of media or other works?**

' No
e.g., essays, pictures, audio/video recordings, course material

14.2 If Yes, who will have access to this material?

Access:

14.3 In cases where you will be sharing materials for verification or feedback, what steps will you take to protect the dignity of those who may be represented or identified?

Interim Feedback:

14.4 When publicly reporting data or disseminating results of your study that include materials you have collected, what steps will you take to protect the dignity of those who may be represented or identified?

Public Reporting:

e.g., presentation, reports, articles, books, curriculum material, performances

14.5 Does this research project involve the use of materials created by participants?

No

14.6 Explain if consent obtained at the beginning of the study will be sufficient, or if it will be necessary to obtain consent at different times, for different stages of the study or for different types of data.

Consent:

e.g., obtaining consent from individuals who are depicted in the materials created by participants

14.7 At what stage, if any, can a participant withdraw his/her material?

Withdrawal:

14.8 What opportunities are provided to participants to choose to be identified as the author/creator of the materials created in situations where it makes sense to do so?

Identification:

14.9 If necessary, what arrangements will you make to return original materials to participants?

Return:

15.0 Internet-based Interaction**15.1 Does this research project involve interaction with participants via the Internet?**

' No

15.2 Will your interaction with participants occur in private spaces where there is a reasonable

expectation of privacy?

No
e.g., members-only chat rooms, social networking sites, small discussions

15.3 Will these interactions occur in public spaces(s) where you will post questions initiating and/or maintaining interaction with participants?

No

15.4 Describe how permission to use the site(s) as a research site will be obtained, if applicable.

Site Permission: n/a

15.5 If you are using a third-party research tool, website survey software, transaction log tools, screen capturing software, or masked survey sites, how will you ensure the security of data gathered at the site?

Data Security: n/a

15.6 If you do not plan to identify yourself and your position as a researcher to the participants from the onset of the research study, explain why you are not doing so and at what point you will disclose that you are a researcher. Provide details of debriefing procedures, if any, and indicate if participants will be given a way to opt out, if applicable.

Disclosure: n/a

15.7 How will you protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants who may be identified by email addresses, IP addresses, and other identifying information that may be captured by the system during your interactions with these participants?

Privacy: n/a

16.0 Safeguarding Information**Personal Identifying Information****16.1 Indicate which if any of the following Personal Identifiers will be collected during the course of this study, including recruitment. Select all that apply:**

Personal Identifiers:^a Birth Date - full
Select all that apply

If Other, please specify

16.2 If collecting personal identifiers, explain why it is necessary to collect this information.

Rationale:^a To ensure participants meet criteria of being young adult participants for the purposes of the study.

16.3 If applicable, explain when and how identifying information will be removed.

Removal:^a All participants will be referred to throughout the study by code without the personal identifiers.

16.4 If applicable, specify what identifiable information will be retained once data collection is complete, and explain why retention is necessary. Include the retention of master lists that link participant identifiers with anonymized data.

Retention:^a Once data collection is complete, information will offer only a general summary of participants : number of males/ females, age range from North End Winnipeg.

16.5 If applicable, describe if the data in this study will be linked with data associated with other studies or with data belonging to another organization.

Data Association:⁴ n/a

e.g., within a data repository

17.0 Data Storage

17.1 Describe how research data will be stored, e.g., digital files, hard copies, audio recordings. Specify the physical location and how it will be secured to protect confidentiality and privacy.

Data Storage:⁴ Research data of all individual interviews and the focus group audiofile materials will be kept confidential in the investigator's secure dropbox file accessible only to the investigator. When the thesis is completed, any written materials will be kept for five years in my personal locked filing cabinet.

e.g., study documents are kept in a locked filing cabinet and computer files are password protected

17.2 If you plan to destroy your data, describe when and how this will be done.

Data Disposal:⁴ Five years following completion of the thesis, written data stored will be shredded and digital files erased.

17.3 If the research data will become part of a data repository or if this research involves the creation of a research database or registry for future research use, provide details.

Data Usage:⁴ n/a

17.4 How long will the research data be retained?

University policy requires that you keep your data for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the study but there is no limit on data retention.

Data Retention:⁴ five years

17.5 Specify where the database(s) will be located.

Specify if the database will be under Canadian or foreign jurisdiction. Note that data housed on US servers fall under the US Patriot Act. At a minimum, participants should be informed of this potential Breach in confidentiality.

Location:² password protected personal computer

17.6 Describe who will have access to the database and how that access is determined.

Access:⁴ Investigator

17.7 Will identifying information be stored within the database?

⁴ Yes

17.8 If the database is to be maintained locally, what steps have been taken to ensure the security of the database is upheld?

Security:⁴ Database information will be password protected for which I have sole access.

17.9 Indicate who is responsible for the database(s).

Responsibility:⁴ Investigator

17.10 Are there standard operating procedures for the database management, use and access? If Yes, attach in the attachment section at the end of this application.

No

18.0 Human Biological Material

18.1 Does this research project involve Human Biological Material?

Human Biological Material: No

18.2 Indicate if this study will involve any one of the following:

Material Sample Type: Not Applicable
Select all that apply

If Other, please specify

18.3 Indicate the biological material that will be studied.

Description: n/a

e.g., body tissues, fluids - be specific

18.4 Describe how the material will be collected.

Collection Method: n/a

18.5 Identify the person(s) or institution that collected the biological materials.

Collector: n/a

18.6 Describe how the material will be stored.

Storage Method: n/a

18.7 Indicate how long the material will be stored.

Length of Storage: n/a

18.8 Describe where the material will be stored.

Storage Location: n/a

Include information if the specimen will be sent out of the province

18.9 Specify all intended uses of collected material.

Biological Material Use: n/a

18.10 Indicate if there will be a code that allows linkage of the specimens back to the original study and/or the patient's clinical records.

Specimen Linkage: No

If yes, specify how specimens will be coded to protect confidentiality and indicate who will maintain the link to identifying information.

19.0 BioHazard Safety**19.1 Does this research project involve Biohazard Safety?**

' No

19.2 Indicate if your research will involve the use of one or more of the following. If you answer Yes to any of these, provide details below.**a) Risk group 2,3 or 4 viruses, bacteria, fungi, parasites or eukaryotic cell lines**

No

b) Environmental specimens suspected to contain risk group 2, 3 or 4 microbes

No

c) Large-scale single volume culture in excess of 10 litres for any microbe or eukaryotic cell line

No

d) Microbial toxins

No

e) Human clinical specimens, including blood or other body fluids or primary culture of human cells

No

f) Xenotransplant studies involving vertebrate donors and/or recipients

No

g) Genetic manipulation involving virulence genes from risk group 2, 3 or 4 microbes, mammalian oncogenes, mammalian cytokine or interleukin genes or microcide resistance genes

No

h) Genetic manipulations involving the use of recombinant vector systems base on lentivirus, adenovirus, retrovirus or herpes virus backbones

No

19.3 If you answered YES to any of the above, describe in more detail

Description:

20.0 Application Attachments

Attachment	Description	File Name	Type	File Size
Letter of Institutional Approval	Letter of approval for interviews from Indian Family Centre	Scan 1.jpeg	jpeg	74 KB
Conflict of Interest				51 KB
Aboriginal Community				51

Agreement Details				KB
Other Communities Agreement Details				51 KB
Recruitment Materials				51 KB
Informed Consent Documents	Revised consent form to respond to reviewer's comments June 17,2013	APPENDIX A consent.doc	doc	51 KB
Interviews, Focus Groups, and Surveys - Protocols				51 KB
Interviews, Focus Groups, and Surveys - Question Frameworks	Appendix B Questionnaire	APPENDIX B Questionnaire.doc	doc	26 KB
Interviews, Focus Groups, and Surveys - Survey Questions				51 KB
Biohazard Safety Approval				51 KB
Other Attachment 1				51 KB
Other Attachment 2				51 KB
Other Attachment 3				51 KB
Other Attachment 4				51 KB
Other Attachment 5				51 KB

Declaration

By checking I Agree below, I (the applicant/Principal Investigator):

- certify that the information provided in my ethics application and related documents is true, complete and accurate;
- attest that others listed on the application have agreed to be included;
- am familiar with and accept the terms and conditions set out in the University of Winnipeg's *Research Manual: Policies and Procedures*;
- am familiar with and accept the terms and conditions set out in the University of Winnipeg *Senate Committee on Ethics in Human Research and Scholarship (UHREB) Policies and Procedures*;
- am familiar with and agree to comply with the policies described in the *TCPS 2 - 2nd edition of Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*;
- will follow guidelines and procedures which ensure compliance with all relevant professional, University, provincial, national or international policies and regulations governing research involving human participants;
- understand that if there is any deviation from the project as originally approved, I must submit an amendment or reply to the UHREB for approval before implementing any such changes;
- will report to the Research Office, without delay, all adverse participant responses that exceed the levels anticipated and provided for in this application;
- have read and agree to comply with the Policy and Procedures on Integrity in Research and Scholarship.

I Agree: Yes

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