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Land-based Practice for Indigenous Health and Wellness in Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the cultural concept and role of the Land as healer in Indigenous communities in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut, and the importance of facilitating modern Land-based programs and activities for integrated health, education, and environmental outcomes. It describes a yet largely undefined field of professional practice currently being negotiated on the ground in communities. This valid form of integrative practice, centered in Indigenous pedagogy and wisdom, recognizes that people are intimately interwoven and connected with their traditional lands, and that directly cultivating this fundamental relationship can shape and influence all areas of interaction with society, including our health and wellness. Research methods were framed by an Indigenous methodology of narrative experience. Eleven Land-based practitioners were interviewed, and their narratives speak to the recognition of Land practice as an important part of individual and community resilience in the face of rapid colonial change and its subsequent challenges.

Preface

Members of the scientific community…must be puzzled by the types of problems addressed by professional designers and by the patterns of reasoning they employ.[1]

The subject matter of design is potentially *universal* in scope, because design thinking may be applied to any area of human experience.[2]

The problem for designers is to conceive and plan what does not yet exist, and this occurs in the context of the indeterminacy of *wicked problems*, before the final result is known.[3] .

Richard Buchanan, Wicked Problems in Design Thinking

[1] (Buchanan, 1995, p. 12)

[2] (p.15)

[3] (p.17)

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank all those amazing individuals who contributed their words and wisdom to this thesis; their stories and insights are invaluable and their relationships enduring. I would also like to thank all the other people I have met across the north over the past three years who have spontaneously trusted me with their stories of the Land. I would especially like to thank my Elders Be'sha Blondin, Francois Paulette, and Dene National Chief Bill Erasmus for their support throughout various stages of the project. I would like to thank my Graduate Supervisor Dr. Mary-Ellen Tyler for her guidance and confidence in my work and direction for this project. I would like to thank my family, Gaye Hanson, Mary Benjamin, Tee Wern Lim, Ugur Parlar, Stephanie Young, Susan Chatwood, Kester Reid, and all my work colleagues for their personal guidance and friendship throughout the research process. I would also like to thank Dr. Gregory Lowan-Trudeau for helping me frame my methodological approach and context early on. I would like to acknowledge the various communities, organizations, and institutes that provided input and support at various stages of the research process: the Institute for Circumpolar Health Research; Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre; the Nunavut Research Institute; the Dene Nation; Liard Aboriginal Women's Society; Kwanlin Dün First Nation Justice Department; the Tłı̨chǫ Government; the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board; Nunavut Parks and Special Places Division, Government of Nunavut; and the City of Yellowknife. Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the Faculty of Environmental Design at the University of Calgary for various bursaries and scholarships, and for being so supportive of northern-based Indigenous research. Máhsı cho, from the bottom of my heart.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated in loving memory to all those young people who have taken their own lives in our communities. You are loved, honoured, and missed. We are now ready to listen.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Definitions and Abbreviations

Definitions:

Aboriginal: A collective name for all of the original peoples of Canada and their descendants. Aboriginal Peoples in Canada consist of three groups – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. The term is used to describe the original peoples as a collective and is not used to describe only one or two of the groups.

Indigenous: Refers to Aboriginal people in an international context. Indigenous means 'native to the area' and its meaning is similar to Aboriginal Peoples or First Peoples. The term is used to recognize the place of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada's late-colonial era and also implies land tenure.[4]

Land: An all-encompassing term in Indigenous pedagogy, which includes all aspects of the natural world: plants, animals, ancestors, spirits, natural features, and environment (air, water, earth, minerals). The term is capitalized throughout the thesis to capture the deeper cultural meaning of the word. When not capitalized, is used in reference to a physical location or geographical concept.

Land-based: Land as a central feature or concept rooted in Indigenous pedagogy. When not capitalized, is used as a location in reference to a place away from established community centre or as a concept from a non-Indigenous lens.

On the land: Used as a reference to a location away from established community centres.

Healing: The process of achieving wellness and balance in all dimensions of health.

Health: Includes all aspects of holistic health: mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health embedded in individual, familial and community social networks.

Wellbeing: A state of being comfortable, happy, and healthy.

Mental health: Focusing on the mental dimension of health, and balancing it in relation to the integrated emotional, spiritual, and physical domains of wellness. Also acknowledges factors such as economic and social equity and wellbeing.

Land-based Health or Healing: Term used to designate a formal or informal health or healing practice, program, or service that takes place in a non-urban, rural, or remote location on a land base that has been intentionally spiritually cultivated to ensure the Land is honoured and

[4] http://www.naho.ca/publications/topics/terminology/

respected. The Land, as situated firmly in an Indigenous pedagogy, is understood to be an active host and partner to the person or people engaged in the healing process[5].

Abbreviations:

IK: Indigenous Knowledge, also referred to as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), or Traditional Knowledge (TK)

GNWT: Government of the Northwest Territories

YG: Government of the Yukon

GN: Government of Nunavut

NWT: Northwest Territories

[5] (Hanson, 2012)

Chapter 1. Introduction

> The wisdom encoded in the indigenous culture can provide answers to many questions; many seemingly intractable problems could be resolved by bringing traditional ideas and values back to life. Pre-contact indigenous societies developed regimes of conscience and justice that promoted the harmonious co-existence of humans and nature for hundreds of generations. As we move into a post-imperial age, the values central to those traditional cultures are the indigenous contribution to the reconstruction of a just and harmonious world. [6]
>
> Taiaiake Alfred, Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto

Research Positioning

An important aspect of research as an Indigenous person is the concept of positioning (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012). Essentially, *who am I and where do I situate myself within this research project?*

I am a Chipewyan Métis woman born and raised in the Northwest Territories, Canada. My grandparents on my mother's side were both Dene. They spoke Chipewyan as a first language and lived in the community of Fort Resolution, where my mom also grew up. My grandparents on my dad's side were Euro-Canadian with Italian-Irish and English ancestry. I had a mother and father who embraced the Dene lifestyle and belief system and I grew up with a sense of Dene teachings and understandings.

This doesn't mean I haven't struggled with a mixed identity, but I have realized that with this mixture comes the gift of inclusion and partnership. It is no longer us versus them, in Indigenous and settler realities, but instead 'we'. I have spent many years working and living in various northern communities and travelling to other parts of the North including the Yukon and

[6] (Alfred, 2009, p. 30)

Nunavut, meeting and chatting with all kinds of amazing northern people. I am an outdoor enthusiast and connecting with the Land has been an important part of my own healing journey as a second-generation residential school survivor.

I am an insider to the research process, as a Dene person, and an outsider to the research process among other First Nations groups in the Yukon and the Inuit in Nunavut. I am an outsider as an academic researcher and an insider as a friend and relative.[7]

Through work and personal pursuits, I have experience in different areas of Land-based practice. I spent the first six years of my career within the environmental management realm. Since then I have led outdoor and cultural programming for youth, worked at a wilderness addictions treatment program, and as a nature-based mentor for urban youth. I have had experience working in Circumpolar health research initiatives, as a project officer with mental health and addictions services, and currently work as a backcountry canoe guide and instructor. I also co-published work on the difficult issue of Indigenous suicide while writing this thesis (Redvers et al., 2015).

Most of all I'd like to think that I am a good listener, and have absorbed and witnessed as various Elders, practitioners, adult participants, and youth have expressed to me throughout the years how important Land-programs have been for their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. I can only hope to do their words justice here.

[7] This insider/outsider dynamic is discussed in more detail in the methods section.

Research Focus and Question

Based on a review of related literature (academic and grey) and established programs, interviews with key practitioners, and reflective practice, I develop a narrative examination of the practice of designing Indigenous Land-based programs in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut. In this context my primary research question is: What is the nature, scope of practice, and value of Land-based programming from the perspective of how it is currently being practiced on the land by Indigenous individuals in communities in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut? This includes: an examination of the concept of Land-based practice within a northern Canadian context; and the identification of successful practices and current challenges in this rapidly emerging field.

Research Background

As I sat in a Canadian health conference reflecting on the scope of health services, and the eagerness of those within various fields and departments to 'see change' and embrace Indigenous concepts for mental health services, I was struck by the immensity of the challenge of trying to bridge two seemingly unbridgeable worldviews of health into practical health services programs and funding regimes. This gap seems evident within the area of 'Land-based practice' which, presented in this research, includes a resurgence of Indigenous peoples' 'back' to Land-based activities and programs in the wake of colonial based separation. This movement is underlined by an Indigenous understanding of the importance of Land-based connection as a central component of Indigenous health and wellbeing. As I reflect on this challenge, I am

reminded of an apt quote by design scholar Richard Buchanan who said that "The new liberal art of design thinking is turning to the modality of *impossibility.* It points toward the impossibility of relying on any one of the sciences (natural, social, or humanistic) for adequate solutions to what are inherently *wicked problems* of design thinking" (1995, p. 19).

At this point I have searched the research literature for an explicit explanation of the connection between Indigenous health outcomes and time spent on the land in a modern day context. As a result, I have come to the conclusion that academic sources in the field of mental health have only started to attend to 'the Land connection' and its contribution to Indigenous health as a plausible contribution to improved health, education, and environmental outcomes, especially among youth. I realize now, after the field research, that going back to this fundamental Land-connection is entirely possible from an interdisciplinary lens.

I surmise if the history of colonization resulted in systematically removing and disconnecting Indigenous peoples from the Lands in which their culture and identity are based - and it is well established that this colonization process is the root of intergenerational trauma and continued health challenges in our communities (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003; Kral, 2012; Lavallee & Poole, 2009) - then one important part of regaining wellness must be about reconnecting with culture and identity at its most fundamental component, which is rooted in a Land-based relationship. This concept builds on the work of current Indigenous education scholars bringing Land-based pedagogy to the forefront (Simpson, 2014; Wildcat, McDonald, Irlabacher-Fox, & Coulthard, 2014) and focuses on its applications in the realm of health services and the cross-cutting disciplines of health, environmental studies, and education. This thesis argues that in order to rediscover this fundamental Land-based relationship, we must

experience it directly in the natural world, through practical Land activities and interactions that return us to the Land physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

The importance of cultivating opportunities for this Land-based relationship to occur in the reality of modern-day society is at the core of this thesis.

Rationale

Land-connection in the North continues to be facilitated non-formally in personal, family, and community cultural practices and enjoyment much like it was in the past. It is also currently being facilitated formally within modern education, health and justice systems, and environmental agencies through Land-based programs of various kinds. The facilitation of 'modern' programs has been taking place at the ground level for many years now; however the formal examination of these programs through knowledge translation of their practices and outcomes is only just beginning to be captured in the literature. This area of practice is therefore very new to academia with sparse literature to draw upon for research and the formation of health policy in Canada. As Ritchie, Wabano, Russell, Enosse and Young note:

> Despite mounting evidence in non-Aboriginal populations, there is a paucity of evidence related to the effectiveness of outdoor programming in Aboriginal populations. There is also a dearth of published research on how to design, implement, and evaluate these programs. Nevertheless, outdoor and land-based programming is prevalent in many Aboriginal communities, and it holds promise as a culturally relevant health promotion modality for Aboriginal adolescents on reserves (2014, p. 3).

Culturally relevant Land-based initiatives are positioned as enhancing resiliency in Indigenous populations, especially in youth, though this hasn't been thoroughly investigated.

Land-based initiatives include the development and implementation of various forms of programs and activities which include: traditional healing, treatment and wellness camps, Land-based educational programs incorporating both Western science and traditional knowledge, culture camps (incorporating harvesting and traditional skills), outdoor recreation and leadership, and variations of these different modalities combined (Janelle, Laliberte, & Ottawa, 2009; Laiti & Sorbye, 2013; Lowan, 2009; Noah, 2010; Ritchie et al., 2014; Ritchie et al., 2010; Simpson, 2002; Takano, 2005; Watson, Watson, Ljubic, Wallace-Smith, & Johnson, 2006). The one unifying aspect of these programs is that they are physically operating in natural landscapes located a distance away from communities and based on Indigenous understandings of a reciprocal and fundamental relationship with the natural environment, referred to here as 'on the land' or 'Land-based' initiatives, which is addressed in detail throughout this thesis. Many of these programs focus on youth or young adults and vary depending upon the intention of the program and the desired outcomes. They are frequently based on the premise of facilitating cultural education and identity, outdoor or traditional skills, wellbeing, and/or the connection to the natural world. As such, program design will vary relative to their intention and organizational context. These programs are differentiated from wilderness or nature-based programs based on the Indigenous philosophy and ideology underlying them.

Throughout the research process, I spoke formally and informally to Elders, youth, affected individuals, and practitioners from across Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and the Yukon. Through the formal interviews, in combination with an examination of various program-level reports from related Land-based projects across different northern communities, it has been made clear to me that providing opportunities for Indigenous peoples and especially youth to reconnect with the Land around them - through a cultural lens - is of utmost importance for

health and wellness in the North, promoting a clear sense of community resiliency. The results of this journey are presented in detail throughout this thesis. This journey is neither romantic nor espouses Land-based programs as the only solution for the health challenges facing our people. However, it does demonstrate a glaring absence in mainstream health research of formally recognizing the importance of facilitating Land-connection opportunities within northern Indigenous communities. Land-based programs can be an important tool for enabling interrelated health outcomes and wellness in an Indigenous cultural context.

As will be addressed in Chapter 2, many of our Northern people are suffering; yet many are also thriving in the face of great adversity. The term 'resiliency' is one that aims to chart a new path for the story of Indigenous health outcomes and is relevant in a discussion of Land-based initiatives (Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011). There have been large strides advocating for health solutions which better meet the needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in northern Canada, yet there is still a long way to go.

During a conference I attended in Whitehorse held by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation in 2014 called *Healing Together with Land and Culture*[8], it was clear that many Aboriginal peoples from across Canada are moving towards the recognition of Land-based health and healing and the development of Land-based programming as an important step on the path to resilience and recovery. The youth at this event in particular showcased a significant level of courage, resilience, and interest in reclaiming cultural and Land-based practice. One young woman stood up in front of the auditorium and shared her astonishment at learning about the history of residential schools only recently, how this learning impacted her life, and how her own journey to find her family and learn more about her cultural identity gave her the strength to move

[8] http://www.kwanlindun.com/healingtogether

forward. The message from the youth at this conference was clear, that many of them *want* to head back outside. They *want* to reconnect; it's just that they or their peers might not know exactly how to do this, and they need a little support.

I recognize that though this research focuses on Indigenous ways of understanding Land-connection and programming, ultimately this research cuts across cultural and ethnic boundaries for the benefit of all northerners. The Indigenous experts interviewed in this research reminded me that Land connection is something that speaks to us all as people of Mother Earth.

Chapter 2. A Review of Land-based Programs in Canada's North

> Dene Ch'anie, which translates as The Path We Walk, [uses] a circular mode. Embedded within Dene Ch'anie is a Code of Conduct, according to natural laws. When we act outside of these natural laws, we upset the balance between body, spirit, heart and mind, leading to negative consequences. We need to reconnect with Mother Earth to rediscover the natural laws, as individuals, families and communities. [9]
>
> Excerpt from oral presentation by Francois Paulette, Dene Elder, Northwest Territories

The Land–Indigenous health interconnection is embodied within Indigenous Knowledge (IK) or Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). TEK is now recognized at the international level as a valid form of knowledge contribution. The United Nations (UN) recognizes the value and rights of Indigenous peoples and their forms of knowledge through its Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2008, 2014). Scientists, global leaders, and designers are turning to Indigenous peoples and their TEK more than ever as a means of solving some of the serious challenges faced on the planet today (Berkes & Berkes, 2007; Gadgil, Berkes, & Folke, 1993; Peloquin & Berkes, 2009). Agrawal (1995) notes a resurgence in the rhetoric of Indigenous Knowledge since the 1960s in national and international institutions and in many academic fields, indicating that IK has its place in academia and can make a valuable contribution to understanding an array of fields including health and wellness, education, and environment. As Elder Francois Paulette describes in the concept of Dene Ch'anie above, a fundamental Land connection based on Natural Law is a locus for solutions to the challenging health context seen in Aboriginal communities in northern Canada.

[9] (Crosscurrent Associates Ltd, 2007)

Due to forces of colonization and various oppressive policies that have affected Canadian Aboriginal peoples both historically and into the present, communities are working to maintain a sense of cultural identity and the continuance of traditions (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Land-based initiatives are taking place in the face of many health related struggles intertwined with various social determinants of health, such as social status, education, and social and physical environments (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Kirmayer et al., 2003; Social determinants of health, 2014).

The Aboriginal demographic in Canada's north currently experience higher than normal mental, physical, and emotional health disparities, including high suicide rates, which unfortunately are consistent with other Indigenous populations around the Circumpolar world (Clarke, Frankish, & Green, 1997; Kirmayer et al., 2003; Lehti, Niemelä, Hoven, Mandell, & Sourander, 2009). Many of these elevated health and social struggles have been linked to the legacy of colonialism and challenges to cultural identity, among other complex factors (Kirmayer et al., 2003; Menzies, 2008; Richmond, 2009). The concept of 'health' among Indigenous people is closely linked to cultural and personal connection with the natural environment (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Kirmayer et al., 2003; Wexler, 2009). However, with the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut all facing increased developmental pressures and environmental concerns – related to climate change, resource impacts, and loss of cultural species, as well as other social problems – the need for healthy, sustainable, and empowered Indigenous communities is evident (Caine, Salomons, & Simmons, 2007; Simpson, 2002).

Many researchers are promoting the concept of resiliency as a means of framing the complex socio-ecological problems faced in Indigenous communities (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Kirmayer, Sehdev, Whitley, Dandeneau, & Isaac, 2009; Wexler, 2009). Indigenous scholars are calling for a holistic framing of health which combines physical, emotional, mental, and social

aspects grounded in spiritual understandings consistent with Indigenous worldviews (Lavallee & Poole, 2009; McCormick, 2000; Mehl-Madrona, 2005; Stewart, 2008). This integrative approach creates a rich intersection between environment, community development, and health in Indigenous communities. When addressing Indigenous health disparities, aspects of environment, culture, and social governance are all intimately intertwined. As Alfred states, "Land, culture, and government are inseparable in traditional philosophies; each depends on the others, and this means that the denial of one aspect precludes recovery for the whole" (2009, p. 25).

Land-based Initiatives for Community Sustainability

The phenomenon of Land-based reconnection as a basis for community health sustainability is not a new concept outside of academia. Many leaders in Indigenous communities and organizations are vocal in their understanding that reconnecting people, and especially youth, with the Land is one of the primary building blocks for their communities to move forward ("Camp programs help students", 2010; Ilisaqsivik, 2014; Porter, 2012; "Yukon to invest", 2014).

Many initiatives are being guided by Indigenous knowledge holders and local communities as a natural solution to health disparities, resource extraction pressures, and desire for intergenerational healing. This knowledge largely exists in an oral tradition and is program based and experiential. In the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut there is a growing demand for government agencies to support these types of programs (Laurie, 2013; NWT Department of Health and Social Services, 2014). Yet initiatives remain largely underfunded and ad hoc in nature (Noah, 2010). However, there are a few well-established programs which are setting precedents in significant ways. For example, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation in the Yukon

has been successful in achieving integrated Land-based healing service delivery. Their formal Land-based treatment program is currently funded by mainstream territorial and federal government health agencies as a viable community addictions intervention strategy ("Yukon to invest", 2014). The Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning is an accredited Land-based bush university located in the Northwest Territories, which is setting an example for Indigenous Land-based education in Canada and has received various academic grants and funding (Luig, Ballantyne, & Scott, 2011).

A theoretical framework for understanding these programs as exhibiting an array of measureable health benefits in Indigenous communities is generally missing in the mainstream health literature. This creates an opportunity to address this gap, and bridge Indigenous Knowledge and individual narratives with mainstream health and wellness, environment, education, and community development research. Specifically, the effective facilitation of Land-based experiences is a highly under-examined contribution to improving an array of health, social, and environmental outcomes in northern Indigenous communities.

The following literature review represents a preliminary 'mapping' of the parameters of such a framework and raises questions for further discussion and research.

The evidence base for the efficacy of funding and promoting specific Land-based programming for health and resiliency initiatives is not cohesive, and found mostly within the health and education fields. Finding consistent wording for such programs is challenging. For example, a variety of terms including *wilderness*, *nature, environmental, outdoor*, *Land*, *land-based,* and *on the land* are used with slightly different meanings and connotations by various disciplines and agencies. There were very few primary publications identified using the specific key-words *Land-based* or *on the land*, combined with *wellness, healing, or health,* and

Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples; although these terms are often used in northern communities and by practitioners (Alfred, 2014; Ilisaqsivik, 2014; NWT Department of Health and Social Services, 2014; Wildcat et al., 2014). For the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to use the terms *Land-based* and *on the land* because of their northern and Indigenous relevancy, but I also draw on the other terms mentioned above in appropriate contexts.

The literature reviewed below discusses the concept of Indigenous resilience as a way of framing and understanding aspects of Indigenous health, and specifically the centrality of the Land within Indigenous understandings of human health and wellness and how this translates into practical applications. Organized Land-based initiatives are described, including recent literature describing the holistic health benefits of such initiatives within Canadian Aboriginal populations. Current gaps in the literature are also discussed.

Resiliency in Indigenous Populations

A number of scholars have sought to promote the concept of resiliency as a holistic and empowering way of approaching the complex socio-ecological problems faced in Indigenous communities (Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011; Kirmayer, Sehdev, Whitley, Dandeneau, & Isaac, 2009). The concept of resiliency is found both in the fields of ecology and psychology, with different interpretations (Walker, Holling, Carpenter, & Kinzig, 2004; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). However, as Kirmayer et al. (2009) have argued, both concepts can be seen as interwoven in ideology and context. Specifically, in ecology, resilience is known as the ability of ecological systems to adaptively manage change over time (Walker et al., 2004). It also includes a transformative component (Walker et al., 2004). As Kirmayer et al. (2011) state, "In biological systems, resilience usually does not involve simply springing back to

a previous state but is a dynamic process of adjustment, adaptation, and transformation in response to challenges and demands" (p. 85).

In the field of psychology, the concept of resilience is a well-studied and developed field of research with a range of different conceptualizations in various areas (Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick, & Sawyer, 2003; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). For example, Olsson et al. (2003) explain that in psychology the term resilience "has been variously used to describe a substance of elastic qualities, the capacity for successful adaptation to a changing environment… and more recently…a dynamic process involving an interaction between both risk and protective processes, internal and external to the individual, that act to modify the effects of an adverse life event" (p.2). Most simply, resilience has been defined as an individual's "ability to do well despite adversity" (Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 84). There is a notable bias in personality psychology viewing resilience in terms of individual traits and characteristics, which is being challenged by a "new body of literature [which is] moving beyond the focus on individuals to consider the importance of social and cultural dimensions of resilience" (Kirmayer et al., 2009, p. 64).

In light of distinctive cultures, histories, and social realities, Kirmayer et al. (2009) propose an integrated social-ecological conceptualization of resilience more in line with Aboriginal community understandings, incorporating a shared history of colonization and "indigenous notions of personhood identity and well-being [that] emphasize the interconnectedness of persons with each other and the environment" (p.64). They describe this concept in detail:

> For Aboriginal peoples in Canada, ideas of resilience are grounded in cultural values that have persisted despite historical adversity or have emerged out of the renewal of indigenous identities. These include culturally distinctive

> concepts of the person, the importance of collective history, the richness of Aboriginal languages and traditions, and the importance of collective agency and activism. Aboriginal notions of personhood root identity in a person's connections to the land and environment, which may include recognition of a larger world of human and other-than-human spirits (Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 88).

An increasing body of recent work within psychology is approaching resilience from this perspective, in which communities and societies are also seen as being able to demonstrate resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2009; Tousignant & Sioui, 2009). As Kirmayer et al. (2009) explain,

> This new focus on "community resilience" looks at how people overcome stress, trauma and other life challenges by drawing from the social and cultural networks and practices that constitute communities. At the same time, it draws attention to the resilience of the community itself. (p. 63)

Aboriginal researchers have added a relational, cultural dimension to resilience by focusing on 'traditional' activities in people's lives, such as spirituality, healing practices, and language (Kirmayer et al., 2009). The concept of resilience can provide a much needed strength-based framing around various social-environmental health challenges in Aboriginal communities.

Tousignant and Sioui (2009) explain that "resilience has been a rallying emblem among Aboriginal communities and other oppressed populations because it inspires hope in the face of harsh adversity" (p. 45). Maidment (2000) provides a relevant example from Australia of a community model developed through the 'Mending the Broken Spirit' research project, which was conducted through the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs (See figure 1). This diagram relates to the integrated nature of ecological and community resilience.

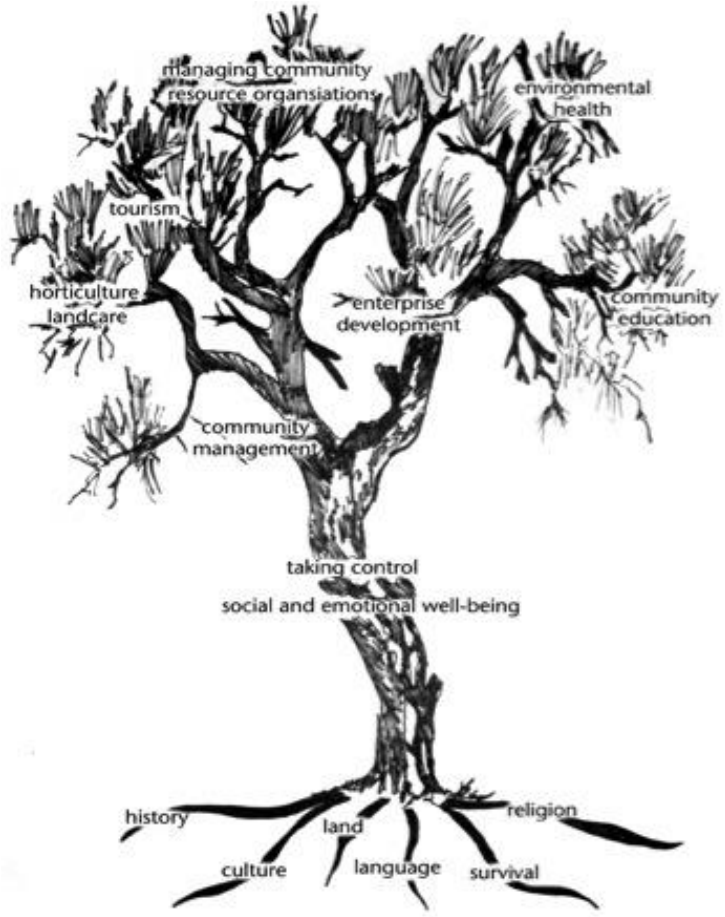


Figure 1: Model for Improving Community Health and Education Outcomes

(Maidment, 2000)

Resilience and the Land Connection

There is a large body of health literature documenting various health conceptions, interventions, and outcomes related to Indigenous populations in Canada's North (Ford, Rasmus, & Allen, 2012; Goodkind, LaNoue, Lee, Lance Freeland, & Freund, 2012; Kral, Idlout, Minore, Dyck, & Kirmayer, 2011; Richmond, 2009; Wexler, Gubrium, Griffin, & DiFulvio, 2013). This recent literature recognizes the essential importance of incorporating cultural and historical

understandings of health within Canada's North in a shared history of colonization. Interestingly throughout this literature, even though connection with the Land is mentioned indirectly, rarely is reconnection with the Land addressed directly as an Indigenous health solution. It appears this is starting to shift, as recent publications are beginning to recognize the importance of returning to Land-based practices directly as a way of improving health outcomes (Kant, Vertinsky, Zheng, & Smith, 2013; Radu, House, & Pashagumskum, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2014).

At the same time, an array of strength-focused health research (Goodkind, Hess, Gorman, & Parker, 2012; Kirmayer et al., 2011; Riecken, Scott, & Tanaka, 2006; Wexler, Moses, et al., 2013; Wexler, DiFluvio, & Burke, 2009) has rallied around the concept of Indigenous understandings of resilience and wellbeing for improving health outcomes, by focusing on protective factors that revolve around strengthening cultural ties and Indigenous identity (Allen et al., 2013; Andersson & Ledogar, 2008). Specifically, Kirmayer et al. (2011) note that these cultural ties and Indigenous identities are intimately related to a person's connections with the land, including the spiritual, ancestral, and collective identity found in natural environments. Recently, Kant et al. (2013) have concluded from their empirical investigation of social, cultural, and land use (SCLU) factors and Aboriginal well-being and health that "improved access to cultural sites and freedom to participate in spiritual activities are likely to reduce prevalence of mental and psychological problems" (p.473). This is similar to the Land and health connection many Elders have described time and time again in public hearings on environmental and community health in the North (Crosscurrent Associates Ltd, 2007).

Many Indigenous individuals know from experience the utmost importance of being out on the Land, connecting with Mother Earth, spirit, themselves, and their ancestors (Zoe, 2010). This central concept has been extensively captured in anthropology literature (Basso, 1996;

Cruikshank, 1991; Ignace & Ignace, 2004; Legat, 2012; Whitehead, 2003). Dene academic and psychologist Stewart (2008) speaks to the importance of including cultural identity and healing practices into the therapeutic relationship with Indigenous clients. Stewart (2008) states that "participants maintained that a fundamental notion of a holistic approach to mental health was central to their practice of counseling" (p. 52). Examples she mentions of this include incorporating ceremony and prayer into counseling, as well as Elders or traditional healers, and taking clients into nature (Stewart, 2008).

I have personally been able to experience this connection to culture through time spent out on the Land and in conversation with others who have undergone significant healing journeys in their own lives. There is now a considerable body of literature making the essential link between supporting practices or initiatives that promote cultural and spiritual identity with increased Aboriginal health outcomes in Canada and across the Circumpolar North (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Flint et al., 2011; Kenyon & Hanson, 2012; Wolsko, Lardon, Hopkins, & Ruppert, 2006). Yet the mainstream academic evidence documenting the many health outcome benefits Indigenous peoples receive from organized time spent out on the Land, as part of their cultural practices or outdoor programming, is limited, and represents a relatively new area of health research (Kant et al., 2013; Ritchie et al., 2014).

A Transition to Organized Initiatives

Various forms of Land-based or outdoor initiatives are being proposed and implemented to enhance the presence of protective factors underlying concepts of resilience in Indigenous communities (Flint et al., 2011; Janelle et al., 2009; Laiti & Sorbye, 2013; Porter, 2012; Simpson, 2002; Smethurst, 2012; Takano, 2005; Tidlumaluk, 2007; Watson et al., 2006). These programs may or may not frame themselves around resilience factors directly, but they have a

common theme of being located in natural settings of varying distances away from established community centers – being out on the Land and directly fostering a meaningful 'relationship with Land' as the central component to the program or healing provided (Laurie, 2013; Smethurst, 2012). Some have direct therapeutic outcome goals such as increasing self-esteem or encouraging pro-social behaviours (Janelle et al., 2009). Others recognize the general importance of spending organized time out on the land for healing in response to intergenerational trauma and its related impacts (Ilisaqsivik, 2014; Porter, 2012; Radu et al., 2014). For example, one program in the Yukon combines Western therapy and addictions treatment with traditional Land-based healing practices and cultural counselling in a remote camp-based setting (Dendys, 2013). The Council of Yukon First Nations offers a short description of the central role of the Land in Land-based addictions and treatment programs:

> Land-based healing treatment programs are initiatives where the land itself is honoured, respected and involved in the healing process. In such a program, steps are taken to identify how individuals' relationships with the land have been disrupted and how to renew this relationship (Laurie, 2013, p. 8).

Other Land-based programs are more education or skill-oriented than therapeutic, and are built on the importance of environmental education and traditional knowledge or cultural continuity, all the while recognizing the interconnectedness of environmental and human health (Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 2014; Flint et al., 2011; Industry Tourism and Investment, 2014; Luig et al., 2011; Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). An Indigenous Land-based pedagogy which links education, environmental and cultural values, and wellbeing is currently being developed by Indigenous academics from across Canada (Wildcat et al., 2014).

Indigenous Land-based Pedagogy

The introduction from a special issue of the journal *Decolonization: Indigeneity,*

Education & Society (2014), examining the Land as pedagogy, states:

> We begin with the premise that, if colonization is fundamentally about dispossessing Indigenous peoples from land, decolonization must involve forms of education that reconnect Indigenous peoples to land and the social relations, knowledges and languages that arise from the land (Wildcat et al., 2014, p. I).

An example of this Indigenous pedagogy has been employed successfully in northern Canada through a university-accredited education program held in a Land-based setting in the Northwest Territories (Luig et al., 2011). By employing a Land-based Indigenous education pedagogy informed by Elders and ethnographers, Luig et al. (2011) explain that "learning and becoming knowledgeable as beings in this world is understood as a movement in a field of relations in a sentient environment which encompasses human and other-than human beings" (p.14). They further explain:

> Life depends on the maintenance of respectful relationships between all forms of being and it is here that learning finds its purpose and knowing is assessed of its value. Consequently, personal autonomy, primary experience, and the awareness of interrelatedness are key orientations of Aboriginal pedagogy that are applied at Dechinta (Luig et al., 2011, p. 15).

Currently, Land-based programs within Indigenous populations are being organized by government, industry, Aboriginal organizations, local communities, and key individuals all over Canada. Yet Ritchie et al. (2014) notes there is still little scientific evidence reported on the efficacy of these programs as health interventions in the mainstream literature (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 3). At the same time, various researchers in the field of education have highlighted and validated the important nature of Land-based programming, from within a Land-based pedagogy. (Alfred, 2014; Schreyer, Corbett, Gordon, & Larson, 2014; Simpson, 2014; Styres, Haig-Brown, & Blimkie, 2013; Tuck et al., 2014).

Land-based initiatives in the North are viewed by many as an important contribution to community sustainability in the health, education, and environmental fields. However, besides the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning[10] (Ballantyne, 2014), such initiatives are typically outside of the academic realm, and led by individuals, communities, and organizations at the ground level. There is little publicly available information on the logistics or health outcomes of such programs (Noah, 2010). Despite this, through the documentation of a Land-based pedagogical approach, an evidence base is starting to emerge which is also relevant to the field of health (Luig et al., 2011; Radu et al., 2014; Simpson, 2014; Wildcat et al., 2014).

In practice, programs that employ a Land-centered pedagogy incorporate the interaction between decolonization, mental health, and resilience. Ballantyne (2014) describes this intertwined process:

> Through this process, one of the most common feelings encountered, alongside rage and peace, is guilt. It is the guilt of having been raised in small communities and not having the land-based skills by which so many thinkers ground Indigeneity and Indigenous-ness. Some students have never actually lit a fire, let alone spent significant time in the bush. While many are raised in sedentary communities located in the heart of their motherlands, they do not have access to land. De-territorialization has been so effective that kids can grow up in Denendeh having never practiced skills which two generations ago would have been fundamental to survival. The colonial apparatus has been this effective in removing people from their land while leaving them physically on it. During the process of Dechinta, many bush skills are learned with Elders who share the collective knowledge of what has been remembered.
>
> Learning these practices evokes the anger of never having been taught, as well as provokes exploring why those teachings were severed and how learning them revitalizes and rekindles. These skills are complex in their meaning and application. They always involve reaching back to the teaching of ancestors to share what was learned, where, and from whom. Thus, bush pedagogy is always rooted in place and in relationships and stories. Through the learning of skills, what is experienced is a shift from guilt to gift. This is what has been

[10] http://dechinta.ca/

> called ‘the Dechinta Transformation’, whereby the forces of Indigenous theory and practice merge and result in students who can articulate processes of decolonization on paper as well as engage in decolonization through an active process of becoming rooted in land based practices (Ballantyne, 2014, p. 79).

This description illustrates where the fields of mental health and education weave together to create an operational framework for individual and community resilience in a Land-based environment as highlighted in ‘the Dechinta Transformation’.

Mental Health Outcomes

Recent evidence in support of organizing Land-based programs within the field of mental health is limited, but beginning to emerge. Specifically, a few studies report preliminary health outcomes from various forms of Land-based programs in Canada. Ritchie et al. (2014) evaluated the impact of an OALE (Outdoor Adventure Leadership Experience) on the resilience and wellbeing of First Nations adolescents from a reserve in Canada. Using a mixed-methods design incorporating a 14-item Resilience Scale self-report survey at three different time periods, they determined that “the OALE program was beneficial in promoting resilience for adolescents in Wikwemikong over the short-term” (p. 2). They also conclude that “future studies are [still] necessary to assess whether OALE (or similar outdoor type interventions) are effective within other communities” (p. 2). Similarly, Janelle et al. (2009) evaluated a wilderness program organized by the Atikamek community of Manawan in Quebec for local adolescents and found that “this type [wilderness program] of traditional activity is an innovative tool to increase cultural pride, foster pro-social behaviour and empower First-Nation youth” (p. 108). Radu et al. (2014) describe a Land-based program designed by the Cree Nation of Chisasibi for intergenerational healing, where their Elders “stress that the land and cultural traditions have healing power that can enable individuals in distress to deal with pain and self-hurt” (p. 87).

In northern Canada, Takano (2005) described a land-skills training course in Igloolik, Nunavut. The main goal of this course was "to guide young people to 'be and become an Inuk', the core of this being establishing connection to the land" (p. 463). Takano (2005) further noted that "being on the land made [the youth] realize their connection with their ancestors, place and a bigger environment, which matched the elders' perceptions" (p. 482). The Dechinta Land-based University has published preliminary evaluation data from their pilot semester which supports the emotional success of employing experiential learning with Aboriginal students in a bush environment (Luig et al., 2011). The Land-based academic education program also "engaged students on intellectual, emotional, and physical levels [and] created awareness of various emotional difficulties, their causes, and their effects among participants" (Luig et al., 2011, p. 13). Similarly in Alaska, Henry, Allen, Fok, Rasmus, and Charles (2012) included Land-based components in their widely adopted community-based integrated suicide and addictions toolkit delivered in a number of Alaskan Native communities. Henry et al. (2012) described how subsistence berry-picking activities involving Alaskan native youth, parents, and other adults can promote protective factors against suicide such as "*ellangneq*[11], communal mastery, clear expectations, and affection/praise" (p 3). Finally, after examining Yup'ik conceptions of wellness, Wolsko et al. (2006) conclude that "Yup'ik participants from a broad age range and geographic distribution within the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta consistently emphasized that traditional values are a source of wellness, cultural changes have often had a negative impact on health, and connecting with the community and the wilderness helps to both heal and sustain a sense of well-being" (p. 360).

Although there is some research evidence that Land-based initiatives are a promising

[11] Translates as a sense of awareness and consciousness of how ones actions affect others (p.11).

form of supporting Indigenous mental health outcomes, there is still an absence of material specific to the conceptualization, design, organization and operation of these programs which could assist those wishing to increase the use of Land-based approaches. As Ritchie et al. (2014) concluded, discussions around the phenomenon of modern land-based programming is sparse in the academic literature, with few articles providing detailed program or evaluation data linking clear health outcomes to the programs (Laiti & Sorbye, 2013). This is underscored by a "lack of published research describing alternative conceptions of health and wellness" in general, found in a " decidedly Euro-American worldview [which] still tends to dominate the academic dialogue on conceptions of health and wellness" (Wolsko et al., 2006, p. 360).

From the lens of mainstream understandings of health-outcome or intervention evaluation, these gaps make it difficult to find support for Land-based programs as viable community health initiatives. The general lack of program evaluation data may be the result of a cultural disconnect between small-scale, community-based programming, and high-level, Western-scientific standards and definitions of health care and evaluation which do not align with the capacity, priorities, and worldviews of northern Indigenous communities (Kant et al., 2013; Sahota & Kastelic, 2012). For example, Janelle et al. (2009) observed that "obstacles met during the course of this research project highlight the importance of developing methodologies able to capture the rich and specific outcomes of traditional activities in an Aboriginal context" (p. 108). The obstacles referred to by Janelle et al. (2009) included a need to adapt mainstream self-esteem questionnaires to be more culturally appropriate. Several of the original questions "were perceived to be offensive or confrontational" which required wording changes and translation into the Atikamek language (Janelle et al., 2009, p. 110).

The types of cross-cultural research challenges identified by Janelle et al. (2009) point to

deeper issues within establishing 'clear' Indigenous health outcomes using Western-based methods. Imposing non-Indigenous conceptions of health and wellness, subsequent outside-in treatment approaches, and the cultural "proselytization" of health solutions from Western health disciplines are all related to the challenges of health and wellness in Indigenous communities (Kral et al., 2009). As Kral et al. (2009) explain: "Some Indigenous communities have closed their doors to researchers, not because they are against the generation of new knowledge but because they have not been able to participate in making decisions about the goals, methods and use of research (p. 299). This phenomenon is evident in the gap between what is available in the primary literature versus what is discoverable in the community-level grey literature on community-based health interventions (Redvers et al., 2015).

Programs in the North

The majority of outcomes for specific northern Land-based programs are largely captured outside of academia in the grey literature through internal evaluations and personal communications in communities (Noah & Healey, 2010). Reports cite the many benefits of Land-based programs run in northern communities, including various physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional outcomes for participants of all ages as well as environmental stewardship (Carey, 2010; Noah, 2010; Simmons & Dejong, 2009). Various programs have been funded over the years as suicide prevention, outdoor leadership development, land and science education, intergenerational culture transfer, and residential school healing, among others (Carey, 2010; Cousins, 2010; Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 2014; Hanson, 2011, 2012;

Laurie, 2013; Noah, 2010; Tidlumaluk, 2007). The Kwanlin Dün First Nations (KDFN) provides the most detailed definition around Land-based healing programming in particular, stating that:

> Land-based health or healing has been defined by KDFN as a term used to designate a health or healing program or service that takes place in a non-urban, rural or remote location on a land base that has been intentionally spiritually cultivated to ensure the land is honoured and respected. The land is understood to be an active host and partner to the people engaged in the healing process. The cultivation of a land base under the stewardship of First Nation people is usually done through the development of an intimate spirit based relationship through ceremony, offerings, expression of gratitude and requests for permission from the land to enter and use it for healing purposes (Hanson, 2012, p. 2).

Luig et al. (2011) further speak to the mechanisms around Land-based healing. They quote the Dene Elders Restoring Balance Project of 2006 from the Dene Cultural Institute which concludes that: "Healing is most effective when the affected person is in the right frame of mind, spirit, and body. Being on the land provides the right frame of mind and spirit – the sounds, sights, and smells of the land are very powerful and relaxing" (Luig et al., 2011, p. 17).

In grey literature reviewed, there were a range of helpful best-practices discussed in the field. In their detailed literature and community review of Land-based youth wellness camps across the North, Noah and Healey (2010) of the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre in Iqaluit highlight the need for community involvement in camp design and delivery, and focus on youth skill building (p. 18). They stress the importance and benefits of holding camps in natural environments and the need to move away from a focus on Inuit suicide to more empowering mental health and wellness promotion (p. 18-19). They also highlight the importance of the provision of a traditional diet, based in land-based practice, as fundamental to Inuit health and wellness (p.19). They conclude by noting the paucity of research available for youth

empowerment and wellness camp models in the Inuit population and a need for future research in this area (p.19).

In her detailed look into promising practices in Land-based addictions and treatment programs in the Yukon, Laurie (2013) lists the following:

> Proper assessment of the client's suitability for the program; easy access to medical staff; sufficiently long programs; offering many different approaches to aftercare such as: home visits, employment programs, employment at the land based treatment program after completing the program and community homes; work with families in order to help them best relate to clients with FASD; a wide variety of activities such as: hunting, fishing, circle work, drumming, berry picking, knife making and course work; hands-on, experiential activities suitable for everyone but particularly suitable for individuals with FASD; openness and respect for individuals' beliefs; having a psychologist available; good quality facilitators; and programs with a deep spiritual foundation focused on healing" (p. 4).

Laurie (2013) also stresses the lack of academic publications available on this topic, stating that "Seemingly, not much has been written specifically about land based healing treatment programs or cultural immersion camps for substance abuse disorders for adults" (p.13).

It is clear that many programs are described as being largely ad hoc and underfunded through various small-scale grants and a variety of different funding sources (Simmons & Dejong, 2009). This is in contrast to their large demand at the community level, with many individuals across the North advocating for these types of programs as holistic health solutions for community healing (NWT Department of Health and Social Services, 2014). There is an obvious gap between what is happening at the community level on the ground in the North versus what has been captured in non-Indigenous academic publishing circles which are often used to guide government policy. Luig et al. (2011) state that, "the relationship between land, place, and health is still poorly understood" (p. 22) and "Qualitative and quantitative studies are needed that explain how health and well-being are affected by being outdoors and connecting to

one's natural environment on a social-relational level" (p. 22). As previously discussed, this gap is a complex one that involves a history of colonization, Western world view research practices, and fundamentally different cultural conceptions of health, and requires solutions appropriate to Indigenous communities (Goodkind et al., 2011; Lavallee & Poole, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wexler & Gone, 2012). The following Tables (Table 1 and 2) summarize a review of the literature on Land-based program outcomes from across the North.

Table 1: Summary of Health Outcomes for Land-based Programs in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and Yukon from Primary Literature

First author, Date	Program name, Description, Date run	Demographic/ Location/ Community	Health outcome data examples	Type of evaluation completed
(Takano, 2005)	*Paariaqtuqtut (*'meeting on the trail') organized by a group of Inuit Elders through the *Inullariit Society* (IS), Land-skills training course. 400 km journey over frozen rivers, sea, lakes and tundra. May 2-11, 2002	Young Inuit adults and their families/ Varied/ Igloolik, Nunavut	The course succeeded in delivering and affirming Inuit core values and identity. Participants in the program shared the same view as the Elders concerning the meaning of 'being on the land'. It was linked to 'being an Inuk', 'hunting' and 'well-being' (p.482).	Ethnography, case-study approach. Mixed-research design based primarily on participant observation and semi-structured interviews post-program, and supported by document analysis.
(Luig et al., 2011)	Dechinta Bush University Centre for Research and Learning, Three week pilot program. Resident Es, cultural experts, university professors, and artists taught in collaboration through fireside lecturing, writing, and speaking assignments, travelling out on the land, gathering wood, harvesting, moose hide tanning, making dry fish, and more. June 2010	Adults/ Yellowknives Dene Territory/ Yellowknife, Northwest Territories	Experiential learning that engaged students on intellectual, emotional, and physical levels created awareness of various emotional difficulties, their causes, and their effects on health among participants (p. 13). The attention Dechinta gives to the inseparability of learning and well-being explains the positive results students reported with regards to learning success, motivation, and personal growth (p. 21).	Case-study, participant-observer, feedback from students, and literature review.

Source: *written descriptions are cited directly from the corresponding authors*

Table 2: Summary of Land-based Program Health Outcomes from Research Reports, Media, and Program Summary Reports

2.1: Nunavut

Authors, Date	Program name, Description, Date run	Demographic/ Location/ Nearest community	Health outcome data examples	Type of evaluation completed
(Mearns & Healey, 2015)	Makimautiksat Wellness and Empowerment camp. An evidence-based, culturally competent intervention promoting mental health and wellness among youth in Nunavut. Makimautiksat and the Eight *Ujarait*/ Rocks Model were developed by Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre. Six communities participated in pilots of the camp between 2010-2013.* *Camps are ongoing	Inuit youth/ Various land locations/ Cambridge Bay, Arviat, Iqualuit, Pangnirtung, Coral Harbour	Parents felt that the goal to enhance the skills and knowledge of Nunavut youth to support their mental health over their life span was achieved, and that the experience brought joy to the youth, promoted cultural learning, and provided an opportunity to learn new information and coping skills (p.5). Youth reported feeling more happy, cheerful, and energetic, with a decrease in feeling sad after participation in the camp. They indicated that they felt better preparing to plan for their future, setting goals for themselves, and understanding their strengths (p. 4).	The research framework focused on Inuit ways of knowing, following the *Piliriqatigiinniq* Partnership Community Health Research Model cited. An evaluation questionnaire tool was developed in partnership with community partners. The tool was used to collect data in each community through pre- and post-camp evaluation forms for campers, six-month post-evaluation focus groups for campers, pre- and post-camp evaluation forms for parents, and post-camp evaluations for facilitators (p.12).
(Noah & Healey, 2010)	Kitikmeot Elder and Youth Cultural Camp. Embrace Life Council & Health Canada were involved in the formation of this project. Traditional skills such as sewing, tool making, hunting and meat/skin	Inuit Youth from across the Kitikmeot region/ Umingmaktok (Bay Chimo) and Hiraarvik camp /	Was a successful opportunity for empowering Inuit youth to explore and express themselves through different mediums and learn new skills (p.12). They explored different themes such as the perception of mental health across Canada for health promotion (p.12).	n/a

	preparation. Instruction in photography and video camera operation; youth assisted in documenting the camp experience with photography and film. August 10-16, 2008	Cambridge Bay	Trusting the kids with camera and video equipment for the week helped to build the campers' self-esteem and feelings of empowerment as they explored an anti-sniffing/substance abuse topic (p.12).	
(Ilisaqsivik, 2014)	Summer healing and cultural retreats, Qimmivut dog teaming workshops, country food provision, youth justice programs, men's group and father/son program, Arnait (women's retreat). *Ilisaqikivik*, community-based Inuit organization. They offer several multi-day land-based healing and cultural retreats throughout the year as well as other workshops and specialized programs.	Inuit all ages/ Community determined locations/ Clyde River	Community residents report that they feel safer and more open to talking about issues and challenges when out on the land. The camps promote intergenerational healing from past traumas associated with settlement and rapid socio-cultural change. Offers the chance for families, Elders, and children to form strong bonds on the land while sharing skills and knowledge. Provides time for relaxation and laughter.	Community feedback; details not provided

2.2: Yukon

Authors, Date	Program name, Description, Date run	Demographic/ Location/ Nearest community	Health outcome data examples	Type of evaluation completed
(Hanson, 2011)	Jackson Lake Land-based healing men's program September 2011.* Kwanlin Dün First Nation Department of Justice [12.] Three week on-the-land residential addictions program. The program aimed to provide healing experiences and tools for people to deal with issues related to residential school, trauma, addictions, violence, loss and grieving. The renewal of the relationship between the men and the land was a primary focus of the program (p.4). *There are previous and ongoing intakes for this program.	Adult males/ Jackson Lake/ Whitehorse	The Four Aspects of Self data showed that overall the men experienced an increase in how they felt about themselves (their mind, body, spirit, and heart) over the course of the program and three months following the program. Amounts varied, and there were ups and downs over the course of time. (p.20). The Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) data indicates that the men experienced an improvement in how they felt over the course of the program to three months following the program, though the amounts also varied (p. 25).	Mixed methods quantitative and qualitative data collected at five data collection points during and up to 14 weeks after program completion. Data collection points included the completion of an externally validated ORS and Resilience Scale used at the beginning of the program and once more during the first follow-up interview. Employed a culturally relevant Four Aspects of Self Rating Scale, story sessions, brief interviews, and follow up interviews. Evaluator on site as a participant-observer for one third of the program.
(Hanson, 2012)	Jackson Lake Land-based healing Women's program Aug-Sept 2012.* Kwanlin Dün First Nation Department of Justice. Four week on the land residential addictions program.	Jackson Lake/ Whitehorse	The Four Aspects of Self data showed mixed results, though improvement was experienced in the majority of cases, with a number of women still working on improvement in the areas of mind, body, spirit and heart as they were leaving the program. (p.18)	Three evaluation instruments were used twice with the women in a group setting in the first week of the program and the last week of the program – these were the Outcome Rating Scale, the Four Aspects of Self Rating Scale and the Resilience Scale (the same instruments as the

[12] http://www.kwanlindun.com/jlwellnessteam

	This program aimed to provide healing experiences and tools for people to deal with issues related to residential school, trauma, addictions, violence, loss and grieving. The renewal of the relationship between the women and the land was a primary focus of the program (p.3). *There are previous and ongoing intakes for this program.		ORS Data showed mix results over the course of the program on how the women felt individually, interpersonally, and socially (p. 21). Resilience Scale Outcomes: The average score in the first week of the program was 118 compared to 144 in the last week of the program representing a significant change in resiliency reported (p. 22).	men's program), without post-program follow-up (p.2). Interviews completed with key program staff post-program. Focus groups with all clients held at the beginning and end of program.
(Laurie, 2013)	Various Yukon Land-based addictions and Treatment programs 1999-2012. 8 specific programs from across various Yukon First Nations mentioned.	Various	Overall, the people interviewed indicated that the main strength of land based programs is that all aspects of being on the land are therapy. As individuals grow in cultural pride and knowledge and are self-reliant on the land they move towards healing (p. 34).	Detailed grey and academic literature review including comments from former clients found in written material. Interviewed various health and social services staff from Yukon First Nations health authorities, other related service providers and Elders involved in various Land-based programs in the Yukon (p. 12).

2.3: Northwest Territories

Authors, Date	Program name, Description, Date run	Demographic/ Location/ Nearest community	Health outcome data examples	Type of evaluation completed
(Carey, 2010)	Taiga Adventure Camp Summer 2010.* Built on the philosophy that positive role modeling, educational experience, and leadership-based opportunities for young women promote self-esteem. In each of its sessions they offered a set of core activities that reflected the Camp's core values, as well as a set of optional activities that the campers chose as a group. Activities could include canoeing, leadership activities, eco theater, traditional and environmental issues teachings and others (p.9). *Offers ongoing programs as the Northern Youth Leadership Society[13] .	Young women, ages 11-17 who live in NWT/ Various on-the-land locations/ Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Fort Simpson	It is clear that the Taiga campers felt that their experience at camp taught them leadership skills and gave most of them the motivation to gain even more skills (p. 32). Both campers and staff agreed that Taiga Camp did very well in teaching the campers to feel better about themselves (emotional well-being); with campers rating their learning a 2.7 and staff rating the campers' learning a 3.0 (p.30). Taiga Camp takes an effective approach to instilling protective factors among its campers. However, in order for these implications to be fully evidenced, a longitudinal study is recommended to make a more accurate determination that adventure camps are effective approaches to suicide prevention (p.45).	One year valuation report under the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (NAYSPS). NAYSPS formal case study evaluation framework; relied on a mixed methods strategy; employing several kinds of data collection instruments and fieldwork. Pre- and post-evaluation data statistically analyzed; logic model applied. Participant and staff evaluation surveys, staff focus groups, interviews, camper MSC (most significant change) stories rated and evaluated, and evaluator's field notes.
(Simmons & Dejong, 2009)	Tedzexé Caribou Hunt Pilot Project. Chief Albert Wright School and Community of Tulita. Camp activities included getting wood and water, basics of cooking, keeping the	Grade nine students from the local school/ Drum Lake/ Tulita	The students developed stronger learning relationships with their relatives, and came to understand their knowledge and skills on the land in a new way – they learned that their relatives can be their teachers. This was an opportunity for the students to strengthen their understanding of their Dene and Métis	Post-trip assessment of learning outcomes conducted in the classroom back in town. Informal post-trip interviews with community members involved.

[13] http://www.northernyouth.ca/

	fire going, hunting, and cutting up meat as well as TK mapping discussions, two storytelling sessions, educational meetings, student documentation and Land-based skills instruction. February 23-March 5, 2009		identity and heritage, and their role as contributors to the community (p.13).	
("Take a kid trapping", 2010)	Take a kid trapping and harvesting on-the-land program. Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, GNWT Report 2009-2010.* Children participate in camps where local community members teach students a number of traditional food-based skills, building traps, hunting, trapping, preserving meat and other skills. Programming is adapted with community needs and traditions through incorporating local Elders and trappers. *2002-2016 ongoing programs	First Nations youth and young adults ages 13-34/ Various locations	Impact of intervention on health-related outcomes of health promotion and behaviour-related protective factors was determined to be positive. Positive outcomes were found in the areas of knowledge, skills, attitudes and intentions of youth.	Descriptive observational study: environmental scan, narrative, descriptive explanation, case study. In-depth open-ended interviews.

Source: *written descriptions are summarized from the work of corresponding author*

Evidence from Related Disciplines

Related evidence of holistic health benefits from wilderness experience in the mainstream population appears in the context of different disciplines including psychology, sociology, ecology, education, outdoor recreation and leadership, and community development literature. For example, Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH), which includes 'wilderness therapy' and 'adventure therapy' is in widespread practice throughout North America (Becker, 2009). The mental and physical health benefits of nature based activities and nature itself is now a growing field of study internationally (Kim, Jeong, Park, & Lee, 2015; Kim, Lim, Chung, & Woo, 2009; Zelenski & Nisbet, 2012). This includes such studies such as one looking at 'forest therapy' as a promising adjuvant to cancer treatment (Kim et al., 2015), and another determining the superior benefit of cognitive behavioural therapy administered in a forest environment as opposed to a hospital setting (Kim et al., 2009).

OBH programs have shown promise in working with a large array of at-risk youth populations struggling with mental health, addictions, trauma, criminal history, and behavioural concerns. They have demonstrably increased a number of outcome variables including self-esteem, identity, and mastery of various technical and life skills in wilderness environments (Bettmann, Russell, & Parry, 2012; Castellano & Soderstrom, 1992; Neill, 2003; Russell, 2005; Russell, 2003). Outdoor experiential education (OEE) is another field often built into various non-Indigenous land-based models engaging young people experientially with natural environments (Howden, 2012). By way of these models, individuals learn through guided reflection to increase awareness and skills in outdoor environments (Howden, 2012). Other fields include 'Ecopsychology' and 'Conservation Psychology', which investigate the health benefits

of interacting with diverse and healthy natural environments, as well as the preservation of those environments for future generations (Clayton & Myers, 2009; Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 2008).

Overall, there is substantial evidence from a variety of fields for the positive health benefits to individuals and society from time spent in natural environments, though this is still a relatively new and growing field of study.

Chapter 3. Designing a Qualitative Indigenous Methods Approach

An Indigenous research approach aims to frame academic research from a wholly Indigenous epistemological basis, as an alternative to mainstream approaches (Kovach, 2010). Largely championed by Smith (2012), the idea of decolonizing research methodologies takes a political stance to research, recognizing the historical context of oppression and exclusion of Indigenous values found in dominant research paradigms and the unfortunate consequences of research in Indigenous communities. Wilson (2008) mentions that despite cultural differences, there are common aspects and beliefs within the research paradigms of Indigenous peoples internationally. Kovach (2010) states that " as the academic landscape shifts with an increasing Indigenous presence, there is a desire…to move beyond the binaries found within Indigenous-settler relations to construct new, mutual forms of dialogue, research, theory and action" (p. 12).

Due to my mixed cultural background as an Indigenous Métis person in Canada, my intention is to combine my own ways of knowing with mainstream interpretive research approaches, in order to frame an appropriate approach for my own research. This approach was inspired and informed by the concept of 'methodological métissage' or "Métissage as methodology" as described in detail by Lowan-Trudeau (2012, p. 117). A reflexive use of both Indigenous and mainstream qualitative research methods has been successfully employed by a variety of Indigenous scholars who have recognized the importance of drawing on Indigenous wisdom and ethics to inform research that is relevant for our communities (Kovach, 2010; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012; Wilson, 2008).

I also recognize the validity of personal and practical experience in informing solutions and practice at an intuitive level and in this spirit draw on my own 'reflection-in-action'

throughout my approach, bringing in my own voice and at the same time recognizing the experience inherent in other individuals currently negotiating Land-based practice on the ground (Schon, 1983).

Conceptual Framework

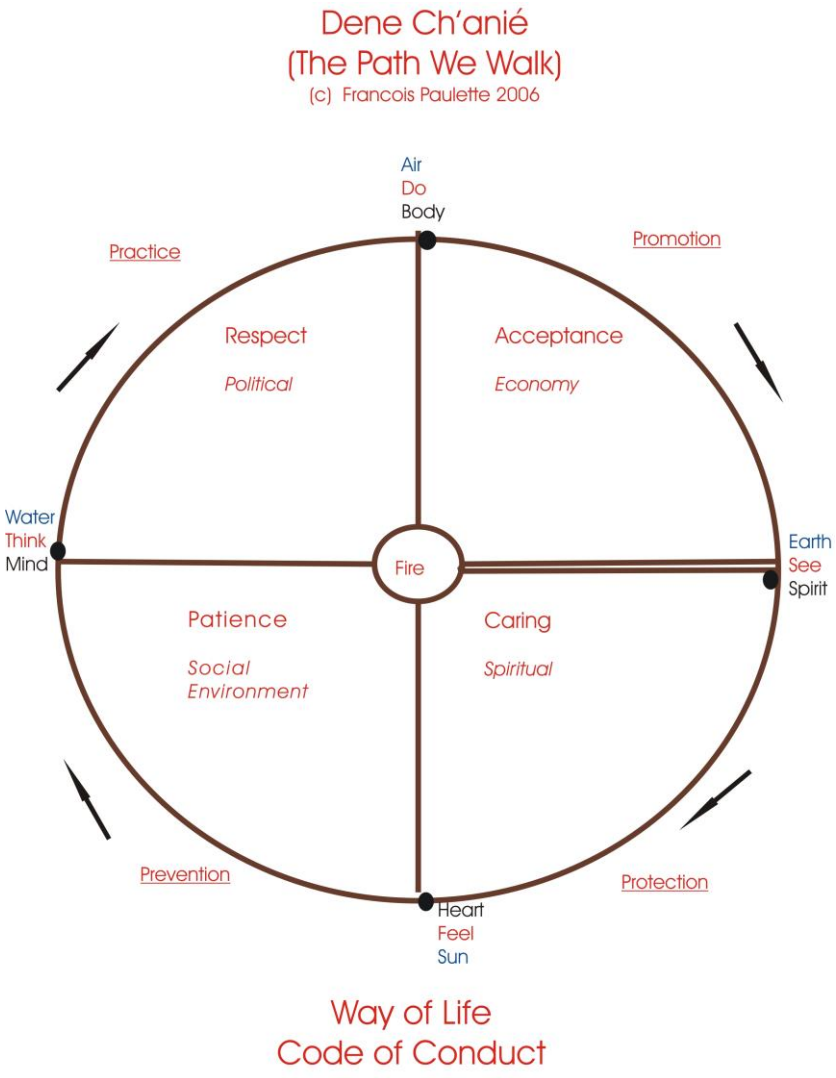


Figure 2: Dene Ch'anie The Path We Walk: Way of Life Code of Conduct

(Crosscurrent Associates Ltd, 2007)

Dene Worldview

At the heart of my own Indigenous background and teachings is a distinctly Dene understanding of the world which includes relationship, a respect for moral code, and holism, which includes an integrated understanding of health, Land, and spirituality.

Elder Francois Paulette (2014) underscored the importance of recognizing that this worldview is not a theory, but is a way of life. My research approach accepts the validity of this way of life as outlined in Dene Ch'anie (Figure 2). And by taking an interdisciplinary research approach I aim to mirror the holistic dynamism found in Dene Ch'anie, as well as a recognition of the concepts of environment and health as intimately related and cyclical to each other. As Elder Paulette (2014) also stressed to me, Dene Ch'anie is about balance. This holistic understanding of Dene Ch'anie and code of conduct guides my research framework and provides balance to the use of different cultural and disciplinary research methods which combine teachings from both academic sources as well as teachings from a variety of Indigenous mentors, including Dene, Métis, Anishinaabe, and spiritual teachers. My research aims to achieve a sense of intentional weaving of research strategies firmly grounded in an Indigenous worldview similar to the approach taken by Métis scholar Lowan-Trudeau (2012).

Related to the Dene Ch'anie teachings above, I was told by another Dene Elder during a meeting I was facilitating that in forming any kind of framework or approach I must first start with a circle of relationships (Blondin, 2013). So I will also draw on the concept of 'relationality' or 'relational accountability' as outlined by Wilson (2008, p. 80-125), who describes the importance of relationships as being at "the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (p.80). Indigenous worldviews, relationship, and identity are highly connected and also include relationships with other life forms, ancestors, and future generations (Wilson, 2008). Wilson

(2008) explains that "identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationship with the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land" (p. 80). This concept is close to my experience, very relevant for a discussion on Land-based practice, and integral to the methodological approach.

Qualitative Methodologies

Qualitative research is a larger term for a number of different mainstream research methods which share a common theme of using mostly language as a meaningful source of data and information in the investigation of human experience and social life (Polkinghorne, 2005). Qualitative research takes an epistemological position described as interpretivist which stresses the understanding of the social world by examining human interpretations of their world (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Five of the most cited mainstream traditions include: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (McCaslin & Scott, 2003). Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, and Silverman (2010) explain that often mainstream or 'traditional methodology' "is an outcome of a rationalistic view which considers research activities as driven by a set of norms, rules, and transparent procedures" (p. 8). They go on to suggest that this rigid view is essentially flawed as it restricts the usefulness of a methodology by applying abstract rules on its use in practice. As a solution they state that:

> The perspective we propose therefore tries to solve this schizophrenic attitude and contradictory behavior by, on one hand, suggesting a researcher-centered view of the place of methodological rules in guiding research behavior, and on the other hand, encouraging methodologists to adapt methodology to the research situation. We do not neglect the usefulness of methodological rules; instead we reject top-down rules and prefer bottom-up, user-centered and context dependent methodological routines and agreements (Seale et al., 2010, p. 8).

My research approach mirrors this perspective in finding a balance of incorporating methods which are relevant to the research context in Indigenous communities, by drawing on a series of tools within qualitative research most reflective of Indigenous values, and without abandoning an overall grounding in Indigenous epistemology and experience. The qualitative category with the most overlap with my research area is the larger tradition of biography.

Biography includes autobiographies as well as life histories and oral histories, life stories, or narrative analysis with a common focus on recording and interpreting the life experience of individuals (Bornat, 2010; Cruikshank, 1991). Narrative methodologies involving oral tradition and storytelling honour the interpretive approach to mainstream research which is thought to be more convergent with Indigenous research methodologies and thus has been suggested as "a relevant and appropriate methodology for Indigenous research, even though it involves presenting stories in writing" (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012, p. 120). The concept of narrative analysis is an interesting one, interwoven within different philosophical traditions and conceived of in different ways (Kovach, 2010). As Polkinghorne (2005, p. 138) states, "the experiential life of people is the area qualitative methods are designed to study" and " it is the *life-world* as it is lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings that is the object of study". He goes on to explain that short-answer questionnaires… [which] only gather surface information, are inadequate to capture the richness and fullness of experience… thus the data gathered for study of experience needs to consist of first-person or self-reports of participants' own experiences" (p. 138).

Narrative Approaches

Indigenous scholars understand that story is a valid way of understanding life, which is central to the Indigenous oral experience (Mehl-Madrona, 2005; Wilson, 2008). Narrative research approaches honour the idea that our stories are the cornerstone of our identities and that lived experience can best be sought through the stories we tell (Andrews, Sclater, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2010). Kovach (2010) describes that since the beginning of time, story and knowing have been inseparable in Indigenous communities, and that story is recognized as a legitimate form of understanding the world. She notes the interrelatedness of narrative and Indigenous research methodologies, but stresses the difference in fundamental philosophical standpoints, with Indigenous epistemology linked to a deeper cultural framing of the research question (2010). For example Kovach (2010) states that Indigenous stories "are a vessel for passing along teachings, medicines and practise that can assist members of the collective" (p. 95) which are rooted in a rich cultural and linguistic milieu. A framing of the importance of narrative in Indigenous research approaches can be supplemented through the field of narrative analysis, which comes from distinctly different philosophical roots, though some similar understandings have emerged.

Clandinin (2013) explains that there are many analytic methods or forms of narrative analysis, including thematic analysis, structural analysis, and visual analysis, which are used within other research methodologies including phenomenology and case study research. Clandinin (2013) elaborates that there is now a "well-established view of narrative inquiry as both methodology and phenomena" (p.12) which has its philosophical roots in Dewey's theory of experience and offers the following definition:

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. Narrative inquiry begins and ends with a respect for ordinary lived experience (p.18).

The most noteworthy interrelationship between narrative inquiry as outlined by Clandinin (2013) and that of Indigenous framings of narrative (Kovach, 2010) is the importance of relationship to inquiry. Kovach notes that relationship is central throughout the research process, exposing itself throughout the framework, form of research protocols, and ethical considerations (2010). Similarly, the importance of relationship informs and influences my research framework, interview process, and ethics approach, underlined with the core value of respect for individuals, communities, and fellow academic and research contributions in the field.

Finally, Kovach also describes how story can work "as a decolonizing action that gives voice to the misinterpreted and marginalized" in an Indigenous research context (2010, p. 94). In this case I draw on narrative approaches in order to include the voice of key Indigenous experts in the North in the academic dialogue and evidence for Land-based healing; a voice that is largely missing from the related mainstream literature within a Western positivist conception of environment and health.

Relationships

Through extensive community work, and drawing on a variety of different Indigenous wisdoms, Bopp and Bopp (2006) have developed an integrative model of community relationships. I have adapted these relationships into a research context to help me frame the

relational aspects of my research process and the accountabilities within those relationships. These include personal, group, community, and wider world relationships. Thus, the first step of my research framework involved reflecting on the interrelated areas above in relation to my research process; essentially, how to incorporate these relational aspects into my methodological approach?

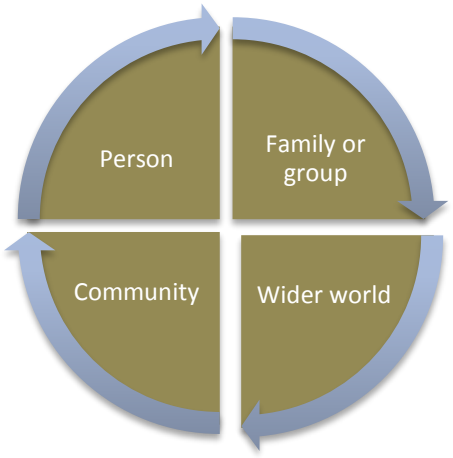


Figure 3: Research Relationships

Adapted from (Bopp & Bopp, 2006, p. 33)

Personal relationships

My approach aims to be accountable to my own belief system and worldview through creating a research methodology that speaks to my own personal narrative, reflections, and experience in the field of Land-based practice, and takes into account my cultural identity, insider/outsider status, and biases as inherent to the research process (Innes, 2009; Kovach, 2010). This process can be referred to as "self-location" (Kovach, 2010, p. 110) and is present within various feminist approaches to qualitative research as well as being a central aspect within

an Indigenous research paradigm through the concept of 'positioning' (Kovach, 2010; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012). As Kovach (2010) states, "in asking others to share their stories, it is necessary to share our own, starting with self-location" (p.98). Similarly Lowan-Trudeau (2012) refers to the important process of positioning within Indigenous cultures, which, when applied to the research process includes introducing yourself to your research participants and research audience, and taking a reflexive approach to research which demonstrates and acknowledges the reciprocal learning experienced by the researcher and research participants. This was an integral part of my methodological process.

Maintaining positive and respectful relationships with my participants was imperative for the research process (Innes, 2009; Kovach, 2010). As Kovach (2010) explains, "story and Indigenous Inquiry are grounded within a relationship based approach to research" and "for story to surface, there must be trust" (p. 99). She expands that "earning trust is critical and may take time, upsetting the efficiency variable of research timelines…and…if a pre-existing relationship is not in place, such a process must begin". This trust building exercise started to unfold organically for me outside of a research context.

After completing my first year of graduate school, I returned back to my community feeling disconnected from relationships back home. Following two years of deferral of graduate school, I intuitively began to shift the focus of my work from ecology to an area I was more interested in: Land-based programming. As a result, I volunteered for various projects, asked questions and shared my experiences with people in this area and spent a lot of time listening to other people's stories and experiences on the Land. I spent more time learning about my ancestors and who I was culturally and spiritually. I also attended conferences and events where cultural leaders were speaking and introduced myself and let them know what my passions were,

in the process building cultural and professional relationships in a spirit similar to the concept of positioning (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012). I travelled to different communities for a variety of cultural events and opportunities. As my personal cultural and community networks grew, I naturally began to reconnect to the North and experienced ways of knowing and learning outside of academia. As I learned more and built relationships with leaders in this field, I started to obtain more confidence that I might actively pursue this area of research with the intention of giving back to the North, and participating in solutions.

This was important given that many Indigenous communities and individuals lack trust in the research process based on historical experiences, particularly the 'hit and run' researcher who has no previous connection with the community and does not give information back to communities (Smith, 2012). I felt that I had to live and work passionately with Land-based programs in this area in order to meet the Dene Ch'anie or moral code, and approach key individuals to share their personal experiences with me. This aim of building relationships was not as overt as expressed here, but was more a natural process for me, and it is only upon reflection that I understood the work I have been doing in this area has brought me back to a place of research based on the relationships I have already built. It was almost a circular approach to the research process, for which I am now thankful. This experience was reflective of an Indigenous worldview inherent within a relational epistemology.

Group relationships

Seale et al. (2010) state that a good qualitative study "…may be judged according to [its] utility or relevance for particular groups of people and particular power relations" (p.9). Indigenous people make up a wide and diverse group of people with shared values and historical

experiences. Alfred (2009) explains that there "is great diversity among Turtle Island's [North America's] Indigenous peoples: hundreds of languages, a broad range of customs in the social and political realms, and a complex variety of spiritual beliefs that have yet to be understood by outsiders" (p.13). Duran (2006) notes the important differences between Indigenous cultures, and at the same time often purposefully engages in what he calls 'glossing' or not making a distinction between tribal groups because he believes that "the most powerful colonial strategies inflicted on Native peoples has been convincing us that we are so different from one another" (p.7). Alfred (2009) also notes that we share fundamental common values and histories as Indigenous peoples that can bring us together as a united group. Duran (2006) mentions that most Indigenous people prefer to call themselves variations of "Human Beings" (p.11), which is similar in the Dene tradition, with the word Dene roughly translating as 'the people', although its root meaning, significantly, is 'from, or of, the land' (de/ne) (Fabian, 2016).

I also see the benefits of mobilizing these shared values and common struggles amongst Indigenous peoples. That being said, while recognizing important similarities underlying Indigenous values around the world, I do not aim to generalize any conclusions from my thesis results across many diverse people and expressions of Indigenous identity and culture. I draw most readily on those of which I am familiar, or those of which I have been able to receive formal teachings or have the permission to share. This is consistently expressed by other Indigenous scholars (Kovach, 2010; Wilson, 2008). While being informed by common Indigenous values, my thesis results are limited to specific Indigenous groups located in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut in a local context.

Community and wider world relationships

I have tried to ensure that my research project is relevant for the North, including recognizing the responsibility for presenting any information in an understandable and plain language format (including presenting my results in person in the various communities of my participants) (Hanson & Smylie, 2006). I have requested cultural feedback from Elder mentors in addition to my formal supervisors at the University of Calgary. I have not presented or used sensitive community information or knowledge without written permission, which is standard in community research protocols (Sambaa K'e Dene band, 2003). Steps were taken to develop frameworks, discussions, and results in visual form to ensure adequate knowledge translation (Hanson & Smylie, 2006).

I have presented some of my research findings through the Institute of Circumpolar Health Research and internationally at the *Healing Our Spirit Worldwide*[14] gathering in Hamilton, New Zealand and have worked to build professional connections and relationships in order to strengthen my research process.

Study Location

The Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut are the three territories of Canada, in addition to its ten provinces. Their land mass totals approximately 3.9 million square kilometers or 39% of the total land mass of Canada, yet their collective population is approximately 118,400 or .3% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2015). Approximately half of the populations of Yukon and Northwest Territories live in their respective capital cities (Whitehorse and

[14] http://hosw.com/

Yellowknife), while the population of Nunavut is spread more evenly across the territory. In all cases, the territories have a few larger (relatively speaking) urban centres, with a higher number of widely dispersed smaller communities, making the provision of health and wellness care challenging. The majority of the population are recognized as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit, though the percentage of the respective Aboriginal groups varies in each territory.

These statistics clearly show that these three territories have very low population densities and wide expanses of natural landscapes. The majority of these lands are within the traditional territories of respective Aboriginal groups, and have been utilized for a wide range of harvesting activities. In essence, the Aboriginal communities have deep historical attachments to very large tracts of land, and the term 'cultural landscapes' has been used by at least one government, the GNWT (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2007). Mining and oil and gas development have taken place throughout the three territories and are prevalent features on the landscape. Regardless, all of the communities in these territories, including the larger urban communities, continue to have access to wide expanses of land for traditional harvesting, recreational, and ceremonial activities. Utilizing the Land as a base for healing becomes at least feasible in these geographic circumstances, though there is relatively little road access or communication services available into these remote areas. Motorized transport by four-wheeler, plane, or boat is common, involving substantial fuel costs and logistical planning.

Methods

Interview process

I interviewed eleven Land-based Indigenous experts from across the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut from March-June 2015. I used this interview process to capture the

first-hand experience and understanding of Land-based practice from some of the people currently working in this field from across different Northern regions. These individuals were chosen through purposive sampling, which is a very intentional selection of informants who are experts, in order for me to substantially learn about this unique experience (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140). They were identified through personal and professional networks developed through time working in the field of Land-based health, and a subsequent 'snowball strategy' in which knowledgeable individuals from these networks identified other Land-based program leaders who might be interested in sharing their experiences with me (Polkinghorne, 2005).

I posed basic questions for these key informants during an audio recorded interview, and at the same time aimed to keep the interview process flexible in order to gain a "rich and inclusive account of the participant's experience" (Polkinghorne, 2005). While interviewing Dene knowledge holders, academics Johnson and Ruttan (1992) describe the difficulties they had with a heavily structured interview process during a project funded by the Dene Cultural Institute:

> Local researchers found that informants did not respond freely to a question-answer format. By constantly firing questions at an informant, they felt that they were restricting his or her freedom to address other issues that were of personal importance. Moreover, it was not clear to what extent the information gathered in this manner represented a Dene as opposed to Western perspective of the subjects being investigated (Johnson & Ruttan, 1992, p. 36).

In contrast, Kovach (2010, p. 99) identified the benefits of a more open-question format to interviewing Indigenous informants:

> The best methodology that I found was in-depth interviews, because that gave me space… to at least guide people in terms of what to say and when to say it. It was a more open approach. The more structured the interview the less flexibility and power the research participant has in sharing his or her story.

As a result, I considered these experiences in developing my interview guide and interview process, knowing that flexibility would be an integral part of the experience and that the process would be a reflexive one, where the experts would lead me down the path I needed to go down in order to understand their own gifts and experience.

I kept in mind that "producing interview data is unlike the production of questionnaire data… in producing interview data, the questions vary and are adjusted to the individual being interviewed" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 143). Polkinghorne (2005) goes on to state that "the produced account is sometimes referred to as a co-creation" (p. 143) as the interviewer's presence is integral to the person's account of the participant's experience. In effect, my previous experiences with the participants and the process of easing into questions and stories helped open up deeper and richer responses from the individuals, more so than if I had had no previous interaction with them or understanding of the emergent requirements of Indigenous interviewing. Care was taken to ensure that the participants remained the main author of the descriptions they gave me. Consistent with Polkinghorne (2005), my interview process involved listening more than speaking and carefully managing my influence on the person's experience by focusing on each key informant's personal understanding. The interview guide, including interview questions, is provided as Appendix I.

Throughout my field work I also informally talked with a number of anonymous individuals across the three territories who were interested in the research topic at conferences, events, on the land, or just at the coffee shop. This included being invited to various Land-based programs and activities, which I participated in whenever I got a chance. These informal experiences and conversations enriched my experience with the interview process and provided a triangulation of experience outside of the formal interviews with a wider array of northerners.

None of these conservations were recorded or used in this thesis, but were an important part of my process in supporting and validating the experiences of my key informants.

Ethics approval

Prior to my interviews, I completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement online tutorial which outlines ethical guidelines for conducting research with human participants (Government of Canada, 2014). I obtained formal ethics approval from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board to conduct field interviews. In order to conduct interviews in the Northwest Territories I also went through an in-depth ethics application with the Aurora Research Institute including an extensive community consultation and feedback process (Aurora Research Institute, 2011). I also received a formal Scientific Research Licence to go ahead with interviews in Nunavut through the Nunavut Research Institute[15], which required research approval including translating all research related documents and interview questions into Inuktitut.

I ensured that my personal relationships in the research process were treated with respect, which meant ensuring that I sought the highest level of transparency in clearly communicating myself as a researcher during site visits and in follow-up stages. I examined any potential risks associated with the interviews and found there were no major risks associated with the research (Government of Canada, 2014). I ensured that any people participating in audio recordings had the right at any time to refuse being included in this thesis or to end the research partnership at any time during the interview process (Government of Canada, 2014). I included a clear discussion around the use of any sensitive information and was directed by my informants

[15] http://www.nri.nu.ca/research-licencing-applications

of any desire for anonymity or anonymity of associated organizations (Government of Canada, 2014). I clarified that these participants were first and foremost representing themselves and their own personal wisdom and experiences in the research and were not spokespersons for any organizations or Aboriginal groups they were affiliated with.

I obtained a support letter from the Dene Nation of the Northwest Territories and formal feedback from various organizations and First Nations through the research licence application process (Aurora Research Institute, 2011). I abided by traditional knowledge collection protocols developed by various First Nations regions and governments even though I was not collecting community information directly, and reached out to others who had experience with research ethics in a northern context (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2005; Institute for Circumpolar Health Research, 2014). As part of the licencing application, there is a commitment to producing a plain language account of the research results for distribution to participating individuals and communities in which people were interviewed, along with translation into Inuktitut for Nunavut.

Narrative collection

Field interviews took place in five different communities in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon. Ten interviews with eleven individuals took place in familiar settings for the participants in order to make the process more relevant to the topic of research and comfortable to the experts interviewed. Location was dependent on weather and logistical circumstances such as recording quality and ambient noise (Dene Cultural Institute, 1991).

Following the interviews, I provided each expert interviewed with copies of the original recordings and transcripts of their interview so they could have tangible copies of the information they shared. Although I generally did not receive much formal feedback through

ongoing correspondence other than general words of well-wishing and support, there was a back and forth element to the transcription in order to verify information, similar to the process outlined by Stewart (2008). As Clandinin states "Narrative inquirers continue to live in relational ways with participants, although in less intense ways, throughout the process of moving from field texts to research texts" (2013, p. 49).

A modified process of narrative analysis was used for individual interview transcripts. The initial transcripts were sent back to the participants in a draft narrative format for comments and feedback before being summarized into research texts or *narrative accounts* similar to a process outlined by Clandinin (2013). As Clandinin (2013) states, "In our use of the term *narrative account* we strive for a sense of being morally responsible to each other and to our negotiated relationships as well as to our negotiated texts" (p.132). Important narratives from my informants were kept intact as much as possible in the research texts and examples of such narratives are included throughout this thesis with my own reflective commentary and interpretation interwoven between, similar to the method explained by Kovach (2010, p. 52) and shown by Cruikshank (1991).

In a negotiation of Indigenous and qualitative methodologies, I utilized thematic analysis to gather basic themes from across the various transcribed interviews (Kovach, 2010). Thematic analysis is a widely used but poorly demarcated mainstream qualitative analytic method that is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within an entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 77, 79). Braun and Clarke note that it is "an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data" which is not necessarily wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework (2006, p. 77). For example, they note that it has often been framed as a realist/experimental method, but stress its "theoretical freedom" which can be compatible within

other paradigms, such as essentialist or constructionist, that depart from a naïve realist view of research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). They note that it overlaps but differs from other analytical methods that also seek to describe patterns across qualitative data - such as thematic discourse analysis (DA), thematic decomposition analysis, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), and grounded theory - by not requiring a detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of approaches such as these (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To clarify, they note that the most important part of utilizing the thematic analysis method is to explicitly state what the theoretical position of the analysis is, so that it is not left unspoken and naturally assumed as realist (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

My theoretical framing of the thematic analysis component was within Indigenous ways of knowing as discussed above, and aspects of a social constructivist paradigm, which "values context in cultural construction of knowledge, language and communication" (Stewart, 2008, p. 50). Themes were identified at a semantic level, attempting to summarize the significance of patterns in relation to the literature for their broader meaning and implications for practical application (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes and patterns within my data were identified through a theoretical, deductive, or 'top-down' approach, which is more analyst than data-driven, to provide me with a more detailed analysis of the concept of Land-based health itself (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Essentially, I looked for themes within a very specific research question and underlying topics, which is more in line with a constructivist theoretical approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). My underlying question being: what is the nature, scope, and value of Land-based programming in the context of how it is being practiced?

This approach might be looked down upon by proponents of narrative inquiry as reducing storied lives into themes or categories and taking away the essence of what I started out with in

interpreting the individual interview processes (Clandinin, 2013). Kovach states that processes such as thematic grouping which extract narrative findings are not an "Indigenous method" but can be approached through a lens of respect and understanding (2010, p. 53). I felt like there was a useful place for thematic categories within my project if approached from a lens of introspection, respect, and understanding of the intention, which I will explain further.

The expositor of Dene Ch'anie above, and other Indigenous mentors I have listened to, essentially explain large concepts and hundreds of years of individual and collective wisdom via visual conceptions or shared themes, for example the visual form of the tepee described in the worldview of Dene Ch'anie (Figure 2). It seems that apart from the storied narratives of Elders, cultural leaders also value the individual's ability to listen and synthesise knowledge into themes that are useful for teaching others about large holistic concepts (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012). Similarly, Kovach mentions "In many Indigenous communities, individuals with the training and experience to inductively analyse patterns were the knowledge-keepers and were highly esteemed" (2010, p. 131). Therefore, I saw utility in synthesizing themes from the things people told me, as long as I recognize that it is my interpretation of their stories and not the stories themselves, and that all things are essentially connected.

This analytical method helped me in organizing the teachings from my informants into a format that is more accessible and coherent to a wider audience. In addition to reflecting on the nuances of their rich narratives and life experience in the field, I hoped to find connections between the experiences of my interviewees in order to better elucidate the concept of what Land-based practice is from an Indigenous perspective, across very different geographic and cultural regions. This perspective is presented in narrative form.

Validity and credibility

As a Dene academic, Stewart suggests that "Indigenous epistemology can influence knowledge and practice in research… [and that other authors have suggested] through the interpretive activities of both researchers and participants, the process of co-constructing and co-participating stories is inherent in a narrative inquiry, and this reveals a circular, or continual, understanding of experience" (Stewart, 2008, p. 50). This brings to light the question of validity when working within an Indigenous research framework, while also situated within a largely Western positivist oriented academia which highly values objectivity and distance from the research question and interview process.

Validity, which is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions generated through research, is seen as one of the most important criteria for quantitative studies (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). In qualitative research, various stances on the aspect of validity are evident (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Most qualitative researchers have suggested that qualitative studies should be judged or evaluated based on completely different criteria to quantitative research (Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Mishler, 1990). Woods, Shaw, Agrawal, and Smith (2004) state that "there are now 100 sets of proposals on quality in qualitative research, some adopting non-reconcilable positions on a number of issues…and attempts to produce consensus on criteria have proved difficult" (p.223). They go on to explain that qualitative research is not a unified field, and that there are many different approaches to methodology and data collection which make the idea of developing uniform criteria for assessing validity flawed (Woods et al., 2004). They also state that the concept of addressing quality should not be abandoned despite these challenges, by instead finding a middle ground between firm criteria and adaptation within different methodologies (Woods et al., 2004).

In interpretive inquiry, Mishler (1990) proposes to redefine validation as the process or processes through which we make claims for and evaluate the "trustworthiness" of reported observations, interpretations, and generalizations, [departing from standard doctrine] by making validation rather than validity the key term (p. 419). The concept of trustworthiness is also outlined by Bryman & Teevan (2005, p. 27) as being composed of 'credibility' (i.e. how believable are the findings?), among other things. Mishler (1990) explains that focusing on this concept of trustworthiness better represents a socially constructed discourse and displaces validation from a "presumably objective, nonreactive and neutral reality" (p. 420) sought after in scientific disciplines. Kovach (2010) also draws on this concept in her work. Kovach (2010) explains that a clear concept of validity within the Indigenous paradigm can be summarized by the question "Are you doing this in a good way?" (p. 52). She goes on to practically explain some steps that can be taken to ensure this process within an Indigenous framework, including maintaining "a consistent effort at debriefing with other Indigenous graduate students and scholars throughout the process, both formally and informally"; keeping the language of the research accessible; and allowing participants to review transcripts (2010, p. 52). I have followed these steps during the research process and found them to be a suitable way for me to address the concept of validity in my work. This included networking with other Indigenous researchers and students throughout the research process, as well as vetting my proposal through the Dene Nation in the Northwest Territories and prominent Elder Francois Paulette. I tried to present my results in a relatable and understandable format with inspiration from Wilson (2008), who describes complex methodological processes in a format even his children would understand, and, finally, sharing the transcripts with participants as an important part of the research.

Kovach (2010) further states that in order to uphold credibility within Indigenous research approaches and frameworks, the methodology used must be congruent with cultural values and demands, and also engage with the wider academic community. Specifically she states that:

> (a) findings from Indigenous research must make sense to the general Indigenous community, (b) schema for arriving at our findings must be clearly articulated to the non-Indigenous academy, (c) both the means for arriving at the finding and the findings themselves must resonate with other Indigenous researchers who are in the best position to evaluate our research (2010, p. 134).

I would argue that this credibility can be upheld by insider or outsider researchers. Lowan-Trudeau (2012) stresses the importance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars alike in entering into the important territory of dialogue on ethical research approaches "*by, with, and for"* Indigenous peoples (p.114). Insider/outsider status is discussed more below.

In addressing the credibility of my findings, I have explained my methodological approach in detail in this section. I also took care to interview individuals who are informal leaders and who are spoken highly of by members in their community or organization. This acknowledgment gives integrity to their knowledge gathered through years of personal, community, and ancestral experience. I interviewed unique individuals from different Indigenous cultures in the North and note the thematic similarities between their experiences, therefore triangulating knowledge across diverse experiences and regions in the North.

Insider/Outsider status

An interesting aspect of research within an Indigenous paradigm is the concept of insider/outsider status and concerns over validity with research conducted by insider researchers;

that is, researchers who are a part of the community they hope to study (Innes, 2009). I had prior relationships to varying degrees with some of my research participants and was approaching my work in those cases as an insider, as a friend or colleague, or as an Indigenous northerner with my own understandings of Indigenous culture. This was countered by my outsider status as a researcher, and at times, differences among our own Indigenous cultural backgrounds (Innes, 2009).

As Innes (2009) states "though insider researchers acknowledge that their research projects present certain challenges, they disagree that these challenges weaken the validity of their findings" and in fact two Native American researchers argue that "from our own experience, it is the *lack* of distance that has enhanced our own research" (p.444). In fact, it is more commonly accepted that the "ethnographer's self [actually] affects every aspect of the research process, from conception to final interpretation" (Innes, 2009, p.444) in any research process. Thus, the standard view of researchers remaining distant and objective is in fact an undesirable approach to research methodology, especially within an Indigenous paradigm which is based on relational trust and insider identity which aids the research process and may at times provide a more nuanced and insightful version of the cultural reality. An important concept of insider research is that it has the "ability to address research issues in unique ways that not only increase our knowledge but also challenge preconceived notions of the research group" (Innes, 2009, p. 445).

Chapter 4. Results and Discussion

Land-based Experts Interviewed

I consider the individuals I interviewed as experts in their field of work, similar to admissions made in the reflective practice of professionals (Schon, 1983). They have gone about their work intuitively and were knowledgeable in defining the field of Land-based practice as they experience it. They all have varied and diverse experiences with the Land, many since birth. It was also clear that they were all strongly grounded in their individual cultures and identity. They each had a rich ability to communicate, engage, and relate the experience of operating in the modern arenas of education, health, justice, environment, governance, and community development.

They are bridge builders, informal community leaders, Elders, young professionals, Land-users, and reflective practitioners. Each has multiple roles to play at the community level, though they each represent themselves in this research rather than their organizations or affiliations.

They are all uniquely equipped to bridge worldviews in this area of practice in their own personal and professional lives. They live the field of Land-based practice every day, in their professional and personal lives, and continue to work through and reconcile the challenges of organizing and supporting Land-based programming within the current arenas of government systems and funding mechanisms. In this way they are also trail blazers, working within the system to change it from the inside or bottom up, in order to make cultural Land-based practice more accessible and prevalent in our present day reality.

I have provided initials to track these individual's quotes throughout the results section for ease of identification and tracking.

Biographies and Identifiers

BB- Besha Blondin is a respected Dene Elder and medicine woman. She was born on Great Bear Lake at a place called Cameron Bay, where her father delivered her into the world. She lived most of her young life on the land, until she was about 12 years old, embedded in cultural education through her parents and Grandfather Itsi Tauya. At 13 years old, her parents told her that is was time for her to start living her own life and she made a choice to go to school. She is an environmentalist, healer, teacher, auntie, and grandma for many, and passionate about the gifts and potential of our youth.

AMR- Ann Maje Raider is a part of the Wolf Clan. She's from a traditional Kaska family rooted in Kaska Territory. She is a loving kind presence and contributes to her community in many roles. She has been with the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society (LAWS) for 16 years now and has extensive family roots throughout the Yukon.

LM- Linda McDonald is a member of the Kaska Nation as well as a member of the Liard First Nation. She is also a member at large with LAWS and helps out where she can in planning and contributing to Land-based activities and participating in them. She comes from a traditional Kaska family from Watson Lake and northern British Columbia (B.C.). Her family comes from Northern B.C. as well, so she feels very connected to the Land there. Linda teaches Kaska language and culture at Watson Lake Secondary School in Watson Lake.

LP- Leesee Papatsie lives in Iqaluit but was born in Pannituuq (Pangnirtung), Nunavut. She is an engaged community member and likes hunting. She is a wonderful grandmother, sister, mother, and friend. She has lead and taught at dozens of Land-based programs and cultural activities across Nunavut and spends as much time as she can out on the land. She works with Nunavut Parks and Special Places with the Department of Environment within the Government of Nunavut.

BQ- Becky Qilavvaq is a proud Inuk from Nunavut. She is based out of Iqaluit, born and raised in the small fishing community of Pangnirtung. She spoke only Inuktitut growing up and learned English later on when she moved to Iqaluit. She travels around the world being asked to represent Nunavut in various capacities. She is deeply grounded in Inuit culture and values, and a

captivating speaker and Inuit leader. She is highly engaged in her community and works in partnership with many Inuit youth towards a beautiful future.

CM- Ceporah Mearns is an Inuk originally from Pannituuq, Nunavut. She was the youth research coordinator at Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre in Iqaluit at the time of this research. She is a student, a young professional, a granddaughter, educator, and ambassador for Land-based programming in Nunavut.

LC- Luke Campbell is a young leader, passionate about his cultural roots and gifted in his work with youth. He is Dakh'lawêdi and Tlingit Southern Tutchone. He spends many long days organizing and leading cultural activities and Land-based educational programs in partnership with First Nation youth. He has a great sense of humour, cares deeply about people, and is happily grounded in the territory of his ancestors.

CG- Colleen Geddes is a member of the Teslin-Tlingit First Nation, from the Crow Clan. She is the coordinator of the Jackson Lake Wellness team through Kwanlin Dün First Nation. One of her roles involves the coordination, planning, and implementation of two four-week Land-based healing programs at Jackson Lake, outside of Whitehorse, every summer. She believes in traditional culture being a grounding for people who wish to heal. She has previously worked for many years in the justice field, assisting people in trying to better their lives and move forward in a good way. She loves being out at camp and bringing the community together to gather, meet and share.

PG- Phillip Gatensby's Tlingit name is [oral only]. He is from the Kùkhhittàn clan, which is the Raven Clan, and is the grandchild of the Yen yèdí which is the grizzly bear people. He is an advocate, a father, a holder of ceremony and traditional teachings, and a cultural counsellor and teacher. I interviewed him in a truck stop café on the Klondike Highway.

MM- Mandee McDonald is Maskîkow (Swampy Cree) form Churchill Manitoba and has been living and working in Somba K'e, Denendeh (Yellowknife, NT) for almost 20 years. She is a land-based programming manager, moose-hide tanning apprentice, an academic, a writer, and works many hours spearheading land-based education programs in partnership with the Dene of Denendeh.

TR- Tony Rabesca been involved in many programs based in Dene language, culture, and way of life. Tony was a wellness worker and delivered many healing programs in his community. He and his co-worker were the first to deliver an on the land treatment program based on the Dene way of life. He continues to live strong like two people and teaches the importance of spiritual connection through language, culture and way of life.

Articulating a Lived Land-based Connection

> At some point, my grandmother, she talked a lot, she told lots of stories about the Land, the life of the Land. She spoke to me one time; I might have been about 13 I guess, and she'd talk about how we were from the Land, we were the Land, not from it, but we were the Land. That I was the earth and I was the fire, and I was the water and I was the air, right, and all of them were things that contributed to give me life. And so without any one of them I would not be able to exist. And she spoke to me, she said once that, she said "A long time ago everybody used to speak the same language". And at the time I thought she meant English, right, later in my life I realized it wasn't a spoken language, it was a spirit language really that she was talking about it. And when she said 'everybody' she meant every living thing, And she said that, one of the things she said was that we were the only ones who don't know the language anymore, that we didn't speak it, but everything else still did speak it.
>
> And so it kind of stuck with me that, and I always had a relationship with the Land pre-camp days; I would, I understood it, I know that I didn't really fully remember. I believe that is a cellular thing that is going on; I am my grandmother's breath, it is in my DNA, and in my bloodline. I always had this idea. Even just sitting somewhere in Vancouver, downtown Vancouver, the little sparrow that hops around underneath your feet at Starbucks, I always made connections with it, with the plants, and with the animals, I certainly attribute lots of that to my grandmother's life, lots of it, it was inside of me already. **PG**

The practitioner-experts shared many stories and details about a diverse range of Land-based activities and programs that have been, or are currently being organized by themselves and/or other community citizens and organizations. These activities, though diverse in nature, all shared aspects of reconnection with various First Nations, Métis, or Inuit identities and cultural or Land-based skills and education, as well as strengthening human relationships. Most importantly, they shared a resounding common recognition of the fundamental importance of connection with the Land for a holistic range of integrated benefits or outcomes, and a vision for these activities continuing and expanding in nature.

This concept of Land-based connection was deeply integrated and integral to the practitioners' experiences and became most evident in the recounting of various stories and

examples which touched on many different concepts, crossed disciplines, and fields of research, and revealed a multi-faceted and unique area of practice well-suited to unite the fields of education, health, justice, environmental stewardship, and community development as proposed in the literature review.

Data Presentation

> And the thing is, even the kind of thing you are kind of working on can't be described: it is beyond our words, it's beyond our thoughts, it is a magical world that we come from. So it is difficult to use a language that doesn't belong there to describe that. **PG**

As this Indigenous knowledge holder explains, the presentation of Land-based cultural experience and wisdom poses challenges in the research world. It is hard to reconcile the extraction of certain kinds of data to articulate simplified themes and definitions for cross-cultural translation purposes in a field of practice that is so much about cultural integration, intuitive practice, and lived experience. Schon (1983) describes this 'reflection-in-action' process, similar to what I observed when listening to my key informants' reflections on their work.

> When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is *in* our action [emphasis in the original] (p.49).

I understand that my translations of lived knowledge will fall short; however, I do my best to describe the nature and scope of Land practice as I understand it from my fieldwork.

The concept of language, as mentioned in Phillip Gatensby's (PG) quote above, came up a few times when examining knowledge translation between worldviews: 'language' in the form of English or other written languages and traditional languages, but more significantly, the 'experiential language' of the natural world so deeply embedded in a cultural understanding, in which Land-based connection is richly felt, understood, and lived every day by the people with whom I spoke. As mentioned in the methodology section, Chipewyan Elder Francois Paulette clarified this perspective to me over tea one day: "This isn't a world view, it's a way of life" (Paulette, 2014). Stories provide us with a window into this unspoken world of understanding and knowledge lived in everyday life.

Keeping this in mind, I have tried to let the interviewees speak for themselves around the following thematic categories or topics in this narrative discourse analysis:

1. Land-based terminology and philosophy;
2. On-the-Land as a location;
3. Programs versus activities;
4. Land-based practice;
5. Supporting individual resilience;
6. Colonialism and Land disconnection;
7. Land-based health and healing;
8. Land-based education;
9. Community building;
10. Environmental stewardship;
11. Bringing Land-based back to the community;
12. Challenges to organizing initiatives;
13. Summary of emergent themes and findings; and
14. Future visions.

I wish I could share all of the stories; however, for presentation purposes, I have selected narrative accounts from Land-based practitioners that support the different thematic categories. I let the experiences and voices shared in this research speak for themselves in small vignettes, while providing narrative linkages among and within each theme. I have also included two

detailed narrative accounts in the appendices section for a richer, culturally intact example of my results (see Appendix II and III). It was important for me to include these longer narrative excerpts, as it became clear during the data analysis stage that it was the only way of truly honouring the nuances of these two specific stories.

4.1. Land-based Terminology and Philosophy

> So I think that for me, the whole idea of Land-based, it's for me, my understanding, that the Land is a healer. **PG**

Terminology

After discussing the concept with experts across the north, in northern Canada it was found that the term 'Land-based' provides a foundational term that can be followed by any number of words or concepts which can include 'program', 'activity', 'education', 'pedagogy', 'health', 'wellness', 'healing', 'skills', 'philosophy', 'world-view'; and I will add 'practice', 'resurgence', and 'politic' which describe an array of different concepts all united by the fact that they are fundamentally rooted in an Indigenous world view, way of life, and understanding of the world. In essence, the term reminds us of our most fundamental connection.

> 'Land-based' is even one of those words, it's a beautiful, wonderful term. It is bringing people back to the Land, and helping them become alive and remembering their humanity and their connection to all living things…we are the Land. So if we remember who we are, then the same miracle that we see all around us will be us. When we remember that, I am the Land, I am these things. I am the stars and the planets, I'm not something separate from it or foreign to it. That I think, that is where our struggle lies. I think I have no relationship with the sun, but yet I have a fire inside me, that when I die my body will become cold again, because the fire leaves me, yet I think I have no relationship with the fire. I am 80 percent water, but I feel like I have no relationship with water, how sick is that. **PG**

Different terms are used in different communities and with different programs, depending on the context or orientation of the program, all united by the fundamental relationship with the Land. As one informant describes Land-based education:

> Indigenous education and Land-based education, though they don't always necessarily call it 'Land-based' education, because Indigenous education is Land-based, it's fundamentally informed by relationship to Land. **MM**

The term 'on the land' describes a location; of being located a distance away from an established community or settlement. This distance can vary considerably.

Many combinations of terms are described and talked about. For example, if it is primarily an education program organized within the education or school system it would be under the umbrella of 'Land-based education', or if it was an addictions program in the Yukon, it would be under the umbrella of 'Land-based healing', or a youth program it might be 'Land-based wellness', or if it was an Environment or Parks program it might just be 'Land-based programming' or an 'on the land science camp' or an 'on the land trapping or harvesting program'. If it is a community organized trip it might be an 'on the land spiritual or cultural gathering'. If it was organized through a recreational lens it might be an 'on the land canoe trip' or 'ski program' and so on.

While these designations are made for organizational and practical considerations, as already mentioned, there is also an understanding that these programs naturally cross boundaries between many programming and activity areas, making them difficult to define under funding mechanisms that naturally require separation. However, they all could be said to be based clearly in a Land-based pedagogy or understanding as described in the literature review.

Here are some examples of the experts discussing the terminology itself and some of these connections and meanings around terminology with application for practice.

So when I'm talking about Land-based education, I'm talking about Indigenous Land-based education and I know there's some different terms that are kind of thrown around out there in the literature, but there's not really one agreed upon definition that is consistent across disciplines right now. **MM**

I think in Nunavut it would be more Land-based programs. Yah, it would be 'Land-based program', and making that connection of everything working together, because most Inuit kids will understand that - that's one of the good things. It's not like going to a southern school and saying that… but most kids will understand everything's connected. They already have that, so that part is already there, you just build upon it. **LP**

So Makimautiksat, I would say it's a 'Land-based camp'. It was initially Makimautiksat Youth Wellness and Empowerment Camp, we've dropped 'wellness and empowerment', so it's the Makimautiksat youth camp [to keep it more general]. So we're still pushing for wellness; we address these topics throughout the camp... but the goal is, and the evidence shows that, youth are learning about wellness. For some it's healing, you know, we're building skills and gaining knowledge to be a whole person. That's our end goal, at the end of the camp hopefully. **CM**

[Speaking about an education program] I think it definitely is a healing program, I can see that, but we don't articulate it as an organization really, well I don't think. Like when you talk to me or you talk to students, a lot of them *do* talk about it as a healing experience for a lot ways. A lot of people say things like "oh, now I understand why my family is like this". **MM**

Okay, so this is one of the effects I think of working as a program manager now in a charitable organization; I'm always thinking of how to explain things in certain ways to funders, to apply for funding and getting funding for things. And I think it would be [having a common term in the Land-based field] useful in terms of articulating what we do and why it's important to have some kind of term, or a way that can concisely convey what it is, the model, that includes the health components and the education components together as one. **MM**

This term for me would be 'Land-based practice' and I would suggest moving towards more of a Land-based model to articulate these connections, as it became really clear that we just

can't separate healing from education or environment within a Land-based pedagogy. This is further discussed in following sections.

Significantly, once we accept this concept of Land-based practice, it becomes clear from the terminology and stories shared that we cannot be separated from the natural world in an Indigenous pedagogy.

> Well, on the land, well, Land-based healing, it's all the Land I suppose you could say, but you know it's a weird thing because we will say, we will go out in nature, but it's weird because what the heck are we? We are nature, we can't get out in nature. We have these concepts you know about it. **PG**

The terminology around Land-based practice provides a platform for reconnection with our pre-colonial identities in the modern world. The Land-based environment and practice described by the very distinct First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals with whom I interviewed was very diverse in practice and yet very common in philosophy.

> There is always dynamics with different First Nations, even though we are all Yukon First Nations. Every First Nation has something different, you know, that's not our culture, and this is not us, we try and resolve that by saying well we all believe in the healing power of the Land and the animals and the water and the air, and that's a good common place to start. **CG**

The Land-based practice the informants were able to articulate in northern Canada specifies that Land-based understanding is fundamental to any kind of practice or attempt to work towards healing and mending the disconnect that colonization has brought in northern Aboriginal communities, both in humans and in the natural world. This understanding intersects with the field of Environmental Design from a completely different perspective, essentially

approaching the concept of nature-based models and resource management from an Indigenous lens, so that we describe something more grounded and culturally appropriate in Aboriginal communities. An important distinction from similar terms in Canada was made - such as ‘wilderness’, ‘outdoor’, or ‘nature-based’ - as these terms hold different connotations based in a Eurocentric worldview. This distinction of terms and grounding philosophy essentially becomes the underlying differentiating factor of Land-based practice. Importantly, as described above, in the Land-based worldview, we become part of the same system we are trying to label or manage.

4.2. On the land as a Location

There was agreement that there was a distinct difference in the quality of the Land-based connection when practiced a geographical distance 'away' from communities, out on the land versus in a community centre. This is similar to the findings of Laurie (2013) who states that "participants were in agreement that the location of a land based program has to be isolated to some extent" (p.15). Laurie (2013) further explains that "on a practical level, being on the land takes one away from the stresses of everyday life… on a deeper level, several participants alluded to the ways that the powerful energy associated with the land or spirits associated with the land heal"(p.15). The importance of on the land as a location was described in different ways by my key informants:

> But on the land we remember our values far better than we do right in town. **LM**

> I don't think there is really comparison, you know, when you are talking about on the land and in town, in terms of program. **AMR**

> Because we are out on the land, it's just the Inuit thing that we're taught, I know I was taught that. You just become more respectful and just listen to whoever is leading you [when you are out on the land]. **LP**

There was also a distinction made between the larger cities and some of the smaller communities, which felt like living closer to the land. This distance varied considerably depending on road access, boat access, or fly-in only access.

> So for several years all throughout my teen years, we would just have a quick weekend retreat out just for tea or something like that, but it never, it felt like I had this huge void because I just felt so completely disconnected, I felt like I was almost ripped from my culture after we moved here [to the city], even though we are still in the Arctic. **BQ**

What I will say about the ‘distance away from communities or city’ discussion is that as Gatensby (**PG**) reminds us above, fundamentally a Land-based connection can take place anywhere once we remember who we are as people, because we aren’t separate from the Land in the first place. Thus the term ‘Land-based’ doesn’t automatically assume an on the land location. However, the excerpts above do highlight the importance of actually making time to connect with the natural world directly, in a location away from the distractions of the city. It was clear there is a special quality to being out on the land, yet ultimately we are not separate from it. This understanding, as described to me, works to close the divide created between physical community and Land-based connection and any limitations imposed from the idea of Western understandings of ‘wilderness’. This perspective is summarized below.

So you think we as people have to go back out on the land, in order to find this and bring this back into the communities?

> It’s an interesting, it’s an interesting question right. I don’t think, I know that we don’t have to and yet in the same breath, yes we have to. We don’t have to ultimately, a lot of the things that we do, like the ceremonies we do, we don’t need to do them, but because of where we are in life, they are necessary now, they will take us to a certain place, and if we need to do that to get to that place then let’s do it, but I know ultimately we don’t have to. **PG**

4.3. Program versus Activity

> Do we need to do this to help them to understand? If it takes 'program', then let's do it. And later on we'll just call it life - no program. A program called life. **PG**

There was a distinction made between Land-based activities and Land-based programs. Various Land-based activities that wouldn't be classified as programs were described from berry and egg picking to hunting, ceremonial gatherings, fasting, and moose-hide tanning. The variety of Land-based activities is large and rich in northern Canada and continues to be an important part of Land connection for a diverse range of individuals outside of modern programming.

How long have you been participating in on the land activities yourself?

> Since I could remember. Since I was a baby I think. Since I was a kid, since I remember. **LP**

> Well, personally, my whole life through having grown up in Pang. *Pannqituuq*, which is a much more traditional community, all my memories are us out on the land, out hunting, berry picking, egg picking all of that, fishing and then I moved to the capital and it was the worst feeling in the world not being able to go out on the land. **BQ**

> I was born on Great Bear Lake, a place called North Shore, very close to Port Radium mine. And that little place is called Cameron Bay and my father delivered me. I lived most of my young life on the land, until I was about 12 years old. 13 years old, my parents told me, it's time for you to go now and start living your life. So that's when I made a choice to go to school, but before that I didn't go to school, but I had cultural education. **BB**

> I guess all of my life. I am originally from *Panniqtuuq* Nunavut. So my first experience with on the land camps was, I'll say, probably with family, camping. Picking eggs in the springtime, June fishing, and organized land-camps. I was very fortunate to go to school in Pangnirtung where we had yearly spring camp, where each grade spent time on the land at this one place called [omitted] or beyond [omitted]. There was staff that cooked the food and there were guides that took us out seal hunting, caribou hunting, and fishing each day. **CM**

Organized Land-based programs are clearly a present-day phenomenon as the idea of a 'program' is rooted in mainstream funding and organization. All the experts interviewed have been involved in the organization and practice of these formalized Land-based programs. In northern Canada we understand the necessity of these programs in the context of the way things currently are in modern life, especially for youth.

> Because there were some people who weren't fortunate to be able to go out on the land with their families, and so often, those organized school trips were opportunities for them. **CM**

> So long story short, just that's kind of a prelude to let you know why I started doing the work that I do now in fundraising and trying to find money to be able to hold Land-based programs and trying to get youth here who don't have a lot of opportunities to go out on the land, to connect them with those types of programs. **BQ**

There is a level of irony associated with the establishment of these formalized programs. As Qilavvaq (**BQ**) states:

> That's why I've been in this position where I try to find that money, finding third party funding to come in and pull people together so that I provide the resources - what's needed for the exchange to happen for youth and Elders to be able to connect, and for, just to facilitate what naturally happened for thousands of years, now you need to do in a very formal kind of way…and then we have to go out and fight to create these opportunities. It's really kind of sad that you have to do things this way, but it's become necessary I guess. **BQ**

4.4. Land-based Practice

Organized Land-based practice is noted in my research as a distinct field of northern practice. The activities and programs described to me were diverse in cultural teachings, focus, and outcomes. They each took different shapes and sizes and provided an avenue for youth and/or adults alike to reconnect in different ways with the environment, Land-based skills, educational learning, spirituality, pleasure, and different cultural teachings and healing practices. They were similar in that they were all firmly grounded in Land-based pedagogy and directed by the traditional knowledge and cultural practices of the respective group or region.

> There's programs like canoe safety training, but then you look at the spirit of the water, you pay the water, and there's a reason why the connection is that you be patient, you don't rush and go, but you have to understand the patience and understanding. And once you have the understanding you're not rushed, you understand the weather, the surroundings around you and things, and you know where you're going. So it's just a matter of slowly knowing what programs to deliver…and some of them are the TK canoe tour, and there are the ones that learn about place names on the land, they do research on the historical sites and at the same time the importance of the story behind… the story behind the legends, stories that happened during when people were out on the land. So it's all interrelated with the unity and the spiritual connection to the Land and also to yourself. It's totally different, it's all interrelated but some of them are different programs we deliver. **TR**

In the next sections of this thesis I focus directly on organized programs. These are programs that have been designed intentionally by individuals, Land-based organizations, or other institutions. Ultimately, no matter what the program, whether educational, environmental, or therapeutic in focus, each program was described as having innumerable physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health benefits, which naturally crossed disciplines. These benefits were

realized for the workers and organizers themselves, for the participants, and also at the community level, and recognizing this integrated nature of outcomes was seen as an important part of the practice itself.

It became evident that Land-based practice doesn't need to look a certain way nor espouse or reject mainstream practices. It is much too limiting to separate programs into various discipline boxes of education, health, justice, community development and others, even though most funding arrangements require these separations. In response, the model below was developed in this study (Figure 4):

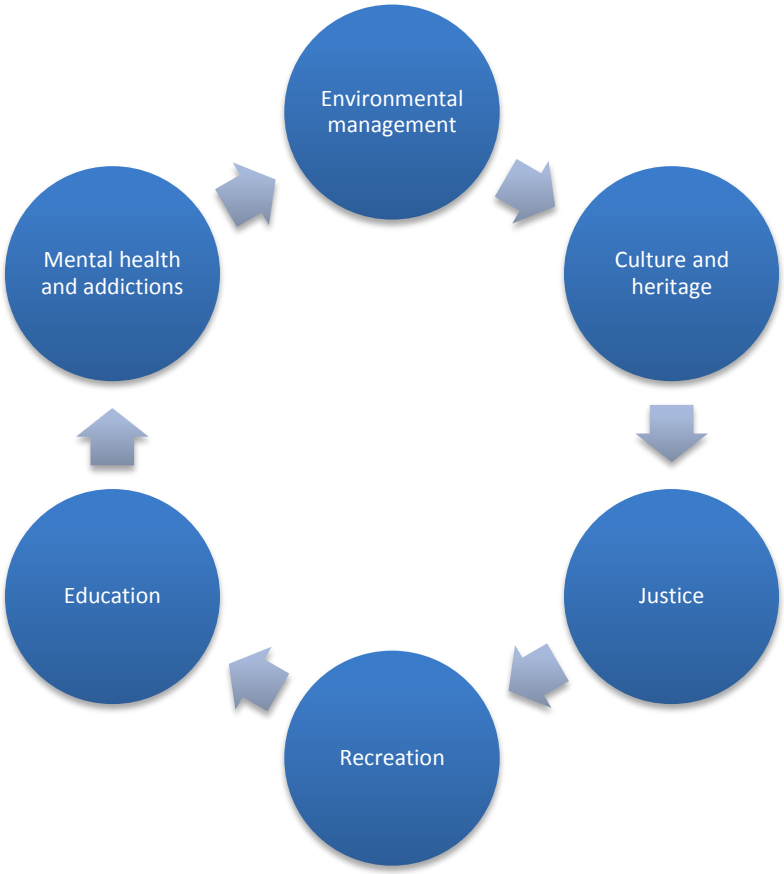


Figure 4: Applications in the field of Indigenous Land-Based Practice

Land-based practice contains solutions which have evaded mainstream health, but are intimately understood at the ground level as containing health solutions to a number of mental and physical health challenges. Below is an example, where conventional services failed, that organized Land-practice can provide a culturally relevant rehabilitation option.

> We had a project, 'Together for justice', and as part of it we went to the corrections center and we interviewed the inmates, the Kaska inmates, cause we wanted to ask them, "How can you help us?", "why don't you help us address violence against women?", and they said, "And what can we do?" they said, "We really want to help, but we just can't because we are sick". They said, "if you can get us well, we will help". And we said "What will that look like?" And they said, "We believe in the Land program- if you do a program for us on the land, that will be both therapeutic and cultural, that's for us, what will work". They said they went through a lot of therapies, a lot of counseling. There's a lot of resources in the prison and a lot of them have a revolving door, and they said, they've seen a lot of counselors, a lot of therapies, but what has impacted them the most has been programs on the land. But it's never been long enough. **AMR**

Not only did inmates feel like these programs would help them towards psychological healing, but when I dug a little deeper, I found that they could also provide an array of other benefits that would help them reintegrate in society. For example, in an analysis of outcomes of a Land-based justice program I was told about during my field interviews, that operated in the Northwest Territories in the 1980's, the program provided an outcome-based measure, using Competency Based Education, of skills attained throughout a wilderness rehabilitation program for inmates. These skills included food preparation and food safety skills, physical fitness and hygiene, interpersonal conflict resolution, navigation and survival skills, rescue operations, trapping and harvesting, among others (Polar Educational Planning, 1982). Such skills are helpful for employment and community integration.

In the next section I summarize some of the personal health benefits my informants identified from their work in this field. This information is ‘backed up’ in program evaluation reports listed in the literature review (see Table 1 and 2),

4.5. Supporting Individual Resilience through Land-based Programs

There were many narrative passages highlighting various interrelated physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental health benefits of these activities and programs on the land in northern Canada. Spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical dimensions were addressed many times over. It was clear that there is something special about the Land-based environment in particular. This is similar to findings by other northern researchers (Hanson, 2011; Laurie, 2013; Luig et al., 2011; Noah & Healey, 2010). As Noah and Healey (2010) state from their research " There was overwhelming support for camps to be held in naturalistic settings… on the land" (p.18). One expert explains this process below:

> So I guess I felt like I was in a position to help other young people connect with their cultural roots and you can do that in a square room but it's even more of an impact emotionally, spiritually, physically, psychologically, in all ways if you are out on the land. **BQ**

The personal healing benefits are grouped thematically and classified as interrelated and summarized under the Factors of Individual Resilience in Figure 5, and further supported by the literature discussed in Chapter 2**.**

Figure 5. Factors of Individual Resilience Supported through Land-based Programming

a. Self-confidence;

b. Cultural identity;

c. Interpersonal relationships and support;

d. Feeling healthy and well;

e. Physical activity and fitness;

f. Observable positive changes and feedback.

The benefits recorded are very much holistic and intertwined with each other, creating thematic categories which are highly interconnected, as exemplified below.

> Why we believe in it so much, because going back there [traditional Land location] brought, what we hear people saying, it brought a sense of belonging and it helped a lot of people in their memories of residential school. It helped them to remember and connect with who they were prior to being taken away to the residential schools. So we had a lot of Elders there, which was really a big part of the culture, is the Elders. So they did a lot of teaching, which is gathering medicines, hunting, making dry meat, berry picking, medicines, learning all about the medicines.
>
> So also, there was no negativity, so it was really different to go out on the Land with people, to see how people are transformed, to become so natural, so whole, and checking on each other, making sure the Elders were taken care of. If you lack something, somebody is always visiting. You are always visiting with each other, talking with each other. And the Elders were really happy, because that's what they remember. Then they come back here [to town] and it's back to the old where everybody, nobody visits, everybody is back separated again. **LM**

These are some examples of the benefits recounted to me through the interviews. They are grouped into thematic categories while remaining interconnected.

a. Self-confidence

In Participants:

> And I think really if done properly it gives a chance to give the youth a voice, or an action, or to be heard either verbally, physically by doing something; it's a chance for them to really show their stuff regardless. A person may not be experienced going out on the land, but they're keen to learn, so that part really interests me, is that everyone has the potential or everyone has something to give out there and when you start bringing that from the kids, it's amazing. **LP**

> All the kids feel very validated when they are out there. Everybody has a purpose, everybody has a role, and it just makes them feel like they are part of a bigger purpose. They have a purpose. That's one thing that I saw, that is very very important for Land-based camps, the role that everybody plays. Everybody has a role and it is a very important role, no matter what your role is. I don't know how to explain it. Yes that's how it used to be with Native people a long time ago, everybody had a role. **LC**

Lots. I see one of them [a young man at a Land-camp], that liked to follow all the time, liked to follow other people. I told him it's going to cause him a lot of problem in this life if he keeps doing that. So I told him that you are going to have to try and make a decision on your own, but how you are going to make it when you are always dependent on other people. So you have to teach them about dependency, how to work without that. And I see this young guy that was a follower, completely change [throughout the program]! And those other young people tell him 'well you need to do this, you need to do that…and he looked at them and he says 'no, because it doesn't fit me'! Yah. So he's got himself, that was about four weeks, and he's standing on his own two feet. **BB**

b. Cultural identity

Personal:

And I built trust for example, out on the land being with these Elders and Inuit and just seeing how well taken care of I was, and just really feeling a deep sense of belonging, like I am really part of this community, I am part of this culture, I am well taken care of. **BQ**

And so, the way the culture is developed and built over time, you feel very safe physically, emotionally, spiritually, psychologically in all ways and it all really comes out on the land way more than in the community, because in the community, in town, you can get away with thinking just about yourself, you can get away with just isolating yourself, you can just go off in a room and put your headphones in your ears or whatever, but out on the land you depend on each other, you have that valuable face time, you really connect on a level where you don't in other settings, and so for me it just got me very deeply acquainted with what it means to be an Inuk and gave me a very strong sense of identity and belonging and that's on top of the physical actual practical skills of being out on the land, that's just the cherry on top, what really happens is so much deeper. **BQ**

I think it does a lot to keep the Nation together, because culturally we're hunters and gatherers, right, and we have the camp there. **LM**

I have been going to camps a lot, as a participant. That camp life, especially as a First Nation person, is so nice to feel! It is so nice to feel, being in a camp with everybody else, and having a role. **LC**

In Participants:

At the beginning you can see how they (kind of) don't really know how to live communally. And then as the days progressed they understand that we are all dependent on each other and that all the kids play an important role. And I think it really shed a light on the kids who don't get that, who just stay in the city and don't really understand that way of life. I think spiritually, being out on the land with those kids, and even the adults too, it's totally peaceful and they are able to focus on the here and now - with no technology. They can't bring anything, because if they bring their cell phone and they lose it, they are SOL, cause you can't turn around on the trail and go find stuff! **LC**

And seeing kids who weren't really into their culture. Some kids come to our camp they had no idea: "What is Southern Tutchone?" "What is wolf clan?" They don't understand any of that. And then at the end, they [proudly] state "I am from the Crow clan, this is my family, my family grew up here, walked there, so I saw where my mom is from!" **LC**

c. Interpersonal relationships and support

Personal:

You get so connected together, like you are all a big family. **BB**

I felt, you know that quote, of 'it takes a community to raise a child'. Out on the land, is where I really felt that sense of community and everyone on every land trip, you have to be careful, there's safety issues and all that so you feel very well taken care of and you learn a lot about the people around you when you are out on the land, when you have to depend on somebody. **BQ**

Because we are out on the land, it's just the Inuit thing, that we're taught, I know I was taught that. You just become more respectful and just listen to whoever is leading you. When I was teaching, I wasn't like "this is the way you do it!" I was always looking for other students input to hear what they've experienced and then "okay you've done it this way, I've seen it done this way, let's do it this way". I think it's a big part of what I enjoyed there. **LP**

And as Ann said it wasn't anything really structured, sometimes we'd invite people in and they might offer something for few days. A lot of the time the synergy of just being there and being together, that's a big part of if too, is just the support she talked about; it's not only the cultural activities but how you are on the land, everybody shares things, if somebody's truck breaks down or boat motor isn't working, you pitch in. **LM**

In Participants:

And another young man was very very how you say it, violent. Abusive, bad mouth, hurting other people. He don't care how he does it, as long as he goes away accomplished by it. So I had to change that attitude, and I asked him, "Why are you like that?" He said, "I had a lot of brothers and sisters, and we come from a very violent home" and he says, "we became to be like: I want to be one, I want to be number one, I want to be number one, and all of us were chasing, that, to be number one." And he says "I always seemed to win". And I said "So what do you think about that now?" [after the Land-based program] And he said, "Wow, what a fool. I never have to be first. Here you teach us never to be first. You teach us about *us*, to be first within our *own self*, I never had that before. Now I have to go home and apologize to my sisters and brothers for pushing them the way I've done, for using violence and anger and swear words with them. I got to ask them, I have to apologize to them." And he says "I learned a lot here". And in that last night at the talking circle [around the campfire] there's a lot of emotion come out. **BB**

And everything that you do is not 'you', there is no 'me', it's 'us', it is such a different sense. Just for an example, for one of our kids' camps we went and set a net, and [there was a sense that] this isn't my fish, it's our fish. A couple kids caught it, however it belongs to everybody. Even, a kid went and got *one* gopher, and he was like "I am not going to eat it because I want everybody else to try it!" **LC**

And just that effort, if anything, if there's one thing we could get out of doing the camp, is just having those relationships with the participants and the facilitators and everyone involved. We're able to talk to each other. **LC**

Very good, the kids, most kids I've seen in a day program there is hardly any cross words with kids, I've seen it with kids, youth, young adults, adults, whenever they are doing a day program being out there. Like 99% of the time there's no cross words. It's almost like one day a year where [that happens] that's pretty cool. **LP**

So, to go through that with their parents and their parents feeling so guilty because they have gone through that. It's my opportunity to take those parents and to start working on healing with them, because they will be there two weeks with their kids, and that's very very important to see them working together. So we'll set up tents so that they all can live together. And so they go through two weeks together, and you can see the changes, the difference, and the feeling that comes out from those young people because they finally can tell their parents what they feel. That just breaks that ice, chew! [like that]. And you see that love building. So sometimes in the workshop I tell the parents "When was the last time you hugged your child?" They said "When they are a child, baby". "Well I think", I said, "it's about time you give another hug, everybody get up and give each other a hug". So you are always working for those two weeks reconnecting the parents and the child together. **BB**

What I really enjoyed I think was the older kids showing the younger kids; older kids being the mentors. We go "you two are going to work together and you two are going to", so they're kind of mentoring the young kids. Some of them may just kind of walk around, but some of them kind of help them, or pour a hot water, you know little stuff, but just that sense of responsibility, of giving the kids that, is good. **LP**

d. Feeling healthy and well

Personal:

The Land, it knows people, it knows us. The moment you go out there you feel more comfortable, everything comes alive in you just like it was sleeping, but when you get out there something magical happens and you feel like an animal, you feel alive again. It's interesting because you breathe more deeply, you go

out on the land, you watch and see, you'll take that deep breath, and it's like 'oh boy', something's feeling good here. **PG**

Well on the land is more where you feel peace, you feel secure, you feel harmony and unity, it's all interrelated, totally different when you go out on the land, you feel more peaceful and you're connected to spirit, you connect to the spirit, you connect to the water, land, animals, and it does totally different changes in you.**TR**

When I first left that trail, I felt, ahhh, a sense of relaxation. There is no sense of time at all. There is no sense of time. You can have lunch at 2 or you can have lunch 7 at night. That was awesome. And coming back, you are so relaxed! Wherever we go, it's nice to just hear the stories about the people that were there a long time ago. Sometimes you have Elders who come in; they talk about, "I used to live here as a kid". And feeling so calm, it's amazing. That's how I felt last year when I did my camp. When we got there, just listening to those stories and feeling so calm and mellow and easy going. **LC**

We are far away from the community, far removed and you know, it's not that we're depending on each other for survival, but it's just laid back, relaxed. We didn't have the greatest weather when we were out, but we made the most of it. You're just running around playing hide and seek or going out for walks, or going fishing, it was just a lot of fun, it was relaxed. It's quiet and you can see in everyone that they're calm, that there's nothing else that they have to worry about. **CM**

So the value, to me, it's almost immeasurable. You could take a certain amount of money and offer a weekend workshop in this building and you would get some benefit, but the benefit is far greater, it's far greater than the sum of its parts, to be there. Everybody from the wee little kids right to the Elders, just really recharge themselves, I think that's what you could say… It's just really powerful, a really powerful place to be. **LM**

And the quiet is really nice and the pace of work out there… it's like you work a lot harder physically but the pace is a little bit slower because you have to be really mindful of everything around you, so you know what you have to do. **LM**

It is so much fun. So much fun [being on the land]. **AMR**

It was always a lot of fun when I went with the school, you know, you go with your friends and you kind of have your own independence. A group of your friends have a tent, and it's always a lot of fun. I caught my first fish in the spring time when I was out on a school trip, but I also caught my first fish in the summertime when I was out with my family. So those were fun experiences. **CM**

So the benefits to me personally, I find that the quiet, and the clean air and the water. The environment feels really clean, like I'm not breathing in anything that smells weird; there's no exhaust, and there's no things leaking all over the place. I don't know, it's just clean, you feel cleaner, even though you shower less and you sweat a lot, I feel always cleaner out there. **MM**

In Participants:

Well they wanted to go back out on the land, and they feel more connected to the Land. And some of them said it's the first time they experienced it, they felt like a family, they felt like they didn't want to go back to the community, they felt safe, they felt good out there. And also they talk about how they're interested in learning more on the traditional cultural activities out on the land, you know fixing fish, duck hunting, beaver, muskrat, I mean there's even the caribou, *all*. **TR**

e. Physical activity and fitness

Personal:

And then just the physical work, like how much physical work you do. You don't have to set time aside to exercise [laughs] or try to think if you got enough exercise that day, or how you're going to fit it in; you are exhausted by the end of the day running around and chopping wood and hauling water and everything else that you have to do. So those are some of the positive benefits I can think of now for myself. **LM**

Because the physical health benefits I already mentioned are: no access to junk food, no access to alcohol, physical exercise all the time, and then you're eating really well all the time, you're eating fish and moose and stuff like that. **LM**

In Participants:

> What we saw with the kids was in terms of their physical abilities. They pushed hard, very very very hard! **LC**

f. Observable positive changes and feedback

Personal:

> Very successful. The judges and them [social services] you know, continuously wanted the camp to be run that way. **BB**

In Participants:

> Yep. And campers, you know I talked to them today and they are always asking whether or not we are coming back and how come we didn't come back last summer. **CM**

> Just seeing the kids that we hired. Because we hired some youth that were sort of living not the ideal lives. And we went out on a limb on that, and we hired them, and we saw how they totally transformed over the period, of even just working with us for (I think it was) three or four weeks that we had them working with us. **LC**

> And then after they finish all that and towards the last week of the program you can see a big change in ALL the kids within three weeks. Three weeks is where they stumble the most, first three weeks, and then after the three weeks it's completely knowledge building, healing, making a difference in their life. **BB**

> And in the camp, and seeing how they totally dealt with different issues that they had. At the beginning, what their attitudes were, and at the end, how they just totally changed. And seeing the respect that they had for people and for Elders and all that. It was phenomenal! **LC**

> Because we're an evidence-based program, I get to see rolling out the camp, I get to see those changes in people and observing them. **CM**

> And I know the parents, and once the camp was done, parents would approach me and there was one parent who said that she was so happy that her daughter took part in the camp because she had become more open than she ever was. Their daughter always kept a diary, and she read a page to her parents about the camp that she took part in, and how she was so happy to have taken part and she learned so many things. And that was just one story that a parent told me and this was a couple of months after it had happened, and I got a little emotional. But that has always stuck with me, because for me, I really started to notice what kind of impact our actions have. **CM**

> So out on the land though, we get back to, we go back to who we are, we go back to our truth, we go back to our strength. So to see people go there and people, a lot of people who maybe had been drinking for a while or a lot of other challenges, to see them in the bush and out on the land, is like a total turnaround. **LM**

> In terms of me, because I only work with kids, right, but not with adults that much. I mean I do, but it's not my main focus. Just getting kids on the land you can tell it does a lot for them. And I think it's really beneficial for them. So I can see that. There are kids who totally change when they are in the bush, I mean literally change, in a really positive way. **LC**

> For the participants I see it as really enlightening for them, it begins a really good healing path, and healing is a process. **CG**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the benefits of these programs have been difficult to assess quantitatively at the high level of scientific rigor required for demonstrating health outcomes to mainstream policy makers (Janelle et al., 2009), but a story, or set of stories, can convey a clear and unequivocal message. It was clear through my interviews that these programs and activities provide outcomes that are beneficial for mental health, physical health, emotional health, and spiritual health no matter what the main 'focus' of the program is.

These beneficial outcomes encompass the development of a clear foundation of personal resilience through Land-based connection. This individual resilience became evident in the practitioners accounts of their own experiences in life. These individuals are key people in their various communities providing many people with support and guidance, while walking firmly both in the cultural world and Western program world. Each practitioner, as seen above, attributed their own grounding and resilience through the challenges in their own lives to various opportunities for their own Land-based connection to develop. Rabesca (**TR**) describes this directly in his own life:

> For me, I had to endure some difficulties after my graduation. I said "I don't know what to do, I need to be proud of myself", but I had to go in the bush myself in order to do that. I had to go with people, and the only way to do that was to watch and learn. But today young people are, they want the government's help, they want them to do all the work, but in the past for me, we didn't have no programs, nothing, so the only way we know is to, if we are going to be able to go out in the bush and be a good hunter, we have to go there our self!
>
> So for me I went there by myself, I went there with people and even though I didn't know too much, but I learned how people cut the caribou, how to fix it, and then finally I did it myself. And I could go caribou hunting and cut meat right now. But that's one of the things, that, a challenge is that I could do things out on the land, and that's a challenge I have to overcome and I'm still learning too, but just overcoming this obstacle opened the door for me and it can open doors to young people and people that really want to make changes in their life. **TR**

A similar experience is described by Qilavvaq (**BQ**):

> And so I truly feel that if I had grown up in another, say in Iqaluit from birth, or say in Ottawa or something, I'd be a *completely* different person and the main factor in what really helped me to develop my sense of identity and my character and who I am and all that was the fact that I grew up in a small Inuk community that was out on the land like all the time. So I feel like my base, my cultural base, my foundation is *very strong* because of that and so its afforded me a pretty amazing life now being invited to all these countries, all these

> conferences, all these events national or international, to speak about Inuit, who Inuit are, what our values are, what our vision is for the future, how our history has shaped us and impacted us, positively and negatively, and all that. And I feel like I wouldn't have been considered a strong resource for cultural knowledge if I hadn't had that upbringing and just that very firm base, that foundation, the culture and being out on the land. **BQ**

These self-reflections from the individuals whom I interviewed, combined with the outcome data from various programs (see in Table 1 and 2**)** demonstrate the ability of Land-based programming to build and strengthen personal resilience in both the short-term and the long-term, for program workers and participants, as defined in the Individual Factors of Resilience diagram (Figure 5).

4.6. Colonialism and Land-Disconnection

> As Indigenous nations, we've been disconnected from who we are as people. From the sources of our strength and our very survival: our land, culture, community. Those things have been broken, or nearly so, by colonization. (Alfred, 2009, p. 5).

We face a lot of interrelated health, education, and environmental challenges currently in northern Canada, which stem from a very recent period of colonization and rapid changes in our communities, from a traditional way of life to one dominated by Western economies. All the interviewees have worked to reconcile in their own lives how to bridge both worlds into something more balanced and healthy in the realities of the modern era. They all function comfortably in both worlds and see Land-based practice as an important part of the solution, and a fundamental antidote to a disconnection brought on by forced relocation, residential schools, and government policy in the North.

> Just further to what Ann said, we've lived off the land for thousands of years; we've only lived a modern way in a very short period of time, and not only residential school, but colonization has really affected us. **LM**

Finding Our Way Back

> When we came into the world, when we were born, there was no sense of separation, we were one with the universe, and then society got a hold of us and they started to say "You are this and that's a dog, you're this and that's a tree, you're this and that's the river, you're this and that's that". And pretty soon we found ourselves kind of over here and everything else is over there. And so that's what I refer to as the separation blues; we feel separate from all living

> things, right, and yet it's an illusion. We can't possibly be separate from those things.
>
> If I could say something to people it is: get rid of the separation blues. Our time here on earth is spent, is here to remember that we're not separate from anything, that's what we're here to do, to realize we are **not** separate from anything, everything is related to us, and we are related to everything. **PG**

In the meantime, the practice of physically going out on the land holds one key to Indigenous healing and reconciliation, addressing a disconnection and intergenerational trauma which ultimately was precipitated by forced relocation from the Land (Simpson, 2014). This relocation challenged the fundamental Land-based relationship, resulted in devastating health impacts, and has since made it logistically and physically challenging to go back and reconnect with the Land, even for a moment. The disconnection continues today within a Western societal framework currently dominating employment, education, and governance in local communities, which can make simply justifying the costs, logistics, or risks involved with accessing remote 'wilderness' environments challenging within these frameworks.

It is very clear that it is difficult logistically for individuals to spend time out on the land in the context of these societal demands, which can include spending time away from family, finding the money, taking time off work or school, justifying the time off work or school, finding people to go with, accessing the appropriate gear, and weather and seasonal considerations. For example, one day I ran into this young Aboriginal man by the lake in Yellowknife during a school day. He looked so happy and excited to be there, and I asked him if he was going fishing with the fishing rod he was holding. He exclaimed excitedly that he was heading out fishing with his uncle for the first time ever and that he would learn how to fish. When I mentioned how great it was that he got out of school to do this, his face went down to the ground, and sullen.

After some gentle questioning on my behalf, he explained that his teachers didn't know and that he had in fact broken some rules at school purposely in order to get suspended so that he could go fishing. He continued that he felt really bad for doing it, but that he had always wanted to learn how to fish. I was surprised at his situation, and gently inquired what would have happened if he would have been able to just ask his teacher if he could take a couple days off to fish. He looked down sadly and explained why he thought that wasn't possible. I talked to him a bit about how sad it is that we live in a society where it is so hard for us to get outside to learn our traditional skills, and we continued chatting until I left him at the dock with well wishes.

Facilitating Land reconnection becomes much larger and even more involved logistically when trying to justify and provide this opportunity for large groups of people, and to do so under intentionally restrictive frameworks set out by government or organizational funding mechanisms makes it more challenging. These challenges are discussed further in the Challenges to organization Section (4.12). For example, how many communities are freely able to choose to spend limited mental health dollars on a Land-based spiritual gathering? What do you think a community would choose in many contexts if they were given the chance to? And what would it take to justify this use of funding?

> It's really counterproductive to be spending all this time on paper and indoors, just to try to get outdoors. **LM**

In the matter of a generation, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit across the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut have been forcibly dislocated from the Land and, ironically, now have to fight for the opportunity to spend time back out on it, let alone exert traditional rights on these lands. Thus, direct Land-reconnection is an important part of the decolonization

process. Qilavvaq (**BQ**) explains colonization, the land-disconnection, and the importance of Land-based reconnection in more detail, in the following narrative, when describing a workshop she conducts with Inuit youth in Nunavut:

> Day one is Inuit history, which is really very hard core. It's deep, it talks about residential school, it talks about the dog slaughter, the trading and the whaling eras, and we look at the impacts of all of those key events in our history and we look at Inuit culture and our values and first I paint a picture of what Inuit culture looked like pre-contact. We paint a full and colourful, deep, bright picture, not a romanticized, unrealistic view, but like really getting into the meat of what life was like pre-contact. They help me flesh that out from what they know.
>
> I usually go then all the way over here [shows], even physically in the room, I'll have a flipchart far on the left side where we talk about pre-contact culture and then I walk to the right side and ask "What are some of the issues we are facing today?" and then the youth say "substance abuse, and domestic violence, suicide, high dropout rates", and they start listing all of that on the right side.
>
> And then once they're done filling that out, then I ask them to look at both and I ask them "Were these problems existing back then the way they do now?" Not saying life back then was perfect, I don't believe that and if I had the option to go back to that time I would opt out because that was a hard life you know, but relationships were so strong and everyone depended on each other, it was a contract for survival. They worked so closely together and it was just a very different existence then.
>
> And then what we see, and what I show is kind of a break down, what things broke down?
>
> So I try to stay very realistic, it's not like "that was a perfect life back then and it's complete crap now!" There's a balance, but what I try to get them to realize is, they look at both and then deep down there's the burning question of "Well what happened?"
>
> "How did we go from igloos, dog teams, this nomadic subsistence, seasonal lifestyle to communities where we don't even get to go out on the land. How did we go from 24/7 out on the land to like barely out??" You know, they're like "What happened?!"
>
> So in the middle I put several flip charts, this big huge space and then we fill in the gaps, we do an Inuit history timeline. We go from about year 800 to today.

And the youth usually after that, their eyes are open because in their minds they have pieces of this big puzzle of Nunavut how it came to be, why things are the way they are, and how we're Inuk, but now we're globalized and we speak English, youth are just making sense of it all, and they have the pieces of the puzzle, and the session that I do helps them form a picture, and they're like "That's why things are the way they are!"

Because I am not completely blaming everything on colonization necessarily, but you have to realize that my grandmother lived a traditional subsistence lifestyle and my mother was the first to go to residential school, and I am the first fully integrated, that's how recent this history is and so that's why it's so crazy I guess, because that's a lot of change in a very short period of time. So I guess our connection to the Land is one of the things that was just greatly impacted in this transition.

And there's so much to this.

But I'm going to say that there was an actual… I want it to be recognized and acknowledged that there was an actual plan by the federal government to disconnect us from the Land; they had a policy in the 1950s, an assimilation policy where they very purposefully, methodically set out to have Inuit settle into communities and to not be nomadic anymore, through the dog slaughter, I don't know how much you know about that. I really feel like we need to really acknowledge and call it like it is, what's happened to us and why things are the way they are.

And these RCMP officers were given this task. I don't blame them, but they were told out of Ottawa or Parliament or whatever after this assimilation policy was signed off in Ottawa, to come up here and to systemically slaughter sled dogs so that Inuit would no longer be independent, that we would no longer be able to travel the Land and to hunt. And no Inuk can make it very far on foot up here, you know, so of course Inuit would have settled because not hundreds, but thousands, of these purebred Husky dogs were killed. And this is very recent, this is in the 50's 60's, that's in my mom's time, that's not my great, great, great great grandmother, that's my mom's time, it's *now*; my mom's still alive, so it feels like it's *right now*.

So that's why when I talk about the importance of Land-camps. It's really about reconnecting with the natural way of life for Inuit, it shouldn't be such a radical thing, or it shouldn't be "Whoa, we are living in the city and need to go out on the land", it's kind of like "What are we doing in the city in the first place, we belong on the land".

I truly believe in a future that's the best of both worlds. I don't believe in totally abandoning say education and the mainstream, being part of the mainstream

> society and being part of Canada, and being globalized and stuff like that, I'm not of the mind that leaving all of that and reclaiming our roots and going out on the Land is the way to go; I honestly really don't feel that's the way, I really feel like it's the best of both worlds.
>
> But the way this world is set up, the world that showed up on our doorstep one day, this new world, there's a lot of pressure to go to university, have a job, make a lot of money too, and with the high cost of living up here it's very difficult to keep up with rent, its over $2000 a month and then food in itself, if you are a big family can be equally expensive, it could be $1000-$2000 a month. And then even going out on the land with how much skidoos and gas and all that costs and it all adds up and then you're suddenly running this rat race in this new world and it doesn't allow very much time for you to really reconnect with who you are and who you're originally meant to be.
>
> That's why I've been in this position where I try to find that money, finding third party funding to come in and pull people together so that I provide the resources, what's needed for the exchange to happen for youth and Elders to be able to connect, and for, just to facilitate what naturally happened for thousands of years, now you need to do in a very formal kind of way…and then we have to go out and fight to create these opportunities. It's really kind of sad that you have to do things this way, but it's become necessary I guess. **BQ**

Recognizing the deep value of Land-based programing, in the next section I present some of the Land-based healing themes spoken about, as they show themselves in program practice.

4.7. Land-based Healing

> For me, I think that Land-based healing is remembering who you are. I think it's returning to that place, becoming who you really are, and getting out of the illusion or the stuff that the world taught us. I think Land-based healing is remembering. It is when you can become… when you start to remember who you are by your connection. **PG**

The description above speaks to the concept of 'Land-based healing', with a distinct scope of practice most applicable to the field of mental health, but with far reaching impacts for other fields as well, as discussed in the available Land-based healing literature on this topic (Hanson, 2011; Laurie, 2013; Radu et al., 2014). It was a term heard frequently in individual and community discussions in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, but wasn't a distinct term I heard mentioned orally during my individual interviews in Nunavut. This does not meant it is not used there however, and I was able to confirm the direct use of the term in Nunavut, for example "*Ilisaqsivik* [community organization] holds several multi-day land-based healing and cultural retreats throughout the year to promote intergenerational healing from past traumas associated with settlement and rapid socio-cultural change" (Ilisaqsivik, 2014). It was also clear during the interviews that the concept of Land-based healing was very much recognized informally as self-evident and inherent to the Land-based programming dialogue in Nunavut.

The concept of a 'Land-based healing' program when used in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, or Nunavut refers to an Indigenous healing practice, grounded in a Land-based pedagogy of health and wellness, which recognizes the Land as intimately involved in the personal and intergenerational healing process. This practice is further outlined in the narratives below, and is supported by the literature discussed previously. These programs often integrate

tools from Western therapeutic approaches, including therapy, addictions, and treatment or rehabilitation. Some included partnering with psychologists or other healthcare workers, along with cultural counsellors. One definition of 'Land-based healing', in reference to drug and alcohol treatment in particular, has been offered by the Council of Yukon First Nations:

> Land-based healing treatment programs are initiatives where the land itself is honoured, respected and involved in the healing process. In such a program, steps are taken to identify how individuals' relationships with the land have been disrupted and how to renew this relationship (Laurie, 2013, p. 8).

Another detailed definition of 'Land-based health or healing' is offered by Kwanlin Dün First Nations (KDFN), which has been clarified over their four years of program delivery:

> Land-based health or healing has been defined by KDFN as a term used to designate a health or healing program or service that takes place in a non-urban, rural or remote location on a land base that has been intentionally spiritually cultivated to ensure the land is honoured and respected. The land is understood to be an active host and partner to the people engaged in the healing process. The cultivation of a land base under the stewardship of First Nation people is usually done through the development of an intimate spirit based relationship through ceremony, offerings, expression of gratitude and requests for permission from the land to enter and use it for healing purposes (Hanson, 2012, p. 2).

These definitions were supported and verified by the participants I interviewed who spoke of these types of programs. Under this theme, throughout the interviews people spoke about the therapeutic healing innate to and cultivated in the Land-based environment. They addressed the integrated practice of traditional and Western approaches utilized during Land-based healing programs, and gave examples of what the Land-based environment has to offer when addressing addictions, trauma, or other mental health struggles.

Common themes spoken about in the practice of Land-based healing across the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut include:

a. The innate healing ability of the Land itself;

b. Western therapeutic approaches and therapy in Land-based environments;

c. Traditional healing and spirituality.

Here are the themes discussed in detail:

a. The innate healing ability of the Land itself

> If something was disturbed on the earth, Mother Earth brought balance back and I started to think of that as us, as human beings, how we feel when we walk on the Land, how peaceful it is and how connected we feel, the idea of how we come alive almost, and I started to look at that and just to realize that there was some kind of a magic here, that was innate in every living thing, I realized that we didn't have to do anything, right, all we had to do is be there and be okay with it.
>
> Like I said, the Land will heal people. What I know is that when I bring a group of people let's say out on the land, the Land knows exactly who they are, they know exactly what they are struggling with, and may not know it intellectually, but it knows it on a way deeper level than the intellectual.

The whole idea of the Land-based is, I think, it gives people time to focus their energy in a certain direction and not being distracted. Not being distracted.

For me, I think to go out there, it eliminates lots of distractions; it allows us to focus on something specific too. If people are ready and committed to come to the camp, then let's look at that commitment. I have this idea that on the land, you are able to I think, the thing we are looking for we already have it, but it has been buried by the crap of the world in a way.

What I do at the camp is kind of an archeological, a spiritual archeological dig, right. I dig for that spark inside of people, but I have to dig through the crap of the world. And so out on the land, when you are away, it makes it easier to dig you know, because it's the help of everything -- the air is nicer, the birds are singing to you, all of this nature; you are being bombarded by nature. It loosens up that crud, you know, so, to me it's not, I don't go out there to do anything, I don't go out there to heal people or anything, but what I do go out there to do is help people remember, that they can allow themselves to heal if they choose, you know. I have a lot of cultural things, I do lots of works with medicines and things like that, but ultimately its really to help them to heal themselves, to remind them that they have what it is that I am talking about. **PG**

b. Western therapeutic approaches and therapy in Land-based environments

AMR: Interesting thing, I'll tell you, is I remember doing the proposal to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, when we first submitted it. It was all, I had it all traditional, no Western, no therapy, just all traditional healing, and so they rejected it. [laughs] I said "Well, you can't do that, you are not allowed to do that, it's culture, you're the Aboriginal Healing Foundation", and they said, "Well if you would change it, if you would put Western [approaches in as well], we really like the proposal, but if you could put a Western model in…" And that's where…

LM: [refers to person's name]

AMR: Yah, Dr. [last name omitted], we said okay we'll get [name] to come in. So, yah, it really blended well together, the Western model and the traditional, they really did go together, so I really thanked them for wanting that in there.

LM: We had people saying "There's no way I am talking to a shrink, no way", and I said "No problem", I said "just come out to [Land-location]" and then next thing you know they are walking down the lake talking with the psychiatrist or the therapist and they are doing therapy and they don't realize it, you know [laughs].

c. Traditional healing and spirituality

So it's something that even our young people, boys, have to, you know, overcome the obstacles of fear, so that to itself is one of the keys to the on the land programs we deliver, is that passage [traditional rights of passage], and that they need to understand, but it's also something we need to bring back and I mean there's tons of stuff we could do to help people. **TR**

If they come in with alcohol problems and they are still craving and they're going through all this different stage, and they tell me how long they've been drinking, then I would go out on the land and get [type of tree] bark and I would boil it up and let them drink it for four days, and then they have no more cravings after that. So these are the things that you got to look at when you are going to be doing this kind of program. That's what I seen my dad doing when he's helping healing people, especially people that have a lot of alcohol and have violence within that alcohol, and that's what he would do to the people. And he says, "It really makes a big change, if there is any craving, is the [type of tree] bark." **BB**

Yah, very strong people, and a number of people have benefited from going there; I certainly have. I was quite ill about ten years ago and I went there, I've been there with the group, but then I went by myself, to spend time with the medicine man and I was on really strong pain killers when I arrived and then when I left I was no longer taking them, you know, after three days. **LM**

So after we set out the programs, we do all the young people, they just work on ceremonies, they go through traumas, they go through all the different information and workshops they don't understand, and when I come in to do the [traditional] teachings then they can really really heal themselves. And I always

tell them, “There’s nobody here will ever tell anybody outside of the camp, what you have gone through. That’s very confidential, so don’t ever worry about that, the staff is obligated for that; to never tell what is going on.” **BB**

Also, Ann mentioned spirituality, that’s another aspect that government doesn’t understand. We also have spiritual, I don’t want to call it ‘programs’, but we do spiritual activities there, and that’s important as well, and it might not be for everybody, so it’s up to the individual whether they are going to participate. But our spirituality, whatever it might look like, we support and encourage. We believe that we as Kaska people are very spiritual people, that’s how we were raised, and our connection to the Land is very much based on a strong spirituality. So we try to reconnect to that by offering some activities or events that are spiritual in nature. But we try to as well, we’re out there every single day, we try to behave with those spiritual values in our mind, and we pass that along. **LM**

And my grandmother said to me one day when I asked her. A preacher came to our house, and said “I notice granny you haven’t been coming to church lately”, and she said “Yah, I’ve been wondering,’ she said “is your God inside that church?” And the Anglican minister said “absolutely he is.” She said, and “That’s what I was thinking”, she said, “you must be cruel people to keep him inside there all the time”, she said “you should let him out sometime”, she said “because my God is way too big for that little house.” And then she said, “you know what, I don’t think I am going to be going to church no-more.” And I was 13, and I was like “Right on grandma good for you!” And then when he left, she said to me “And I think the Land is going to be my bible now.” And it was so cool to hear her say that.

Anyway, when he left, I looked at my grandmother, and I realized she was born in the bush, I mean serious: the bush. And then she came out when the Europeans came and she lived in Carcross ... I said to her “Grandma”, I said “do you hate these people?” And she looked at me and said “My goodness grandchild no!” She said “I don’t hate these people”, she said “they don’t understand.” She said “do you think that if they understood, that they would do that?” And I thought [at the time] what a naïve old woman she is. But actually, now I get that, I absolutely get it! That’s exactly what it is. They don’t understand! So that’s my thing. **PG**

4.8. Land-based Education

> It's not just learning to set a fish net, its learning about protocol and respect and the people whose Land you're on, whose traditional territory it is, and what is their political and historical context that impacts the relationship to that Land now. **MM**

Indigenous Land-based pedagogy and education along with environmental education and Land-based skill building were often talked about, and many of the programs themselves were organized around these themes. There was a wide array of educational programs held on the land, including cultural camps, bush universities, Aboriginal summer Land-programs, and wilderness and environmental skills programs. These were organized through various schools, First Nations, colleges, government departments, or private organizations.

This education scope of practice included a mix of cultural and Western education teachings fundamentally rooted in Land-based pedagogy, values, and teachings.

> I think Indigenous Land-based education is traditional Indigenous education… those are the pedagogical methods that were used before residential schools when everyone was forced into the classroom… so a lot of that is learning from the Land: observing, being mindful, learning from Elders, and thinking about things like reciprocity and relationality, and how those are important concepts that are integrated, or are fundamental, to the Land-based education that we do. So there are a lot of values in there; a lot of traditional Indigenous values as I understand them that are not fundamental to the mainstream public education model. **MM**

Experts mentioned many interesting things, including some consensus that something 'different' just happens out there when teaching youth and adults; that they just understand things better, and that the quality of education is better, as well as how this form of learning is better suited to many Aboriginal youth. The stories addressing the capacity for teaching and

learning in Land-based environments were inspiring, positive, and filled with experiential evidence and keen observation of workers and feedback from participants. This evidence could come in the form of a 'glimmer in the eye', a look of understanding, or a statement about learning, or feedback months later from a participant.

> I think it's a super important education, and I think, just *better;* the quality of education is so much better when people are working together on the land, and it can be math, it can be science, it can be history and social sciences but… Yah, what could that be? I mean I don't know anything about psychology or learning theories, but it's just *better*, the quality of education is better, people just get it somehow more easily, like what they're learning about, I don't know, I don't understand, but it's true. **MM**

This is one Elder's description of her own educational teachings and how they influence the programs she runs:

> My father was a medicine man and a healer, but also had many many other gifts. My mom knew lots of stuff about womanhood, women's teachings, being a midwife, my father being a midwife too, and for them to live that kind of life it was most interesting to learn, because I had to learn, and the way they taught me was to be quiet and to be a listener and today I am very grateful for that, because now I can be able to teach what they taught on the land.
>
> My grandpa also raised me when I was little, and he was telling me stories, he was telling me legends, he was telling me trips that he went through, and incidents that he went through, you know, like through the ice, all these stories were told to me by him, and all done in Slavey.
>
> A lot of people say you are very unique to be raised the way you have been, cause a lot of the people hadn't been raised like that. I never seen my parents ever get angry with each other, I never seen them arguing for anything. They just live in a world of harmony and love and that's what I grew up with, and so for me to look at other young people that are coming to me for programs and on the Land-based is very important for them to get direction from somebody. **BB**

Here are some narratives capturing the benefits of current day Land-based education programs.

> [I am saying this] as somebody who has experienced the benefits of learning out on the land, learning hands on stuff out on the land, connecting with nature, connecting with each other… **LP**

> But if Elders take them out, Elders always make sure that they're learning something on that trail. **BB**

> …We want to see those kind of things [the educational component], we want to see the youth participants learning, we want to see the facilitators delivering the program and showing that they learned the material and they are transferring that knowledge to campers. **CM**

> But in terms of that, their creativity and their ability to use their imagination totally changes when they are out there. **LC**

> And then outside of the communities, in bigger cities I guess, it seems like there's more value placed on skills and knowledge that will get you a job in an industry or a field that is doing well economically right now. So skills like starting a fire, or speaking your language, or Indigenous language, or tanning moosehide, I mean from an economics or a Western sort of economics perspective those kinds of skills and information are not really considered very valuable cause you're not going to get a job as a moosehide tanner that will contribute to the global economy. It will be great for the local economy, but in terms of the global economy, I don't know. **MM**

> But the Elders that come in from the community, they are doing all the cultural education. They make them spears, they make them bows and arrow, they make them bone knife, because young people aren't allowed to use regular knives and stuff if they're under care of justice. So yah. So we have to make sure we find different ways, but the ones who aren't it's a different program; they can carry their knives, their guns, to clean it, the Elders will show them all that, how to do that. **BB**

> We can teach the youth a lot of things, but a lot of it is missing the human aspect of it.
>
> I used to do a lot of school programs, one of them was just avalanche awareness. Then I talked to five year olds or ten year olds and I say,

> "You guys ever listen to your gut instincts?" and they are like, "Nah", and then I say, "You guys ever feel something in your stomach and you're going ohhhhh, like that?" And they all nodded their head yes.
>
> That's the human aspect part of it, teaching them that; that's out on the l and program for me, because when I'm out on the land that's what *I* listen to, that's what drives me. If I have to stop, or if I have to keep going, that's been my survival. So for us to teach the youth skills like that, that's just one example.
>
> That's what we have to teach, is we have to teach them to survive either through the Inuit culture or the Western society, but these small little things that we take for granted, teaching those to the youth.
>
> Okay, when the kids nodded [I said], "Did you ever listen to your stomach going [noise]?" And you look around, and then I asked the kids: "Did something happen afterwards?"
>
> And a lot of them went "Yep". They had moved away from a falling rock or done something. But a lot of kids can relate to that, so finding ways… what do the kids understand and how to get that message [across]?
>
> And I think what's missing is that human part, that survival gut [instinct], because we all have it, regardless. Everyone of us have it regardless if we want to listen to it or not, So I really believe in building what's already there. I don't believe in reinventing the wheel, I go by what's there, okay, let's build on that skill and that's how I've tried to do my Land-based programs. **LP**

From the literature, Simpson (2014) ties the importance of Land-based education together:

> A resurgence of Indigenous political cultures, governances and nation-building requires generations of Indigenous peoples to grow up intimately and strongly connected to our homelands, immersed in our languages and spiritualities, and embodying our traditions of agency, leadership, decision-making and diplomacy. This requires a radical break from state education systems – systems that are primarily designed to produce communities of individuals willing to uphold settler colonialism (p. 1).

4.9. Community Development

Perhaps the Land-based dialogue is, at first glance by outsiders, not seen as being relevant to conventional community development or related concerns such as housing, mental health and addiction, suicide rates, or education rates. However, the experts in this field of practice were very aware of how fundamental this concept is for strong sustainable community development in the North as expressed during the interviews.

As Qilavvaq (**BQ**) explains in her own words:

> So what I've done, is I've taken every year, or every other year, for the last several years, I've started doing a leadership summit, a leadership workshop. It's usually in February or March. I fly two youth leaders from every community in the Baffin, which is 13 communities; we call it the Baffin Youth Leadership Workshop or Summit. And I am very careful with who I pick. I try to pick youth who are already active in the community. I don't just open it up and say "Who wants to come to Iqaluit for a workshop?"
>
> I look for those stars who are already volunteering, who are already trying to run programs, who are already involved and active. And if there's a youth committee, it's usually the president or vice president of that youth committee who I would fly here; and if there is no youth committee, then I just talk to people I know, teachers and just people in the communities that I know, and they will say "well this person seems really active and this person", so then I'll talk to them and say "Do you want to get more happening in your community?"
>
> Usually I don't say Land-program outright, because I have developed this community development tool. I developed it over about six years to help youth to figure out and pinpoint exactly what they want for their communities. So I call it the *Inuguksainiq* community development tool. And I fly the youth in and they use the *Inuguksainiq* tool, and it's basically a hundred different program ideas that are realistic for the community, I don't throw in stuff that isn't feasible.
>
> I have a whole culture section, a sports and recreation type section, arts and media, and special interest area, like if they want to do stuff on climate change or anti-bullying, there is a whole section on that. Another short section on helping the community, like if they wanted to do a buddy system type thing with an Elder, where they help the Elders a certain number of days a week, or if they want to do a town beautification thing, you know, just kind of a miscellaneous section, what kinds of things communities would respond to.

So you have over a hundred options, because I found for years, when I was 14 or 15, we'd go to these youth gatherings and you'd have these people, a lot of times from the south, sometimes Inuk, but when I was younger, you didn't have as many Inuit actively facilitating these types of events, and they would ask open-ended questions like "What would you like to see for your community?" And when you're a teenager, you just shrug your shoulders and say "I don't know, maybe sports or something..." it's very hard to pinpoint. There has to be some structure to the way you arrive at those types of answers.

So I developed the *Inuguksainiq*. It's almost like a survey I guess, it's a numbering system, so the very first thing I throw out is a throat singing workshop or program, and the reason why I choose throat singing, is its one of those things you really have decide if you want that or not, you're not just going to half ass it. Throat singing is such a difficult skill, I don't know if you know but I am a master throat singer, and it's something that you devote a lot of time and years to. So when I give them the tool, I ask them "Imagine I have $75,000 for your community; how are you going to spend it, you can't do everything, you have to decide".

So they go through and they rate. The way I put it, it's all bilingual, its *Manna Suqitigiluanngihara*, and the highest rating is *Piqataugumallarikka Jaqtunga*, which means if they rate it low, it means "I wouldn't be that into this"… [the translation] it's kind of more to not disrespect the thing, "like maybe another time, it's not something I'd get too excited over right now", whereas the last one *Piqataugumallarikka Jaqtunga* is the highest rating of 5, and says "I would definitely want it, if this was happening in my community I would be the first one at the door!"

You don't want to pit these cultural things against each other, as if one is less important. Instead "I would be the first one at the door" *versus* "maybe another time". So I developed it very carefully to be very culturally intuitive. So the person doesn't have that guilty feeling of "I don't want drum dancing in my community" or something like that.

So once they go through, then I have them take all their top fives, that they put stars next to them, and short list those onto a list, and suddenly they have say 20 on their list and then as a group it's usually by community, they'll just talk about those top 20 and start shifting those and then at the end they have their top 10 or top 5, and then we get them to prioritize those so that in the end you have your number "1 thing I want for my community, number 2" ...etc.

The reason why I am saying I don't say "Land program" off the bat, is I tell you, 80-90% of the time Land-programs are on the top 5, all the time, *every time*.

> We have suicide prevention as always one of the top 5 usually; to come in and teach youth how to do either intervention or prevention, postvention, because they deal with a lot of that where their friends who are suicidal and there isn't a lot of counseling available, and so they want peer-counseling, so suicide prevention type stuff tends to be up there, as well as language programs. But for us language… they learn language through hands on stuff, like Land programs as well, and then to learn old terminology like different names of the *kayak*, and what's the front tip called. But out on the land programs, hunting is always in the top three, *always*. We've done a national sample, we've done a regional sample, we've done just having several youth fill it out in one community, and across the board it always lands in the top five, no matter what. And it's usually number one for most communities.
>
> And then youth centres, and having more infrastructure and more structured programs, and a place for youth to gather is always up there too. Also things in and around skills like sewing and those types of things, hands on stuff that they want to learn.
>
> But yah, Land programs. I could be out there actively promoting Land-programs but I allow them to go through this process for them to realize it themselves, as opposed to "you need to have Land programs because it's good for you!" It's more like I just ask them the open ended [question] "What are you guys needing more of?" And they always arrive at that [answer] themselves. **BQ**

The experts told many stories about the impacts programs have had at the community level and in building and healing relationships at this level. They also discussed things to keep in mind about differing community needs and stages of the healing and development process, which is further supported by the 'sixteen principals for re-creating the world' community development process outlined by Bopp and Bopp (2006) and described in detail in their book *Recreating the world: A practical guide to building sustainable communities* (p. 64-68) . This discussion pointed towards the need for Land-based programs to be community directed and driven in the north, similar to the findings by Noah and Healey (2010) which is further addressed in Section 4.13. The narratives affirmed the programs as a valid form of building community support and supporting sustainable community development.

Well, the first few years that we ran, especially the first year, the RCMP sergeant here at the time wrote a letter to the First Nation, which is our political body, said oh thank you for running the camps because there is hardly anybody at the transition home, the women's transition home, there is hardly anybody in jail, we don't see anybody walking around. So the crime was way down…so they sent it to the wrong place, but the whole point to the letter, is things were way better and they just couldn't believe it. **LM**

Each community has their own way of doing things, their own way of healing. What [local community] needs is different from other communities because we see things differently, but we know what the community needs are, and other communities might not know, and we don't even know what their needs are too, unless we understand and go there and learn and sit down. So that's one of the things that each community has a unique way of how to engage our youth and Elders and deliver programs based on the land. **TR**

And each community is also in different stages of healing. One community might be healthier due to their programs and their support; some people might not get that kind of support, so they may be struggling, but how can we utilize resources and go there to support them? Each community has a unique program of healing and it works for them. What works in [local community] might not work in another community, but we sit down together and learn and share, then we'll go do things. **TR**

I think the way we have done it, we go to our homes, we go to our communities, and what are our communities telling us? We've developed this curriculum and how does it work for us? How does it work for our communities? We've gone over our curriculum multiple times and I still think there needs to be development in certain areas, and there's areas that could be stronger, that's how we're learning. We're learning from our experiences in our communities and what our communities are telling us. **CM**

4.10. Environmental Stewardship

The interviewees had many stories and references regarding the relationship between connectedness, engagement with the Land, and environmental stewardship. Land management discussions and sustainability concerns, as well as the exercise of Land ownership and Land rights, also arose. These stories speak for themselves about the relationship between Land connection, Land health, and engagement in environmental stewardship. As noted in the supporting literature, the management of land and environment are foremost topics in northern communities, which already face significant impacts from climate change (Furgal & Prowse, 2008; Furgal & Seguin, 2006); abandoned mining developments (Keeling & Sandlos, 2015); and current and proposed non-renewable resource projects (Ensign, Giles, & Oncescu, 2014), such as hydraulic fracturing for shale oil in the Northwest Territories and Yukon (Struzik, 2014). Culturally significant species such as the caribou also are at the forefront of Land management debates and were mentioned in some of the interviews (Zoe, 2010).

It is in this topic area that we are reminded of the importance of having access to healthy and functioning ecosystems with which to connect, therefore we need to address Land management, the Land politic, and Land protection (Alfred, 2009).

Fortunately, despite the many concerns, we in the North are in a relatively unique position in Canada as we still have access to huge tracts of land and natural areas. The Land-based program and activity dialogue is different than in southern areas of Canada and other parts of the world, where Indigenous communities have been close to overrun with urban and resource development, and face many barriers to traditional land access. As McDonald (**MM**) states:

> But one of the reasons why we're so lucky up here is that we still have, the Dene people still have, their land is still, a lot of it is really quite healthy still and like me as a non-Dene person I can still go fishing without having to go too far, and go hunting and hiking, and we at [organization] can have its program out there on [First Nations] territory.
>
> But down south in a lot places, and some of our instructors who come up and share their experience with us, their traditional territory has [for example] Toronto on it, and they can't eat the fish out of their lakes, and they have to harvest their medicines dodging cops and stuff like that.
>
> So I think in terms of land-based education, and land-based programming, we're lucky that we are able to have access to really beautiful, clean land and water still. **MM**

It was clear that without environmental and other physical protections of our Lands and territories, and recognition politically, we lose the capacity to access our traditional Lands. And in order to protect these environments we need healthy and engaged citizens to stand-up for and manage our resources effectively, and exercise continued use of these traditional Lands, similar to findings by Simpson (2002). Land-based programming therefore contributes to the development of connected and caring future Land-stewards.

> And I realized that was the key, that was the key to humanity, was that. That love was our medicine, and I fasted many years; traditional fasting on a mountain, like I said, I've been involved with ceremony, but one year on the mountain while I fasted, I watched an ant pull a fly up over this boulder. And the fly was probably about three times bigger than the ant, but I don't know why he didn't go around the boulder, but he had to go right over, straight over. So I watched him go over this boulder, he got on top, and this other ant was wandering around, like he had no direction, but obviously he did. It had run into this ant with the fly, he'd walked around it one time and then he grabbed the fly, and one started pulling and one started pushing, and when I looked at that, I thought, that ant didn't even hesitate. He didn't say "are we friends?" or "are we from the same caste of life?" or "have you ever offended me?" Nothing! There was nothing like that! And I realized the only thing that ant did for its entire life

span, was to work to make the world a better place for the future of its people, which are ants, and the ant hill ultimately.

And then a honeybee landed on my wrist and I looked at this honeybee and I said the same thing, I thought, "wow, you do that too". From the moment it was capable, the only thing that honeybees ever done, was work to make the world a better place for the future of its people, which are bee people. And the beehive.

But ultimately everything that we do benefited all of creation. And then I looked at the birds, and I saw how they were doing it-- even just how they ate seeds and didn't digest them and went and pooped them out somewhere else so that the plants could grow. And then I looked at the trees and saw how they dropped their leaves, and the leaves become fertilizer for the next generations. And I looked around me, even the rocks, and I realized everything on that mountain, every single thing was doing exactly the same thing, it was giving up itself to make the world a better place for the future of its people, its people, which are all these different beings.

And I looked and I thought about humanity. I thought about myself first, and I thought, holy shit, I am the only one on this mountain that doesn't know how to do it. And it felt awful actually, it felt horrible. Then I thought of humanity, and I thought, and we think we know stuff, but we don't even get it, we don't even get it not one tiny bit. And I looked at all this and said "if this is what all of creation is doing, then what is my purpose, or what am I supposed to be doing? It has got to be something…" And when I thought about that, and I looked at everything that creation was doing, I thought, then that's what I am supposed to be doing too then. If everything is doing the same thing, then it's got be what I'm supposed to be doing.

So I made a commitment to Creator, and I said "I will spend the rest of life, trying to make a better world for the people, of my people, which are the two leggeds."

But ultimately if we can help the two leggeds, then the whales won't be in trouble, then the trees won't be in trouble, then the wolves won't be in trouble. The earth won't be in trouble. If we can help the two leggeds. So that's tremendous. **PG**

As expressed above, when individuals learn to care and connect with the Land on a deeper level, they then begin to realize their role in the sustainable management and stewardship of the Land and the impact their actions have on the environment.

Blondin (**BB**) further explains her cultural teachings around environmental Land management practices as a child, and McDonald (**MM**) and Papatsie (**LP)** take us into a dialogue of engagement into the northern issues around climate change, local economies, and land-stewardship.

> I started, at 15 years old, there's a place called Hottah Lake, there was a whole bunch of fishermen coming in from Saskatchewan and that piece of land where they want to stay, was where a lot of my family always gathered in that area and I lost a couple of my sisters who were buried there too. So I tried to make sure that environmentally they look after the water. Environmentally to make sure when they catch their fish, it's put in the special place so it's not rotting. So I always make sure that they give me the counts of fish that they take out of that lake, Hottah Lake, so this way here I can keep a record for myself and for my family, so that we are not overfishing, and there is a certain limit of the fish that we're catching. **BB**

> They are going to start respecting that, these things that we could do every year, like pick up garbage. First thing we do whenever, I make it a rule whenever we have a camp we do a walk, pick up garbage, and then once we're done we do another walk, pick up garbage. **LP**

> But I think that getting people out on the land is really important too in terms of environmental protection or climate change advocacy, things like that, because people are so disconnected from nature in the city a lot of time and they don't really, can't really see themselves as a part of the environment, like not very connected to it. So it's kind of hard to advocate for it or feel invested in that whole kind of dialogue or controversy around pollution and oil and gas and climate change and everything like that. But I think once people go out on the land and develop more of a connection to it and a relationship to it, that they feel more invested in what's happening around it, in terms of development and regulations and that kind of level of politics. **MM**

> Like protection of the Land, understanding, I think that's a key point [in programming], awareness and understanding of the Land, and that's building stewardship for down the road for future generations, I really believe in that. **LP**

So they explain to them [the youth] that today because of the environmental part of our life is becoming very contaminated around the world. How do we make things better? And do some good planning so that in the future when you take over, you have a plan to make this even better. **BB**

4.11. Bringing Land-based back to the Community

A topic brought up a number of times was around the integration of the experiences cultivated in a Land-based environment, and how to bring these back into the community or city environment. Hand in hand with this was the aftercare services required after therapeutic or healing programs were held out on the Land. It was clear that there were challenges associated with this endeavour, more that could be done, and a desire to bring more Land-based values 'back' to the communities and cities. This topic is also addressed in detail by Laurie (2013) and Hanson (2011) in relation to Land-based addictions treatment aftercare and integration services particularly in the Yukon.

It was clear from my interviews that there is a desire to see more of the values cultivated in Land-based programming integrated into everyday life in communities. There is also a clear need for recognition and support for the often difficult transition from the Land-based environment back into a community or city environment in practice.

> You know, we go out there for a month on the land and it's a wonderful thing, but how do we bring that back into the community to assist people? And we're dealing with people, many people who go back into very difficult environments. So their sobriety gets compromised immediately by their families and friends and communities, so what if we could have a sober home that people could come and stay in, or just a stronger facilitation, and things for people who come out of treatment. When they are out there it's wonderful, but reality is another thing right. **CG**

> So when they leave they're all crying, they are going on the boat crying. Me, I put my hand on my hip and "Go! Grandma is tired, Grandma needs to rest now", just so they know Grandma [needs] time for a rest now. They said, "Oh, but we want to stay", and I said "There is a river that goes here right by the camp, you can come down by canoe anytime to come visit and spend a few nights, a week if you want" [after the program is finished].

So it does switch them. And by the time, it's time for them to leave, soooo soo much tears because they don't want to go. They know what they're going to go back to. **BB**

And some of us try to keep ourselves really healthy, but it's a challenge, it's a challenge keeping healthy while we're staying in town; we feel much better out on the land, we eat better, we sleep better. So for our own well-being, even those of us who really work at trying to be well, you know we are supportive of each other, we know who's supportive and you can visit them and talk to them, but really where we get our strength from is to be on the land. It's a struggle to have to do that all the time. In a perfect world, we would be out there definitely more than we are now. **LM**

Cause as [friend] was saying, you get back to town and everybody goes back to their TV, their computer, people don't visit, and then people kind of ignore each other. And our culture is all about sharing, and living off the land you have to be respectful and share, that's how you survive out there, how you treat the water, the land, the animals. So you treat each other like that too just by default almost, you know, you just do. **LM**

Yah, how to keep bringing that back into the community [the benefits seen with on the land programs]? And that is a part of it, is continuing that cultural stuff. **CG**

So I feel very connected to the Land here and that's just how I identify myself, and I believe that's why I stay, is because you can move away but then you really lose a part of who you are, if you are not able to be on the land. **LM**

It is just so different, compared to when you're in the city, you are really focused on yourself; do you know what I mean? …everybody is trying to get ahead. It's very individualistic. Whereas, when you're out [on the land], it is very communal, and I love that. I love that. First Nation people are very communal people; however, when you come into the city, when you live in a town or a village and it is so [different]. I can see how, when you bring kids out there and they feel very validated, how beneficial that is. **LC**

4.12. Challenges to Organizing Initiatives

With the general trend of disconnection resulting from colonial impacts and imposed, non-Indigenous policies and governance as discussed earlier, the experts reminded me that there are limited platforms for cultural teachings and knowledge transmission. This is the case in institutions of education, health, justice, culture, environment, and community development. Individuals or community organizations are continually vying for limited cultural funding and other related pots of money for organizing Land-based programs, which is consistent across the three territories.

The unique skill sets and logistics involved in taking people out into wilderness areas cannot be underestimated. It is a lot of work, takes a lot of planning, and often requires staff to be away from children or other family for long periods of time. It can also involve intensive long days, especially when working with youth or in a healing capacity. There are significant financial costs involved due to transportation, food, specialized gear, and other supplies. Finally these barriers can lead to loss of skill transmission earlier in life, creating difficulties in wrestling with this impact culturally as an adult. These are all things that have been hard to reconcile at the funding and policy level, which exist in arenas that are so far removed from Land practice geographically, as well as philosophically and ideologically.

> The idea is…you know… One time my brother got up to talk at a meeting. He said, "You know why I do this work?" He said "I do this work for the less fortunate." And then he waited for a small while and he said, "Don't get me wrong, I am not talking about street people, I'm not talking about people who don't have a home or people that are having a hard time", he says, "I am talking about the less fortunate; I am talking about doctors and lawyers and judges, that's who I do this work for", he said, "*because they don't know.*" **PG**

Included below are some key points made by the individuals interviewed concerning continued challenges to organizing Land-based initiatives. There were many nuances expressed in terms of the unique nature of these programs and need for flexibility in logistics and programming. The five main themes in terms of continued barriers to developing and running activities and programs include: cross-cultural barriers to defining outcomes and success; funding and resources; logistics and safety; the unique skill sets and experience required; and issues of colonial disruption of Land-skills and knowledge transfer.

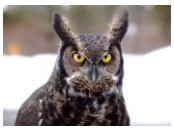
Five main thematic challenges to organizing Land-based Initiatives that were similar across all regions include:

a. Cross-cultural barriers defining outcomes and importance;

b. Funding and resources;

c. Logistics and safety;

d. Intensity and unique challenges of the work required;



e. Colonial disruption of knowledge transmission.

Here is a summary of what the experts had to say about overcoming these challenges:

a. Cross-cultural barriers defining outcomes and importance

I find some people don't understand the long-term benefits of doing a camp. Part of that, too, is getting the buy-in from other people to see the long term benefit, rather than just wanting a return on your investment, now! Usually your ROI [return on investment] for kids comes out way down the road. **LC**

So it's been really challenging to keep going without the support. It's almost like government will fund other things or will fund people who have Masters, PhDs or something, or some-called professional, and will offer a workshop here and will pay for that, but they don't want to give money to our Elders. And they are our greatest teachers, and we have to cherish this knowledge, but we don't get the recognition in terms of support for funding. **LM**

One of the biggest differences I see is that most of times government programs are designed to be this age group, or this type of clientele; it is really compartmentalized. In terms of what we do, we see benefits straight across the board, from even the most challenging child or teenager or someone, an adult, who has been struggling for a long time, you take them out there, and all we'd have to do is we'd tell them some stories or show them some pictures, or record someone talking about it, and that's our proof. **LM**

That is one of the things I find that a lot of these southern programs that want to come up and do youth programs, and you know, one of them understands how it works up here, another one is like: "This is our agenda, this is what we are going to do, this is the outcome we want to see". "Well you have to be more flexible then that", and they're like, "No this is how we're going to do it", and it's like [exasperated] "Okay, ah well…" [laugh and sighs]. **LP**

b. Funding and resources

This was the most common theme across all interviews and regions. The key informants had a lot to say about adequate and flexible funding for Land-based programs. There was agreement that the benefits don't seem to be recognized on the larger level in funding realms as discussed above; the funding is very restrictive; and often it doesn't suit the integrative nature of these programs, instead pigeon holing them into specific topic areas or according to particular government departments. It's almost like trying to fit a round peg into a square hole, which is a fundamental barrier to communication and the context of these programs.

> So, but then when the foundation got cut, the funding, we don't have funding now to do that. It's really tough to get money for culture, very very tough. Very difficult. Yah, we have 13 tent frames out there now, and we just scrounge every year to try and keep those buildings from deteriorating. **AMR**

> So somehow [our organization] has managed to just eke along and maintain its existence, but very very difficult, with great difficulty every year, applying for money, and it's always less and less, trying to cobble together a little money here and a little money there. But [our camp location] is the place where we really shine. **LM**

> And then [a challenge is], I think making sure the resources are there, and the money is definitely a stressor! Cause within our organization we have to wait until April to get our money, and then if we don't have enough money, then we have to try and find other pools that we can use. And April is really really late to try and find some. A camp can cost up to $30,000-$40, 000….
>
> It is a small time frame to find that much money. So that is a huge stressor. That's why every year we always worry about. Where are we going to get our money? Are we going to have our set money, and if we don't, then where are we going to go to find other money? **LC**

Challenges as of right now would be funding. And to continue these programs I think, a challenge would be…we are always available to support communities, but finding the pots of money to ensure that we're able to deliver them will be the biggest challenge….
A challenge is just making sure that this program is sustainable. Core funding. Core funding always. **CM**

Yah…[schools are open to Land-based programming], they are, if approached appropriately and during a time of year, they are actually, yep, they are. I find that in Nunavut anyway that schools are quite open, only if you fund it. Because a lot of times schools don't have a lot of money to fund something like this, so they are very much into it if you find a way to fund it, you can do it. **LP**

Well if you look in the Yukon and you look at the communities, there is not a lot of programming on the land. And it's not that communities aren't interested or don't want to do that, it's just that there isn't the funding opportunities to really provide that. **AMR**

Administratively I think, Land-based education isn't really funded consistently.

I think that they [Land-based programs] need to be more consistently funded, cause I think there's a ton of resources in the north in terms of people who have amazing knowledge and they're willing to share. But I mean the funding is a huge challenge, and Land-based education costs more money than your typical classroom style education. But like I said the quality of education is better.

Because the work that people are doing now, they're all doing it on shoestring budgets. They'll get a year or two of funding to do something and they're always applying for more money and reporting, and they're pretty limited in terms of capacity, but I think if the support was there at the Territorial level there's so much more we could do. **MM**

And then, yah, a lot of people just don't have the resources and maybe because they haven't had the opportunities to go out on the land very much they don't really know what they're missing out on so they can't be like, 'Oh I'm going to work really hard and get there and find a way to do it!', because they don't know how empowering it can be. **MM**

Yah, I think it's super important, I feel like that's one of the reasons I feel really passionately about my job, even though it's a challenging job, it's a small and

really limited capacity in a lot of ways; we're a charity and with that there's a lot of challenges we face as an organization. **MM**

And so the youth are really pumped and [I say] "See people have your back once you know what you want!" I do an exercise where I pretend that they're rich. I'm like "Pretend you guys won the lottery and I come up to you saying: Can I have 20,000 dollars? What would you say?" They'd be like, "Well what are you going to use it for?" And what if I said, "I don't know, I just want that money." They're like, "No." What if I said, "I want to take a group of 10 youth out on the land with 6 guides for a period of…, if I really know what I want and I'm very clear?". Then I said, "then what would you say?" They're like, "Yeah, I'd give you the money; that sounds exciting." So I turn it around, get them thinking how funders think. **BQ**

c. Logistics and safety

Money, time, weather up here, weather plays a big factor. I've done camps, where it's like plan a, plan b, plan c, plan d. Okay when do we throw our hands up in the air? **LP**

Logistics. When you go to remote places it is hard to, you are really reliant on the people who are helping you, you are super reliant. You are so dependent, if somebody backs out from something, you have no idea they are going to back out, because you are out in the middle of nowhere and you are like "they are bringing the supplies for the next portion of our trip!" You are really dependent. Super super dependent on the weather, and the thing when we do these camps, we say we are going to be back at a specific time. We are going to be back from wherever this day, so we have to be back by this day, because parents usually have other things planned, so that's really hard to deal with…

We are totally trail-based too, right, so we are dependent the trail. How bad is the trail? Sometimes we don't really know how it's going to be until we actually get there. **LC**

Or that's where it starts, it starts [with the proposals]. There is another somebody here who is wanting to start something in [community in the Yukon], there is so much groundwork that needs to be done. You can't just go out and set up a tent and start a fire, I mean it's so much more than that. I don't think people realize how much more to it there is. Then there's the whole development and credibility of it, and then making sure that the program is credible, and it's very people driven, so it's the people you have working there that makes the credibility. **CG**

Logistically there's a lot of safety concerns with bringing a bunch of people out on the land who don't have much Land-based experience; cause you're driving boats, and you're chopping wood, there's bears. And even like hygiene, you have to know how to keep food clean in the bush and how to dispose of waste, human waste, food waste, garbage, everything. All of these are health concerns and safety concerns. The boat, sometimes the water's really choppy and you have to get across the lake, and the water's splashing in and people are afraid, so there's a lot of that to manage, well and safely. **MM**

And I trust that they know, that they'll hire guides and the guides know what they're doing out on the land but what's been a challenge is the reporting process, kind of the administration aspects of holding out on the land programs.

And so just the logistical challenges are really great and it costs so much to fly to communities, and so trying to help from a distance can be really challenging, because if we were doing a project that was all on paper, or in the classroom or this and that, then you can just email about it and work out details, but this is out on the land and its very… it's just a really disconnected kind of way...yah it's really hard to be a support from a distance for this type of program. **BQ**

d. Intensity and unique challenges of the work required

When I first started doing them [running Land-programs], I didn't [really enjoy it], it was a lot of work, so soo soo much work….at the beginning when you are in the planning process, and dealing with all the logistics and stuff, you are super stressed out. **LC**

And the healthiness of the program is really based on the people you have providing those services. **CG**

And then the Elders, the ones who have all these amazing skills that they can pass on, they have those amazing skill sets but they don't necessarily have proposal writing skills you know necessarily. And so that's what I've been trying to do is create these partnerships, we're the ones who have the skills to write proposals or help them develop their skills to write proposals through the young people, and they're [young people] the ones who want these Land programs. So I take these youth leaders in, you know, we do this whole capacity building thing, where I'm teaching them public speaking, proposal writing, like how to run a program, what are the pillars of running a successful youth program, a successful Land program. And we go into envisioning for the future. **BQ**

And the more that comes, I find, the more the need is, and the more people want it. We could be doing a million things; again that's where it's scary if it's person dependent, because our spiritual counselor, he's just one guy, you know, and he's a man, and he can't work 365 days a year and give give give give give, you know what I mean. It could have the tendency that could be really hard on them. **CG**

Finding Elders that are good at teaching. I am not putting the Elders down by no means, but having Elders that know how to talk to the youth [is important]. One year, I had a youth camp all done in Inuktitut. I thought it would be an awesome program, but man, who can have a camp that runs all in Inuktitut, it's like hey I am going to do it! I will have ALL Inuit staff, all Inuit, bang, everything.

But it was with the youth and we were picking between I believe from 9 to 12 year olds. And even though we were doing it in a community where Inuktitut is very strong, just their level of traditional Inuktitut is not there, where we had an Elder who knew a lot, knew a lot, but he had a hard time communicating to a youth because of that level of Inuktitut.

And then we have another Elder who's a bit younger and who spoke the way the youth did. And he would get there, and reality is, he hardly knew compared to this Elder but it was his connection, the way he spoke to the youth. So it's like, when this younger Elder would speak the kids would be watching him and wanting to learn and he was a lot more like 'boom boom boom boom'.

But the older Elder, I think would have been good for older adults because… I was more interested in him, hearing him than the kids were! So I started to figure okay, what's wrong with this picture? So afterwards what I ended up

doing, “Okay this is what he is saying” and kind of simplifying it for the kids and they began to understand. That’s one of the challenges, finding an Elder that’s comfortable teaching; that can communicate to the kids. **LP**

Sometimes I go out on the Land with the youth, but I have been in Iqaluit for so many years now and I have become very urbanized and so I know what I’m good at. I know what I am good at and what I am not good at and I focus on, like I hire other people to take youth out on the Land for example even though I have that deep connection I don’t have the practical skills, the survival skills anymore, because I haven’t been part of that kind of lifestyle consistently enough. **BQ**

So you know that at the beginning of each of the programs there is always going to be a lot of clash with youth. Because of ego. There’s going to be clash clash clash; after a couple of weeks I see all this clashing going on and it was very difficult for them to learn to understand, some of them have been doing drugs forever, some of them been alcoholics since they’re a certain age, some of them at five years old and they have been drinking all their life and now they’re 17. Some of them have gone through being born from parents that have drank, the mother drank so much that they are fetal alcohol effect or defect, and some of these young people were really raised in violence and some of them were really not wanted.

And so you have all these young people coming in, of course they’re going to clash, so what I do is I sit down with them and talk to them individually. What is the biggest barrier in their life? This is where, because it’s so confidential, and I used medicines like smudge, to make sure that they are in balance every day, and I told them, “I know everything that is going to happen to you”, and they look at me “How you know?” “Just that hug in the morning, will tell me a story through your night. That hug before you go to bed, is going to tell me how you went through the day. That’s how I know”. So they said “But Grandma, how could you know all that?”, and I said, “Well, some people like Grandma are very gifted to know these things.” “Do you think that we can be able to learn some of those gifts?” I said, “You can, when you decide to, but we need to work on healing first, before we can get there”. **BB**

So those two things: Elders being highly praised and humility being important, means that we have a lot of these older people who are say in their 40’s, 50’s, 60’s who are like, “Well, I wouldn’t dare call myself an Elder, I don’t know nearly as much as what my dad or my Grandpa knew”. They don’t give themselves enough credit for how much they know, and so they feel under qualified to teach or to share their knowledge, because we come from this long culture of you never know enough, you’re not old enough, you’re not… there’s always your Grandpa or your dad was always way more amazing than you, so

it's very difficult for a lot of Inuit to step in and say "I'll teach a program, I know what I'm doing."

So that's one of our barriers, kind of a cultural barrier. Because you have a few people who have that confidence and everything, but then you have this whole host of people who have amazing knowledge but just aren't willing to step up and say "I have amazing knowledge" you know. **BQ**

Or understanding the environment, when people are not used to being out on the Land, with their good intention they want to have a camp and you have to understand the weather, you have to understand kids in a huge amount, dealing with kids for more than 24 hours, that itself [can be challenging]. An organization has well intentions of doing an awesome camp, but if they have staff that are… they may have kids, but having to deal with like 12 kids 24 hours a day for 5 days and they might not have that skill.

Their intention is good, but it requires a skill, having to do that constantly and just working with kids. Having/finding people that can work with kids all the time, that's one of the challenges I find. You know, the intention is there, it's good, but when you put them on the spot for three or four days, you really see that the intention is good, but they haven't done it before so it's kind of hard for them to learn to have eyes on their back. **LP**

Time and commitment. Commitment. To be able to be around kids out on the Land, that's a big commitment, that's a skill a lot of people don't have, they're well-intentioned but, that, to have a good program. **LP**

e. Colonial disruption of knowledge transmission

I find the work really rewarding in that I think especially for Indigenous women these days, a lot of them aren't encouraged to the same extent as young men to learn Land-based skills.

And I find that I've learned that through just my own experience and my friend's, but through the program as well, a lot of the women that come in, their uncles or their dads or their brothers all go hunting and go out on the Land a lot, but they for whatever reason, they're not encouraged or they're not allowed or they're just not interested, but weren't like *pushed* to be interested like with

young men. It seems like if they [young men] are like "uh I just want to stay home and play video games". Someone's going to be like "No, you're going out with someone, you're going hunting or go set the net or go do something!", but the women it seems like they don't get encouraged to the same extent.

So a lot of young Indigenous women come in and they don't know how to chop wood, they don't know how to tie a knot, and they don't know how to start a fire, even though they come from a community where Land-based practices and cultural traditions are pretty strong they don't have those skills. So a lot of times we just start off with, here's how you start a fire, here's what to think about. Especially if we're camping and it's cold you need to know how to start a fire, and what to get for kindling and how to chop the kindling so that you can start it quickly.

Definitely, everyone learns. And there's lots of young men too who don't have the skills as well, who aren't really strong in some skills as well, but I definitely notice it with the women.

So I think it's really important to facilitate spaces where men *and* women can go out on the land and learn from Elders about how to do things respectfully and properly, and efficiently [laughs]. I think it's really important culturally, in terms of cultural resurgence, a lot of these skills are not only not being passed down but there's lots of reasons the skills aren't being passed down.

So I think getting people into the program and out on the Land a lot of times it's really challenging in a bunch of different ways, like physically challenging, academically its really challenging too, but for a lot of young Indigenous people it's challenging because they get out there and realize "Hey, no one ever taught me how to fillet a fish, what the [swear word], like why can't I do that?" "No one ever taught me how to set a fish net, like why? Why do I not know how to do this, like I'm a native person, and I can't. I've never fired a gun, I don't know how to hunt, and I don't know how to fish and I can't even start a fire right now!", and I think it triggers a lot of feelings of shame which is pretty difficult to deal with.

That's something we talk about as a group usually, and sometimes if people are feeling really triggered, we'll usually bring a counselor in midway through the program, so they have a professional to talk to.

But it's all skills you can learn, pretty quickly, but I mean to get *really good* at something it takes a *long* time and a lot of practice, but to set a fish net, by the end of the program everyone knows how to set a fish net. But if they did it by themselves they probably set it, but maybe not in a spot where you get a lot of fish [laugh]; the things you have to learn over time to do right.

But I think a lot of people *want* to go out on the land and be able to do Land-based activities, but I just don't think a lot of people have access to the resources, whether that be cultural knowledge holders, or Elders in their community, or financial resources, cause you need a boat or a ski doo or gas or something like that.

And then, yah, a lot of people just don't have the resources and maybe because they haven't had the opportunities to go out on the land very much they don't really know what they're missing out on so they can't be like, "Oh I'm going to work really hard and get there and find a way to do it!", because they don't know how empowering it can be. **MM**

4.13. Summary of Emergent Themes and Findings

In this results and discussion chapter, I presented Land-based program practitioners speaking to the philosophy, activities, benefits, and challenges of Land-based practice, in its many forms, with integrated discussion of the supporting literature. Together the topics and themes from the field interviews provide a detailed narrative account of the nature and scope of Land-based practice in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut, focusing on similarities across all regions.

The results of this narrative discussion with Indigenous practitioners can be distilled as follows: Indigenous Land-based practice includes Land-based activities and programming united under an integrative and culturally determined Land-based pedagogy and philosophy. This philosophy acknowledges the connection and relationship with Land itself as central to a person's health and wellbeing. It is evident that the design, coordination, funding, and delivery of formal Land-based programs in a modern community context are complex and diverse.

Importantly, although the formal programs discussed in this chapter were differentiated, as programs, 'informal' Land-based activities continue to be an important and significant part of the day-to-day life of many Indigenous people throughout the North and are not separate from the Land-based discussion. Land-based activities continue to be an integral and primary point of Land-connection for those who have access to the know-how, resources, and Land-locations. They continue to keep families fed and nourished with traditional foods, provide income through trapping and harvesting, and keep the traditional ecological knowledge alive. They heal, bring people together, and keep families connected with their berry patches, spiritual sites, and trails of their ancestors.

The categories of formal programming were classified under headings of: Land-based education, Land-based health and healing, and Land stewardship, though the defining factor of Land-based practice is the integrative and overlapping nature of these categories. Land-based education programs include diverse initiatives that employ a Land-based pedagogy and Indigenous resurgence paradigm for the transmission of traditional skills and language, as well as more culturally relevant mainstream education programming that supports the decolonization process (Wildcat et al., 2014). Land-based health and healing programs recognize the 'Land as healer'; in these programs steps are made to identify how an individual's relationship with the Land has been disrupted and how to renew this relationship, often through the integration of cultural counselling and healing combined with mainstream therapies in the Land-based environment (Laurie, 2013). Land-stewardship and other programs include teaching traditional Land management protocols, as well as incorporating traditional ecological knowledge and environmental programming, and often can include science education components, and can be combined with healing or recreation, or just general appreciation and connection with the natural world. An example of such a program in Nunavut is described in detail by Takano (2005).

There is a unifying aspect to these areas of Land-based practice in that they are inherently interconnected philosophically and, regardless of the type of program or activity, these initiatives are clearly seen as delivering integrated health and wellness outcomes at the individual and community levels.

Some challenges that were discussed to Land-based practice that were similar across all regions include:

1. Cross-cultural barriers around importance and defining outcomes;

2. Funding and resources;
3. Logistics and safety;
4. Intensity and unique challenges of the work required; and
5. Colonial disruption of knowledge transmission

The overall importance of these findings for health and wellness in these territories can be summarized using a model of community resilience (Figure 6). This model below illustrates the overriding value of Land-based practice as an important source of personal and community resilience in the face of current systemic challenges in northern Canada.

Specifically, community resilience "looks at how people overcome stress, trauma and other life challenges by drawing from the social and cultural networks and practices that constitute communities [and] at the same time, it draws attention to the resilience of the community itself" (Kirmayer et al., 2009, p. 63). Indigenous community resilience acknowledges a "holism, which emphasizes the importance of all sectors or dimensions of human experience in achieving balance and well-being" (Tousignant & Sioui, 2009, p. 63). This includes the importance of cultural identity, continuance of traditions, healing from intergenerational trauma, as well as strengthening relationships within the family and with the environment. As described below, all the interrelated areas addressed through Land-based practice include: Education and Land-skills; Environmental stewardship; Decolonization and Land rights; Land-based health and healing; Individual or personal resilience; and Community development, and are shown as supporting community resilience in the north.

Each of these areas was addressed in detail in previous sections of this thesis and is summarized below in visual form (Figure 6). Community resilience is defined here following

Healey as “the capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbances, reorganize while undergoing change, retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctness” (as cited in Tousignant & Sioui, 2009, p.46) , and ultimately, to thrive.

Figure 6: Community Resilience through Land-based Practice

In essence, strengthening individual and community resilience, which is recognized by Indigenous practitioners as being the foundation for ongoing wellness in northern Indigenous communities, requires an organized and facilitated reconnection with the Land.

This finding raises some important questions, particularly for program sponsors and funders including: What makes some programs more successful than others? And how do we begin to try to categorize aspects of initiatives that are successful across regions? The lack of quantitative data with respect to the efficacy of current programs appear to limit one's ability to respond to these questions (Ritchie et al., 2014) .

As discussed throughout the chapter, these experts spoke of a diverse range of initiatives originating from very distinct cultural teachings and different focal points around education, health, or the environment. The differences were quite pronounced in terms of day to day practices, activities, and teachings, but I did note some similarities across all regions in terms of program practice, consistent with ones mentioned by Laurie (2013) and Noah and Healey (2010). The practitioner-informants, through their experiences, described what has worked best for them in their Land-based programming. From these narratives and the literature I have identified the following key elements of effective practice, as illustrated in Figure 7 and then explained below.

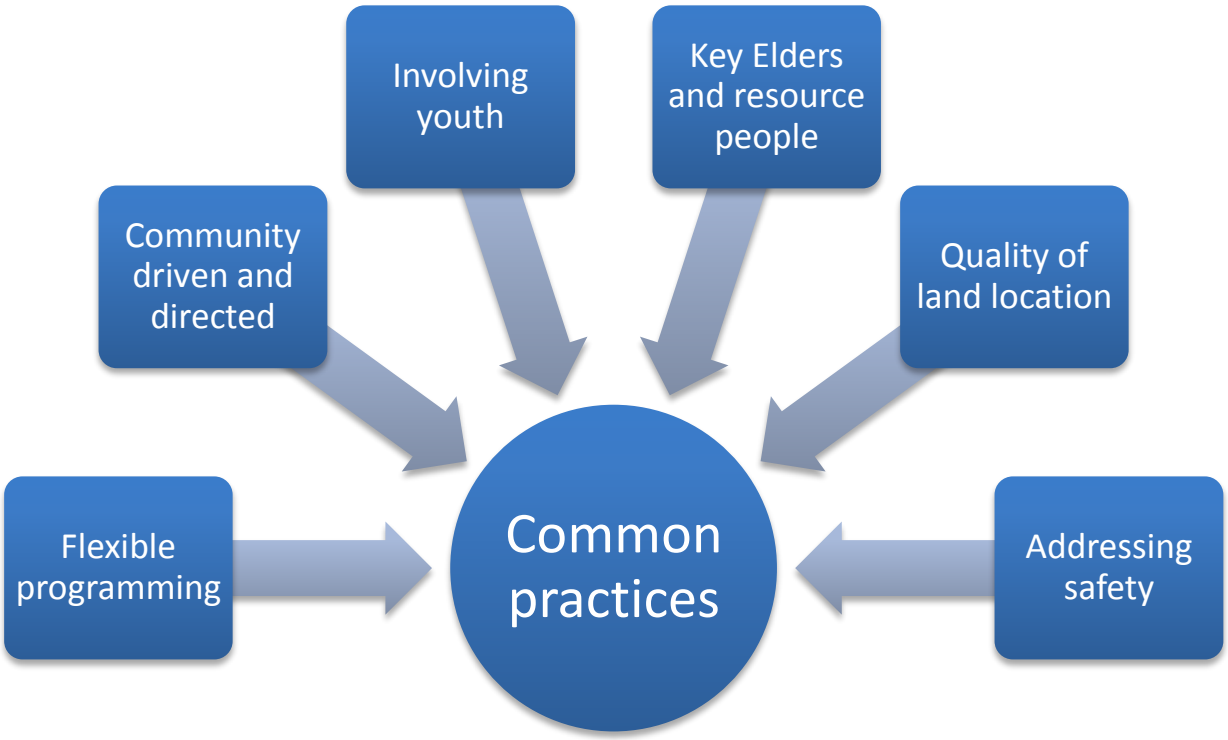


Figure 7: Effective Elements of Land-based Programming

Key Elements of Effective Practice

a. Flexible programming

Practitioners describe the unique nature of the on the land environment and the need for flexibility within a Land-based pedagogy. When out on the land, time is described as shifting and relaxing, and cultural practice, experiential learning and the affordance of learning situations demand a high degree of flexibility in programs and outcomes (Radu et al., 2014). It was clear

that over-prescribing activities, schedules, or outcomes had negative feedback from the organizers and practitioners.

> We have set things that we have to do, and then they all get done, however it's not rigid. It totally changes, sometimes you can be out in camp and an Elder will say "I want to bring all these kids and go teach them how to set a net", and we say "Okay we were just getting ready to teach them this, but go ahead, yah!" So it is very flexible and things get added and when you're in the bush things get added, things get changed. **LC**

> We don't believe structure, too much structure, because culture evolves by itself, it just happens, you don't need very much to make it happen. Automatically, you know what I mean, it just takes place. **LM**

> And one of the bigger challenges is being flexible, not a lot of people… they like schedule and agendas and when you are out on the land that could be completely thrown out the window; so being flexible. You may have these things to learn on your course objectives, these things to meet, and you go out there and this weather happens or something happens and that really puts you behind so you are kind of scrambling to make sure you meet these objectives, well then it doesn't really become fun for the kids, so being flexible, finding ways to do it. **CM**

> But there are certain things… like in the north it's a very case by case scenario…I could have an agenda what they are going to learn, I could have an agenda of guidelines, rules, whatever, and they could all change within one camp, that's the key, is that being able to *change*. **LP**

b. Community driven and culturally relevant

Discussions of the importance of community based or driven health and education programming are paramount in the North (Ballantyne, 2014; Kral et al., 2009; Redvers et al., 2015) and in the wider Indigenous community development and resilience literature (Bopp & Bopp, 2006; Tousignant & Sioui, 2009). The practitioners noted that this culturally relevant and community

driven nature takes centre stage in Land-based programming, due to the place-based nature of this practice, and key differences in cultural values, needs, and land protocols across very distinct First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

> I told the Supreme Judge, I do not want any policies of anybody on this Land. If you want us to do this work, it's going to have to be done traditionally and cultural ways…
>
> And I really believe if you are going to do this kind of program culturally and traditionally, you have to have to follow, for me, it's important, I couldn't work with these kids without our Dene Law. I couldn't work with these kids without the Environmental Laws, because that is what fits us. **BB**

> Yah, I think it's been very adaptable in each of the regions [the programming]. We have common backgrounds, we're all Inuit, common practices. But we also have very specific needs, language [for example], we've translated it into Inuktitut and it's delivered in the language that the facilitator feels most comfortable in. And there's flexibility, our facilitators have incorporated their own knowledge, experience, arts, these kinds of things that has made it very unique to their community. **CM**

c. Involving and supporting youth directly

Involving youth became a large theme throughout the research, even in programs which were focused on adults. This is inherent in the importance of familial and community relationships in Indigenous health and resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2009; Radu et al., 2014). The majority of programs which the key informants had been involved with either involved youth directly or mentioned the importance of youth involvement in some way. This could include the involvement of children and family in supporting adult programs or developing youth models alongside adult models. Many of the narrative quotes throughout this thesis focused directly on supporting youth.

> But this kind of plan if you do this for youth, you have to remember you also need to find out direction not only from the groups of people that want you do to this work, but you also have to sit down with the youth, to find out what their needs are. And how can we fit all the programs to meet their needs... **BB**

> So I had a really good group of people that had that knowledge and so that's where I learned, to look at the most important people on this world, is the young people. **BB**

d. Key Elders and resource people with unique skill set

Recruiting and effectively supporting knowledgeable and healthy Elders, as well as other workers and role models with unique skill sets is crucial to program success.

> Yah, healthy role models. We try to get lots of Elders to come in who are from where we are going, so kids know, "We are in Klukshu lake, what is this place?" and an Elder can be "I grew up here, etc…" and stuff like that. So that is very very important. **LC**

> We get the right people coming in, so it's got to be Elders coming in; we have to have teachers are coming in that have knowledge of culture, knowledge of education come in, and to start to begin to help these young people. **BB**

> But the way we do it that works well, is you have Elders there who know what to do. And you have the bush hand, who's usually a very cultural person, has a lot of knowledge, is a knowledge holder in that regard, and will advise us and things like that, of what to do. **MM**

f. The quality of the land location

This key element of programming is also addressed in more detail in the Land-based Terminology and Philosophy section (Section 4.1). This element includes ensuring some degree of remoteness, but also determining the cultural significance of the location. Laurie (2013) provides similar findings here and states:

> Several participants described how the land assists individuals. A client's awareness of the history and sacredness of a place to his or her community can have a powerful effect. In the case of Ta'Tla Mun Lake, for example, a participant noted that it is a special site that has been used by First Nations people for a long time; therefore, just being on the land increases clients' sense of identity on a conscious and sub-conscious level. Another person when speaking of another site similarly said that "people identify safety with place" (p. 15).

Statements about the importance of place were made by many of the individuals I interviewed:

> Yah, remoteness, is definitely one [for a successful program], to keep it really, we try and keep a lot of culture in there too. **LC**

> It was very powerful, you go way back in Tsilhqot'in country, really remote. **AMR**

f. Addressing safety considerations

This element of success involves addressing all areas of logistical safety and risk management in the land-based location as well as spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical safety. Examples of issues that were addressed included emergency communication and response, wilderness insurance, camp and bear safety, trail or water access, conflict resolution, and having proper emotional supports in place for issues or traumas that might arise when on the land. It was clear

that even in environmental or education based programming, mental, physical, and emotional safety has to be addressed due to the healing nature of being out on the land. Also, there was an agreement that being on the land was a place where alcohol and other drugs didn't mesh well.

> One of the camps that we were on, no drugs allowed, if there's any drugs you are going to be sent back regardless. Then one of the students we found it, and I said "I'm sorry, but that was your choice, it was your choice", putting it on them, making sure the student knew it was their choice, and being stern, so we had to bring the student back. I didn't want to because that student had the potential, but having stern rules on something that's illegal. **LP**

> We would have our Satellite phone and we would phone in everyday: "This is where we are, everything is fine, bye". **LC**

> And the young people, have any time they want to go out [away from] the camp with an Elder or with one of the supervisors they can do that, they can roam anywhere they want on the land, as long as there's somebody there with them. **BB**

> So that's including things like conflict resolution, because you have a small group of people who don't know each other, you drop them off in the bush together for seven weeks, give them a ton of hardcore concepts and issues, and history to think about, and process and write about and read about, and then they're expected to all work together *every single* day from when they wake up until they go to bed.
>
> So there's a lot of issues that can arise from that, between people and people being away from home and people being homesick, and how people interact with each other and treat each other. It is kind of a safe space issue as well, so that's something we address and talk about throughout the program too. **MM**

The nature of this analysis was to describe a common scope of Land-practice across diverse practices and activities. Land practice involves many unique considerations, which differentiate it from other forms of programming including, requiring a strong sense of flexibility in facilitation and outcomes, and a strong community and cultural base to be successful. They

require a unique set of skills to coordinate, organize, and carry out successfully. They are important in addressing youth concerns, are assisted by a meaningful Land environment, and also require a high degree of risk management and safety consideration. The themes discussed were common across the regions of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Yukon.

In order to meet or achieve these key elements of effective Land-based practice, the Indigenous experts were unanimous with respect to one message that can be summarized as follows: The value of this type of programming needs to be accepted, based on their years of experience delivering such programming, and supporters and funders need to find ways to provide ongoing, core funding to maintain quality programs that provide an integrated approach to Indigenous reconnection to the Land in order to better support individual and community resilience in northern Canada.

4.14. Future Visions

When asked about their future visions for the field of Land-based practice in their respective regions the practitioners had a lot to share.

> People, this is what people want to be doing, yah, it is just often people don't quite know how to get it together and there are a lot of people who do it on their own. Like Freddy [Last name], an Elder who just passed away, just said "You just got to go do it, you just got to go, whether you are alone or just a couple people, you got to go to the land, open up those trails, go to your old camps", and he said "that's how we are going to survive, what's coming ahead of us". The prophecies are that things are going to get tough, I am sure you have those same prophecies at home. **LM**

> What I was describing about having these people who are empowered to just go out to find the funding that they need, I really want to see that become the norm. That a lot of people have those skills to fundraise, to write proposals, to get what's needed. And also cause a lot of older people and Elders are passing away, I'd like to see this middle generation really step in and just share what they know…
>
> So in the future I hope that Inuit will remain humble but really recognize that what they know and have to offer is very valuable and that the younger generation in the future would be…because with the residential school era, my mom was ripped away from her parents, so what I want to see is for that to be restored, for all this information, knowledge, wisdom, all of that to be flowing in a really natural organic way to the next generation and for there not to be such a need for these outside organizations to come in and facilitate that, if that makes sense, like we'll do such a good job, that we'll help to restore that natural balance. **BQ**

> Like I said there's a lot of things that is out on the Land, a lot of connection that needs to be done with the youth to feel proud of who they are, and that the future is open for them, especially with the massive Land that we have. In the past people go out hunting, fishing, trapping, today it's just, things are not as it was in the past, but what can we do to continue to preserve and feel that we can continue to do things on the Land? So it's all interrelated. **TR**

Ideally I would really like to see the schools in the Yukon take on a bigger initiative in that. A lot of people don't like school per se, the idea of school. If we started doing more stuff on the land and making it more flexible within the Yukon education system, to be able to take kids out and do Land-based activities then I can totally see things shifting for the positive… Honestly ideally I would love to see the school system more Land-based. **LC**

Finding ways to have, I wouldn't say more programs, because really in Iqaluit more than other communities, there are different programs, you just have to know who's doing what. In Iqaluit, there's a lot of organizations wants to nowadays work with youth, what you need just to do is find out who's doing what and just sort of pull them in.

But within smaller communities it's showing dedication, that you're there to help them, it's not just one stop, one stop help-wise. It's kind of like "I am going to be here", I am going to work with this department over the next five years; "I am going to be here next year". Just showing you're not just there and gone, but showing them that you are there for a long time and then that really helps the youth, to know that you're going to come back someday, or know that you care, not just another person, because we see a lot of transient staff up here, come and do something and bang we never see them again or never hear from that department again. So having consistency within the kids, the youth in the north, having consistent programs.

There's a lot of organizations that want to do it, and they're well intentioned, but it's the consistency that needs to stay put if they are going to do any kind of programming. **LP**

There's so much more we could do, we could have, you know, the kind of program I was talking about, where you have this awesome Land-based education program that we do, but then you could expand it to include the mental health aspect to it as well.

There's lots of things that… people who are doing so much work, there's so much more they could do if they had the support of the Government. **MM**

And understanding youth nowadays and understanding the two cultures, I think that's a big part. Is making the youth, kids understand, that we live in two cultures, we do. We have to learn to survive in the two cultures, we have to learn to do this *and* this. We have to know why the Inuit culture is the way it is today, and then know where the Southern cultures is at, the Western culture, so finding ways to combine that. **LP**

I have been doing this work now since I was 19; I am now 65, so I never quit in what I believe in, and I really believe in the young people. If we can give them, as Elders, the right guidance, they are going to be exploring in this life and make a difference in this life, to make it better than the situation we are in today, just like you. So that's why for me, my pride and joy in this life is the young people, the children and the young people. And to see them just blossom like this beautiful rose, is what I live all my life for, is to see that rose blossom and I've seen it so many times. From that little rose that was so shut in so tight and then just blossom because somebody cared and loved for them and gave them a hope in their life for the future. It makes it a difference. **BB**

Chapter 5. Northern Land-based Practice in Conclusion

> Well things are changing today and rapidly we are losing Elders … you know one of the things, that's back in 1970s when the school was built here, when Chief Jimmy Bruneau said "I want my people to be strong like two people", and to be strong like two people meaning to me, was to go to school and on the other side I have my culture balancing those two.
>
> Tony Rabesca (**TR**)

In a certain way, this thesis is an attempt at being strong like two people, blending a formal academic approach with the lived knowledge, wisdom, and experience of practitioners in a field that hasn't yet been truly defined, nor fully understood within the primary health literature. Land-based practice is an Indigenous approach to the holistic and interconnected challenges faced in the interdisciplinary arenas of health, education, and environmental stewardship. It is based on a fundamentally different philosophical and ideological lens than those of wilderness or nature-based programming. It is a resurgence of Indigenous Land-based activities and programs within a cultural context, that have been shown here to enhance individual and community resilience factors in Canada' north, supporting a movement towards health and wellness.

We have something special

What became abundantly clear throughout this research and through the interview process in particular was that we have something very special here, something that has so much promise and potential to heal and positively influence our communities and to provide a space

for *greater resilience in the face of rapid change*. The health benefits derived through Land-based practice spoken about in the interviews and mentioned in the available literature include, but are not limited to: cultural revitalization, interpersonal connection, culturally relevant nutrition, physical fitness, self-confidence, sense of identity, relaxation, personal well-being, language transmission, strong interpersonal relationships, and pure joy. Other benefits addressed culturally relevant education and enhanced learning, community building, and environmental stewardship. These benefits extended to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants alike.

In discussions on such topics as 'Indigenous healing', 'Indigenous education', 'Community resilience' and 'Culturally relevant health interventions' in the North, the concept of Land is an important one that needs to be recognized and addressed explicitly. The reality on the ground for practitioners in the field (representing very diverse cultural communities across the North) reflects a surprisingly united philosophy encompassing holistic approaches and answers; this has been represented in the Land-based model of community resilience (Figure 6).

Ultimately, what my informants spoke of was the power of accepting our Land-based reality as Indigenous peoples. This means that the answer to the common refrain from external parties "What can we do to help?" should include an acceptance of this Land-based reality. This foundation can then translate into a better grounding for health interventions, alternative models of education, or simply promoting more opportunities for children to connect with the Land or Land-based pedagogy at a young age, fostering deeper connection later on in life. Land-based components can be better incorporated into regular school programming. On the land trips can become integral components of health and education, and not just 'field trips'. Land-based rehabilitation models can be more widely utilized through justice programs, especially for Aboriginal inmates and specifically for Aboriginal young offenders, as a culturally appropriate

alternative for healing. Land-based models can be better funded and supported as a means of residential school healing and supporting suicide prevention efforts for our youth. They can combine Western therapy and counselling with traditional healing practices for the provision of mental health services. Land-based connection and relationship can benefit a number of interdisciplinary areas, since the underlying trauma is 'disconnection', no matter the field you are addressing it from. It is clear from this research, that the experience of being out on the land is an important way to help build and strengthen individual and community resilience factors, as well as working to better integrate Land-based values and practices into towns and cities.

The recognition of this 'practice-based' evidence is paramount, in the absence of 'peer-reviewed' scientific data in northern Canada citing clear quantitative health outcomes from these programs. As Sahota and Kastelic (2012) describe, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities have called for the acceptance of "practice-based evidence, which uses real-life practice as a basis for building evidence, as an alternative to the evidence-based practice paradigm", which relies solely on evidence "based on systematic reviews, reasonable effect sizes, statistical and clinical significance" (p.107). Such an approach is often unrealistic in northern regions based on small sample sizes, the nature of community-based programming, and understandably unwanted due to the unappealing and culturally irrelevant nature of the research. Sahota and Kastelic (2012) explain the implications of this for funding and policy:

> It is also important to note that promotion and implementation of evidence-based practices is another form of institutional racism because almost none have been developed with Native communities. This reality is clearly perceived by many Native American [health] providers and community members, but is not often recognized by non- Native providers, researchers, funding sources, and policy makers. Furthermore, the practices developed by Native American providers that are often deemed non–'evidence-based' are often not funded by important policy makers. Requiring AI/AN communities to use only programs that have been established as evidence-based is problematic. (p.109)

The interviews I conducted provide narrative evidence that these forms of programs are already being practiced as a viable and effective form of culturally valid and culturally replicable intervention (Sahota & Kastelic, 2012). In fact, a single program can help address a number of health, education, and environmental concerns, as noted by the informants. For example, an education program might also provide tangible benefit as a suicide prevention program, or an addictions program provide a means of transmitting cultural skills and Land stewardship. As the narratives illustrate, many forms of integrative practice exist, and opportunities for coexisting interventions in any one program are feasible; it is just a matter of program design and flexibility, and the creativity and commitment of the people involved.

It is due to the successes they have seen that the individuals interviewed continue to choose to work in a field that involves a lot of effort, stress, paperwork, and logistical challenges, often with little or time-limited funding. In parallel, it was clear that life is not always easy on the land, and yet with inclement weather, gear failure, unexpected hazards, and hard physical work, there was general agreement that even in the pouring rain or with polar bears nearby, the Land can provide us with cultural healing and learning opportunities of a unique nature.

I will now address the larger policy arena, and put forward some ideas for future applications and further research possibilities relating to Land-based practice.

5.1. Application of Research Findings to Practice

Better support for Land-based practice

Indigenous understandings of resilience have called for emphasis on protective factors at the individual and community level, which focus on strengthening cultural ties and Indigenous identity towards improved health and wellness outcomes (Allen et al., 2013; Kirmayer et al., 2009). This research supports this finding and stresses that this is best achieved among Indigenous peoples in northern Canada by supporting Land-based values - values which are the source of Indigenous history, language, identity, spirituality, and relationship. Whether Land connection is focused on educational, environmental, healing or other goals, there is inevitably a strong healing component to the experience, given the strong cultural attachment inherent to Indigenous peoples. Supporting Land-based practice in a community would mean looking more seriously at these programs in terms of their ability to promote specific outcomes, which are addressed in the 'Opportunities for further research' section below.

Any discussion of Indigenous health (including addictions, rehabilitation and suicide), education, justice, and environmental stewardship at the academic or policy level should acknowledge the Indigenous Land-based reality, and prioritize the importance of this connection in decision making processes.

At a fundamental level, this means providing basic avenues for one on one connection with the Land and Land-based practices outside of settled communities. This simple act of reconnecting with the Land, the natural world, the ancestors, and landscape embedded with language and traditional skills and practices, is a fundamental form of healing for people, no matter what form this interaction takes, formal or informal.

There are of course many nuances and challenges to creating these opportunities, and to negotiating the transition from on the land experiences back to settled communities and vice versa. These challenges are addressed in this thesis, but many of the challenges faced in northern communities stem from the fact that Indigenous people have been uprooted from a lifestyle based on close harmony with the Land, to lives bound by very colonial and Western structures in just a few short generations. The challenges of reconnecting to Indigenous modes of lifestyle in this contemporary context are being worked out on the ground by passionate and committed on the land leaders. This is not being done with the explicit intention to return to a Land-based lifestyle completely, but in order to regain the resiliency factors that were once a fundamental aspect of Indigenous life and that can still be applied in both traditional and contemporary settings. How to continue overcoming these challenges effectively will require ongoing support, research, and dialogue. This is a dialogue worth having at the policy level.

Bridge worldviews through acknowledgement of practice-based evidence

Sahota and Kastelic (2012) discuss how the Oregon Indian Council on Addiction took a stance asking to "allow tribes to design their own research/evaluation tools and classify tribal programs as 'culturally validated and culturally replicated' [as] taking these steps would help tribes to build practice-based evidence for their own programs" (p.108). As a result, "a panel of experts on tribally based practices and culturally appropriate evaluation methods was convened to create a separate review and documentation process for approving tribal practices as evidence-based" (p. 109), as well as acknowledging the importance of verifying and building this evidence-base within mainstream arenas. Sahota and Kastelic (2012) speak to the importance of acknowledging three 'types' of evidence: practice-based evidence, scientific evidence, and

culture-based intervention. This suggests a middle ground for northern policy, and a way to bridge the two worlds of Western methodology and Indigenous health practice within communities, with an exchange of information between both those worlds and acknowledgement of credibility across different types of evidence. This is critical within the field of Land-based practice, which is based on traditional values and yet operates within the formal arenas of health, education, and environment. Land-based practice must also negotiate validity on the ground in communities in order to be successful, and within the mainstream government and policy arena to satisfy funders and required outcomes.

In order for this to happen, mainstream programming and funding agencies must have solid research available to them that validates the Land-based model from within their own Western frameworks. This evidence may help facilitate making the uncomfortable shift to sending Aboriginal people out into 'risky' wilderness environments, to participate in cultural activities and healing programs that do not fit into familiar models of intervention. Increased support and training for culturally relevant evaluation at the community level could be beneficial in this area as well as culturally supportive research by outsider researchers. This thesis has sought to compile currently available research and verify it on the ground through practice-based evidence. However, this is just the beginning in terms of establishing credibility of Land-practice, and there remain many areas to be worked out on the ground in terms of programming and other considerations.

An ongoing challenge is that Elders or community practitioners in remote areas, far removed from academic institutions, understandably do not have program evaluation on the top of their minds. The recording and sharing of results through formal evaluation outcomes or research is again, understandably, not commonplace, yet often required in order to publish or

compare results and successes in mainstream arenas. Instead, successes are typically transmitted by stories and reports, which I have aimed to capture here alongside the available research literature. Researchers (especially Indigenous researchers) can play an important role here, and have already been communicating and developing this field of practice (Janelle et al., 2009; Radu et al., 2014; Ritchie et al., 2014; Simpson, 2014). There is a clear role here for insider as well as outsider research allies in Canada's north in building the Land politic and discussion towards greater understanding and support of Land-based health and wellness (Caine et al., 2007). Further research in this field will continue to support the transition from Western models of healing, to models incorporating and eventually rooted in the Indigenous Land-based reality.

At the same time, hardworking individuals like the ones I interviewed as well as northern academics are attempting every day through advocacy, program reports, and funding proposals to translate the magic that happens out on the land into formats that existing funding agencies can understand. This thesis is one contribution in support of these efforts.

The narrative results of this thesis highlight what the practitioners on the ground already know: Land-based activities and programs in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut have already resulted in major impacts in the lives of individuals across the three territories. It is clear that building on the strengths of Land-based practice has enormous potential for working towards an Indigenous, resiliency-based model of health and wellness. It is essential that funders, organizations, and researchers maintain and indeed expand the discussion and support for this important field of practice. As this research has demonstrated, further qualitative research in the area and/or quantitative evaluation of programs and activities could be completed in order to continue to build the mainstream evidence base for Land-based practice, and to

improve and clarify overall delivery over time. Ideas for future research are presented in section 5.2.

Acknowledge benefits of an integrated Land-based model

The unique nature of this practice is that it is interdisciplinary. However you define these programs, they are a fundamental tool for Indigenous reconnection and space needs to be created for these initiatives in an otherwise tightly controlled funding and administrative process. An education program improves health outcomes, a healing program includes education, a justice program includes rehabilitation through skills and education, and an environmental program provides mental health benefits, cultural connection, and education. Even a recreational program can include healing, education, and cultural learning when embedded in the Land-based worldview.

It would be helpful to have more flexibility within existing funding models to address the interconnected nature of these programs; for example, rewarding projects that are able to touch on a range of different areas and benefits, rather than excluding them because they don't fit into the prescribed boxes. Programs that touch on a broader range of outcomes and topic areas could instead be seen as an asset, providing more 'bang for your buck' in terms of delivering a wider array of individual and community health, education, and environmental outcomes.

Policy changes

Government and other programming and funding agencies can best encourage and support Land-based practice by accepting and valuing the voice of Indigenous Elders and acknowledging

and building upon the integrative qualities of Land-based practice across disciplines. Establishing core or multi-year funding arrangements would support these programs and provide necessary stability, and would also reflect the value and urgency of supporting such programs in the face of elevated health concerns and unacceptable rates of youth suicide.

Questions the policy arena must address include: What level and type of evidence is culturally meaningful and yet adequate for funders? What flexibility is available for communities to define what works for them? What kind of reiterative practice and validation is needed to prove and improve the success of programs at the individual and community levels?

There clearly needs to be better support for cultural initiatives of all kinds at the territorial and federal levels, including language preservation, cultural organizations, implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada, fewer restrictions on how cultural funding is spent, and a wider perspective of what is therapeutic within the area of mental health to also include informal and formal Land-based practices. Since cultural initiatives are based in an integrative Land-based worldview, supporting cultural programming both within communities and on the land is an important step to better strengthen cultural connections, and help dismantle an imposed 'separation' due to the colonial process.

Within the area of education policy, therapeutic healing and alternative forms of Indigenous education and pedagogy require better support, particularly in terms of addressing how education and healing can walk hand in hand in communities.

Parks and environmental agencies have opportunities to continue addressing the human connection with the environment, and how Indigenous people have always been an integral part of environmental design and management in all areas of Canada. Supporting young people to

spend time out on the land as an integral part of management plans in the North remains a clear opportunity for the future management and success of these agencies.

At the organizational scale, government agencies, NGOs, First Nations, and others would benefit from supporting Land trips for their employees, as a way of reconnecting and healing in their lives. This is especially true in those professions where people are making decisions on resource management in the North, or working in roles within counselling or Indigenous mental health. There is a need for more support for Aboriginal women, particularly in terms of learning Land-skills. This could be through specific funding available for individuals to attend existing programs, through new programs specifically for women and families, and/or through specialized funding for young women *and* men to travel on the land with Elders and learn traditional Land-based skills. This could be through various departments, First Nations governments, private organizations, academic institutions, or bursary programs.

Territorial and federal government agencies need to take the time to review and amend their own policy frameworks, ensuring that they are supporting and not hindering the need for Land-based practice as a fundamental form of reconciliation between government and Indigenous peoples. Youth - who have lost the most in terms of identity and resilience - must be a primary focus for this type of programming.

5. 2 Opportunities for Further Research

Future research could address how to improve program evaluation in order to better qualify the health benefits of Land programs or activities in Indigenous populations, or better determine what types of evidence are adequate to justify increased stable funding and support for these initiatives. Specific outcomes that have been touched on through this thesis, which could benefit from further research, are organized into different arenas while recognizing the interrelatedness and intractable connection to culture. These include educational outcomes such as improved learning retention, language transmission, and intergenerational knowledge transfer; as well as health outcomes such as physical fitness, emotional and mental wellbeing, trauma healing, suicide prevention, disease prevention and treatment, superior mental health therapy in Land-based environments, enhanced protective factors, healthy eating, and increased traditional diets. These include environmental outcomes such as individuals interested in pursuing careers in Land-stewardship, feeling more connected to environmental concerns and debates, having more individuals contributing to a traditional economy and asserting Land rights, increased outdoor tourism opportunities and knowledgeable guides, and the transfer of traditional ecological knowledge to young people. Finally they could include justice outcomes such as reduced crime, greater rehabilitation among offenders, and a wider range of transferable life skills learned in a holistic healing environment.

There is a clear opportunity here for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics alike to begin to map out the extent of the benefits of a transition ‘back to’ a Land-based understanding and way of life amoung Indigenous populations in the north. This could involve the development of action-based research projects to identify in a cross-cultural context the long term cost-benefits of standard programs compared to Land-based community programs. For

example, this might include: looking at the cost savings in the long-term of Land-based addiction intervention programs which could include recovery rates and individual and community feed-back; educational outcomes and attendance for school-based programs when Land-programs are incorporated or utilized; and recidivism rates with offenders, when community-based justice solutions are held out on the land.

Further identification and documentation of programming best practices and evaluation of efficacy would also be beneficial. The details and framework of this research can be expanded upon through work with additional Land-based practitioners in other areas of the north and across Canada for a larger comparative analysis. For example, research could be completed documenting stories from participants of on the land programs directly, while collecting supporting data from a wider array of communities. This research could be used to open a dialogue with other academic and research institutions to develop enhanced cross-cultural communication upon which to build more culturally relevant and evidence based practices and cases for Land-based program support.

Future research should also be directed at further validation of the models and frameworks presented in this research. With further work needed on clarifying this field of practice and how these programs can contribute to Aboriginal health and resiliency in Canada. While this study has focused on the three northern territories of Canada, research could also be conducted in other Canadian and international contexts to determine if the nature, scope and issues faced in Land-practice are similar across other Indigenous populations and communities.

This research was situated within the field of environmental design, as it provided an interdisciplinary platform from which to examine Land-based practice. Further research could be situated in a range of different academic fields, for example, disciplines such as transcultural

psychology, cultural anthropology, education, mental health and addictions, rehabilitation, criminology, conservation biology, ecology, ecopsychology, youth studies, and outdoor programming are all relevant to Land-based practice research.

Further work could go into clarifying how to bring Land-based Indigenous pedagogy and healing to the forefront of Indigenous healthcare and provide a framework for dialogue that can assist both non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations in mending a deep disconnection from the natural world.

In conclusion, Alfred (2009) states (see the introduction to this document), “Pre-contact indigenous societies developed regimes of conscience and justice that promoted the harmonious co-existence of humans and nature for hundreds of generations. As we move into a post-imperial age, the values central to those traditional cultures are the indigenous contribution to the reconstruction of a just and harmonious world “ (p.30). This thesis is a call to bring Land-based values and practice to the forefront of this dialogue towards the reconstruction of a more just and harmonious world for our youth and future generations.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Interview guide [16]

1. How would you normally introduce yourself in a group of people?
2. Why has creating opportunities for Aboriginal youth, adults, and/or Elders to spend time out on-the-Land been important to you?
3. What do you think is an appropriate way of referring to these Land-based initiatives, which aim to promote health and wellness?
4. Can you share with me some positive experiences or stories from your work in this field?
5. Has your experience been that there are health benefits from all the programs or bush trips you have been involved with, or do some activities or programs provide more benefits then others?
6. What are some of the personal barriers you have experienced in organizing programs or Land trips in your community?
7. What would you like to see happen in the future with Land-based health initiatives?
8. Is there anything else you feel is important or that I missed?

[16] Semi-structured, open to flexible wording and adaptations

Appendix II. Detailed Narrative Example: Young Offender's Program

I had the supreme judge come to me one time, and he was looking for me for three years. He couldn't find me. When he finally found me, he came by boat to the camp where I was.

And he put his hand on his hips standing up on the boat, putting his hands on his hip and he pointed a finger at me, and he says "Where were you, I have been looking for you for three years?" So all I did was looked at him and I said, "You could have just asked anybody where I was [laughs] They would just tell you I was out here [laughs]". He said "I finally found out, I had moccasin telegrams going all over looking for you and finally found you".

So I guess in the Yukon they had so much problems with youth offenders. There is so much repeat of youth offenders there, and I guess the judge was getting tired of them coming up into courts all the time, so the magistrate and him they talked about it and said they have to have their program out somewhere, I said "How come? Why are you looking for me, you have all these social programs going all over the place, why can't you fit these young people there?" "Nope, we have to have somebody like *you* to do something for them" I said "Okay, let's make a plan".

I said the only time at this camp that I can have it available for young people is in spring time where they can't run away and fall time when the ice is coming. When they are in isolation I said "You can everything do change their life". We get the right people coming in, so it's got to be Elders coming in, we have to have teachers are coming in that have knowledge of culture, knowledge of education come in, and to start to begin to help these young people.

So when these young people come in, into the camp, they come in just like they know it all! Their ego is so big you know, their pants is hanging way down by their knees, they are walking in like that. I said it take me a whole day just watching, because the staff is going to prepare them. So they got to write down things, they got to put everything and get them organized, but I sit back and I am just watching. Everybody kept saying, "Where's that Elder we're supposed to see?", all throughout the day, "Where's that Elder we are supposed to see?". Me I am just all over the place, running around, just not saying, like I just don't want them to know that I am the Elder. So I am just running around all over the place, you know, making sure they are set up in their cabins, because they have to have a supervisor sleeping in their same cabin. So just running around and finally in the evening, they said "When are we going to see that Elder?!" And then I come up towards them and I said "I am the Elder". "What?! You look too young to be Elder [laughs]; here we are looking for an oooold person"[laughs].

And then I introduced myself to them, and I said "Okay these are rules and regulations for this camp, you heard it from my staff, what do you think?". "Yah, it's good, but you know it's no problem for us to run that way and head to Dawson city, we have no problem just taking off in the canoe, we have no problem just doing that". My first meeting. I said "Ooooooohhh, I said that's really interesting", I said 'If you just turn your head this way a little bit and look way over there you'll see something moving". So they turn their head and they look over there and here a huge Grizzly bear just shaking a birch tree, you can just see it! [laughs]

This is how they are showing themselves. “I am there, don’t forget who I am, I am there”, so he is showing himself and the kids go “Ohhhh oh my god that’s a Grizzly bear!” I said “Yes, you want to run away you just go ahead, once you pass that one line that goes from the camp to the bush, that one line you pass over, it’s up to them what they are going to do to you, it’s going to be hard for us to protect you because a lot of us here don’t have guns, so how are we going to protect you”, so I said, “But there is a medicine was put around that circle, so you don’t step overboard without somebody to go with you”. “So you can go on the river”, I said, “You ever see the bears and wolves and that swim on the river?” They said “Yah”. “Well anytime they can go in that water, once you take that canoe, they are going to know, because they’re waiting for you.”

They don’t run away, they don’t take the boat.

And then we start the programs. The first thing we do is making sure that everything they need is at that camp. Making sure that the Elders have their teaching package. The people are going to be working with them and teaching them in the camp, all have their work order, of how they are going to run the whole project. So I sit down with my staff and train them before we can bring in the young people, after they are trained, they know exactly what to do.

And everybody at the camp have to be up by 6:00 in the morning and so that we can begin the day with exercising. There is, if we have a huge hill, we would be able to run up the hill and come down maybe two or three or four times, and that’s part of their exercise. And part of their exercise is I have a young man there that does teachings with education but also has yoga. So they do yoga in the morning, so for one whole hour they do that in the morning and then after breakfast, they wash their dishes clean up the camp, and then we begin with the program and then I come in. And so that’s where I do the teachings, the workshops, has to do with trauma, suicide, *whatever* comes in the meetings, I mean the workshops that we’re having, whatever comes up is what we talk on. Some of the staff that I have that work there have gone through that experience, so I want to make sure that the youth are always knowing that we’re there if they break down.

So you know that at the beginning of each of the programs there is always going to be a lot of clash with youth. Because of ego. There’s going to be clash clash clash, after a couple of weeks I see all this clashing going on and it was very difficult for them to learn to understand, some of them have been doing drugs forever, some of them been alcoholics since they’re a certain age, some of them at five years old and they have been drinking all their life and now they’re 17. Some of them have gone through being born from parents that have drank, the mother drank so much that they are fetal alcohol effect or defect, and some of these young people were really raised in violence and some of them were really not wanted.

And so you have all these young people coming in, of course they’re going to clash, so what I do is I sit down with them and talk to them individually. What is the biggest barrier in their life? This is where, because it’s so confidential, and I used medicines like smudge, to make sure that they are in balance everyday, and I told them, “I know *everything* that is going to happen to you”, and they look at me “How you know?” “Just that hug in the morning will tell me a story of your night. That hug before you go to bed, is going to tell me how you went through the day.

That's how I know". So they said "But Grandma, how could you know all that?", and I said "well some people like Grandma are very gifted to know these things". "Do you think that we can be able to learn some of those gifts?" I said, "You can, when you decide to, but we need to work on healing first, before we can get there".

But the clashes kept going so I just decided the best thing to do is gather them together to make sure all of their pockets are empty, and make sure they have little shirts and take it off because they are going to do some wrestling, to get themselves tired of each other. So they wrestle wrestle and then they change, wrestle wrestle, and then they change and after they finish that whole thing for maybe take an hour to just do that, half an hour to an hour, once it's finished, they shake each other's hand and they hug. They go one after another around that circle and they do that. You never hear one peep from them after that. Now they're workable. They're learning.

I cut them right off from sugar, no sugar in the camp, absolutely no sugar, they have water, they can have tea, but absolutely no sugar in anything. And slowly from the time they come in I see them with salt, I slowly make them take less and less salt. I make the cook cook all the food with salt in the frying pan, in boiling whatever, so they don't take it and go like that with salt shaker, to keep their blood and their water level in their body in balance to learn. So that's the magic touch.

If they come in with alcohol problems and they are still craving and they're going through all this different stage, and they tell me how long they've been drinking, then I would go out on the land and get [type of tree] bark and I would boil it up and let them drink it for four days, and then they have no more cravings after that. So these are the things that you got to look at when you are going to be doing this kind of program. That's what I seen my dad doing when he's helping healing people, especially people that have a lot of alcohol and have violence within that alcohol, and that's what he would do to the people. And he says "It really makes a big change, if there is any craving, is the [type of tree] bark".

So after we set out the programs, we do all the young people, they just work on ceremonies, they go through traumas, they go through all the different information and workshops they don't understand, and when I come in to do the teachings then they can *really really* heal themselves. And I always tell them, there's nobody here will ever tell anybody *outside* of the camp, what you have gone through. That's *very* confidential, so don't ever worry about that, the staff is obligated for that, to never tell what is going on. And sometimes if a staff want to come in to do this work and sometimes I know the history of that staff, I'm going to have to get them to test out, out of their alcohol, and to make sure that they're okay. So sometimes I have to go through RCMP to do that.

So when the kids go through that devastation on trauma, I have a special place on the land where I can take them to. You know at the camp, you go all the way back, you go all the way back and there's a little cabin if you keep walking out there, just a little cabin and around that cabin is a very sacred place for them to be able to take out their issues on their traumas, suicide and stuff. So they can yell out, blare out, and you can't really hear it from the camp, so that's why I take them that far.

And then towards the end of the program what I do is I, the last two weeks, it's an eight week program, and the last two weeks of the eight week program, what I do is I bring in the parents. If the grandparents are living I bring them in also, so that the young people and their parents can interact, fully. *Everything* that the young person needs to know from their parents will come out. And the parents have to give answers. And I tell you, that is the hardest *hardest* connection you can ever see. Because that rage of that young person, living and growing up in such a devastating violent home, they have no choice in their life, they don't know the difference not to live that life.

So, to go through that with their parents and their parents feeling so guilty because they have gone through that. It's my opportunity to take those parents and to start working on healing with them, because they will be there two weeks with their kids, and that's very very important to see them working together. So we'll set up tents so that they all can live together. And so they go through two weeks together, and you can see the changes, the difference, and the feeling that comes out from those young people because they finally can tell their parents what they feel. That just breaks that ice, chew! [like that]. And you see that love building.

So sometimes in the workshop I tell the parents "When was the last time you hugged your child?" They said "When they are a child, baby". Well I think, I said, "It's about time you give another hug, everybody get up and give each other a hug". So you are always working for those two weeks reconnecting the parents and the child together.

But the Elders that come in from the community are doing all the cultural education. They make them spears, they make them bows and arrow, they make them bone knife, because young people aren't allowed to use regular knives and stuff if they're under care of justice. So yah. So we have to make sure we find different ways, but the ones who aren't it's a different program, they can carry their knives, their guns, to clean it, the Elders will show them all that, how to do that. But these ones are under care of Justice, we have to make sure that their work plan is much different then ones who aren't.

So when the Elders come into teach them about how to use those tools and that, and how to look at tracks on the land and how to know from a distance what animals are walking. So they all have binoculars so that they can see. Then the Elders will say, to the young people as they are walking on the land, "What kind of foot print is that?" Well these young people don't know, they've never been on the land. And some of them are just guessing [laughs], some of them are just guessing, the Elders said, "You know when I was young, I was 6 and 7 years old when I knew what that track was", he says, "That track you are looking at right now is a bear track." And they go "What, there is a bear out there?' and he'd look and he says, "Tell me how old that track is". And the young people go there, they're scratching their head, they're not sure you know how to tell him, you know, and one of the young boys says, "That's a week old,' and the other one would say, "Oh maybe four days", and the other one says "Maybe one day", and the other one says "Oh just today".

And the Elder says "Look around it, if there's a lot of water and it's not dry it just happened this morning, but if you look at this other track over there" he said, "that's an old track, because its

dry there is no moist, there is no nothing, it's dry, so that is about two, three weeks old", so the kids look "Wow, that's amazing amazing amazing!".

So they got to come back and the Elders will tell them "Tell the group here this story what you learned here today". So that's part of their exam, because a lot of the Elders can't write, but they can do it verbally and so the young people talk about it and they said "Boy sometime", he said, "I wish I was raised in my dad's time, then I would know all this, but this is really interesting".

So we all also make sure that you know how to do craftwork, they got to also create something. For us, we have a brilliant brilliant mind, but we got to put that brilliant mind into something. You got to go out on the land and find something that you can put that mind into it. So the young people and Elders and all of us will walk for miles and miles on the land until they find something that they can carve or whatever. And they can find an old rotten wood you know, and they're all twisted together, that's got something in there. So they go out a little ways there; be a big stump with something that look like something in there, so they will cut it and bring it back.

And then we'll play lots of lots of game, traditional games, we do all that. And we never have to worry about fish, because right at the beginning at the part of the course is we make a fish wheel that turns in the river and it catches fish and then when it catches fish there is a basket underneath in the fish wheel, where all the fresh fish go in there and they are swimming, so when it's time to go fishing, they just say "Go out there and hook one up!", so the kids will go down and hook up a fish and they'll cut it and everything because they know how to do that now. And then if there's fish eggs, we talk about the fish eggs. And then we'll soak it up in soya, what you call, soya sauce.

So they would catch the fish and they would fillet it or they would cut it, they all take turns, and then they cut it up, they're the one that's going to cook it for everybody. So everybody takes a turn in doing some sort of cooking, because we believe that if they need to survive out on the land they are going to have to learn how to do that, and if they are around groups of people they are going to have to learn how to do that. So that's why we look at *all* those things that need to be put, but we do a lot of educational work.

And we try to build the camp like a family. So they call me Grandma, they're not allowed to call me by my name and all the other Elders they're Grandma and Grandpas. All the workers they use their names.

And every Saturday they have to wash their clothes, we don't want for them not to, they have to do that.

And then after they finish all that and towards the last week of the program you can see a big change in ALL the kids within three weeks. Three weeks is where they stumble the most, first three weeks, and then after the three weeks, it's completely knowledge building, healing, making a difference in their life.

And so on the last week, I bring in some other people, this young man that's working in there, that came from Toronto, he was also helping with the education part. He did a really good job. But now, before they leave I bring in another educator to come in and to put a plan for each of the young people, where they're going to go from that camp. Are they going to further educate themselves? Are they going to do train themselves into something? Are they going to go to university, to college? If they're going to join the army how are they going to go about doing that? So we make a plan, so that we can give that plan to social services and to the Supreme judge to make sure that those plans are going to be going for them after they leave their camp.

So the family, everybody's there, so they can hear them, that these child are putting a promise there, that they're going to do this, and it makes a big difference.

And then after that we bring them into the city, into Dawson city, and get them massage, reflexology, hair cuts, brand new clothes, and big dinners and then we go back to the camp and that evening we have a big gathering, big bonfire, and then we pass out certificates to them for completing something *so* unique in their life. And the change of their life. And they're going to go.

But the Elders, before all that happens, the Elders come back one more time and they take them out in the bush with their spears and their bows and arrows and their knife and they take them out hunting. And they take them to certain place, or else they'll see the moose right way, but they got to plan how they're going to shoot that moose with bows and arrows, and Elders are watching them after they teach them how they are going to do it. And by the evening, they would come back with a moose. They used their bows and their arrows, their bows especially, all of them aiming at the same time. And they get them down, to bring it into the camp, and their parents *all* help them to cut the meat, to make dry meat, to make everything, and they take part of that meat home, that's for their celebration.

So we feast them and everything, because they are no longer those people that first came. They have grown up so much from that timeline of where they're going through the suffering, they jump from there and go through *all* their stuff that they've gone through in their life and by time the course is finished, its allll this that's been ironed out to here [shows with her hands], to this new life that they are going to. That's how we did it.

Very successful. The judges and them, you know, continuously wanted the camp to be run that way. But it got to the point where my mom was asking me to leave, to go back home, because she was getting more sick.

But this kind of plan if you do this for youth, you have to remember you also need to find out direction not only from the groups of people that want you do to this work, but you also have to

sit down with the youth, to find out what their needs are. And how can we fit all the programs to meet their needs and to make sure we do it within that two months. And so if we have to find people to do that, then we will do that, bring them in…

But it's really important that the youth get confident enough to be around you for two months. You get so connected together, like you are all a big family.

And the young people, have any time they want to go out at the camp with an Elder or with one of the supervisors they can do that, they can roam anywhere they want on the land, as long as there's somebody there with them. But if Elders take them out, Elders always make sure that they're learning something on that trail. A lot of my staff, don't come from there, they come from other places so they don't know as much as the Elders.

So the Elders talk about the plants, they talk about the medicines, they talk about the water, and why does the water in the river flow the way it does? It talks about each of the fish, the salmon, why do the salmon go on the river? What kind of food did they eat? They talk about every Pacific thing. Like say for that moose, what does that moose eat? You want to know. And they say if the moose don't eat that kind of food, they're going to be skinny, they're going to get sick and they're going to die. There is a certain food they can eat, but they can't eat everything.

So they explain to them and they explain to them that today because of the environmental part of our life is becoming very contaminated around the world. How do we make things better? And make things… do some good planning so that in the future when you take over, you have a plan to make this even better. So we talk about that.

And then we always encourage them to do their *best*, because they're the only one that can travel this journey for themselves, and no one else can do it. You make a mistake you are going to suffer from it, which you already have, otherwise you wouldn't be here.

And I really believe if you are going to do this kind of program culturally and traditionally, you *have to*, have to follow, for me, it's important, I couldn't work with these kids without our Dene Law. I couldn't work with these kids without the Environmental Laws, because that is what fits each one of us. So that is the way to heal because they can always see it, every single day. If I have done something wrong, sometimes they talk to me about those ten Laws. "What if I break that? What's going to happen to me?" I said, "Think about it, I have allll day to listen. And if you have to do some chores, or you are going to do your craft work, whatever you're going to do, think about it. Then come to me after with an answer, because I am not going to give it to you freely, you got to earn it to have it." So that's part of the teachings, that all the young people, we're training them to be, to be who they need to be at that point in their life.

And so, you don't need to write everything. So social services told me we have… they gave me four binders like this [shows] of all the policies, regulations, rules, guidelines, everything for the youth. I asked one of my staff, "Burn that fire, sacred fire". I took all those binders and put it into the fire. You don't bring that onto a Traditional Land. You don't do that without asking permission.

I told the Supreme judge, "I do not want to have any policies of anybody on this Land. If you want us to do this work, it's going to have to be done traditionally and cultural ways. And you will get one pager, of each of the kids by the time I finish, that's it. The rest belongs to the camp, it belongs to the organization". And the social services says 'Well, how do we know, how we are going to advance those young people". I said "You are not going to know, but we're going to put a plan together for them, you need to follow that plan we are putting there for them". "So you don't need all those policies here, because we already worked on our own Traditional Law, to look after the kids", so I said "Thank you for bringing them in, but we don't want them".

So that's a way of showing that we have a special way of dealing with the young people. And I also explain to them "If this program, that you were running worked. And if it worked, then why are the kids here today?" "So something is wrong with your system, that the young people don't want. But look at them today, you are going to see them, because I am asking them to all check in to see you, and to show you the big change."

So that's very very important, is that, there's a circle needs to be developed, and that circle needs to be completely completed in that circle. So that there's always going to be for them with that circle full, it's going to keep revolving around until they finally get completely healed [shows me] and to take advantage of this life to become somebody great.

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Appendix III. Detailed Narrative Example: Land-based Healing

The Land, it knows people, it knows us, the moment you go out there you feel more comfortable, everything comes alive in you just like it was sleeping, but when you get out there something magical happens and you feel like an animal, you feel alive again. It's interesting because you breathe more deeply. You go out on the land, you watch and see; you'll take that deep breath, and it's like "Oh boy", something's feeling good here.

So I think that for me, the whole idea of Land-based, it's for me, my understanding, that the Land is a healer. And we are constantly looking and we say Land-based healing, we are constantly looking for healing. What I realized not that long ago is really what are we looking for?

My thought is what are we looking for…We say Land-based healing, right, so I started to think about healing, and how healing in nature is the most natural thing of all. Like when the moose chews the willow tips in spring time, the willows don't flop over and "Oh my gosh, that's it for me!" They seal the wound up and they keep growing. And the same with a tree, if you took an axe and you sliced a piece off the tree, off the bark ...the bark would immediately cover itself with sap and it would heal its wound and it would continue to grow. Even human beings. I carve, so sometimes I cut myself, and sometimes some fairly good cuts too, but I cut myself, and I don't have to sit there and go "heal heal", and concentrate and stare at it. My basic thing is, as long as I keep it clean it will heal by itself, so it is hardwired into me, that stuff we call 'healing' is hardwired into me, and its hardwired into every living thing on earth.

The Mother Earth; that's what it is, it's this massive program of healing. So what we are in this our society we live in, we are constantly looking for this way to heal when in fact we're looking in the wrong direction, we should be looking at it as, it's natural, it is *the* most natural thing. And the balance is perfect there. Then we should be looking at what in the heck is stopping us from healing, we should focus on that, not "How do we do it?" It is already doing it, if we just let it be what it is, it has its way.

The human body, I know we say things about the human body, this sickness or that sickness, I think we absolutely have the ability to heal anything that we need to, right, because it's hardwired into us. My cells can regenerate. I mean people say you can't, but you can, I know you can.

Well on the land, well Land-based healing, it's all the Land I suppose you could say, but you know it's a weird thing because we will say, we will go out in nature, but it's weird because what the heck are we? We *are* nature, we can't get out in nature. We have these concepts you know about it. The whole idea of the 'Land-based', is I think it gives people time to focus their energy in a certain direction and not being distracted. Not being distracted.

Just recently I woke my son up in the morning and I decided to go sit on the couch while he showered and I closed my eyes and I instantly saw this big tree, a huge tree, and it looked like either elm or a maple tree or something huge, an oak tree, maybe. It was huge right, and then I looked up and there were these white leaves floating down, you know how leaves float- but they were all white though, and in this vision I was laying on my back on the ground, I suppose, and I watched them as they fell towards me. I thought, wow, this is interesting, must be something I am supposed to look at.

So as they fell closer I saw words written on the underside of the leaves in black writing. And the words were the names of, I guess, kind of new age things. There was [various practices], all of those things, there were thousands of them. And when I saw all those names written on the underside of the leaves, this omnipresent voice said to me, "It's the tree, not the leaves". And I heard that, but I didn't quite get it right, so it said it again, "It's the tree not the leaves." It said, "The leaves are just the distraction".

And I realized really for me what that meant was you know, it was like what we talk about with the ceremonies. You can take a roundabout way to get to where you want to go or just go directly to the tree. And I heard that.

So, for me, I think to go out there, it eliminates lots of distractions, it allows us to focus on something specific too. If people are ready and committed to come to the camp, then let's look at that commitment. I have this idea that on the land, you are able to think. The thing we are looking for we already have it, but it has been buried by the crap of the world in a way.

What I do at the camp is kind of an archaeological, a spiritual archaeological dig, right. I dig for that spark inside of people, but I have to dig through the crap of the world.

And so out on the land, when you are away, it makes it easier to dig, because it's the help of everything- the air is nicer, the birds are singing to you, all of this nature; you are being bombarded by nature. It loosens up that crud, you know, so, to me it's not, I don't go out there to do anything, I don't go out there to heal people or anything, but what I do go out there to do is help people remember, that they can so this stuff, that they can allow themselves to heal if they choose, you know. I have a lot of cultural things, I do lots of work with medicines and things like that, but ultimately its really to help them to heal themselves, to remind them that they have what it is that I am talking about.

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