"I SCREAMED INTERNALLY FOR A LONG TIME": TRAUMATIZED URBAN INDIGENOUS CHILDREN IN CANADIAN CHILD PROTECTION AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS

by

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Abstract

This Indigenist study is the first to enter the contested space that is the unique educational site of traumatized Urban Indigenous children in Canadian child protection systems. It identifies the historic, political, socio-legal, legislative, financial and jurisdictional wrangling and impediments to their academic and traditional Indigenous educational success. Specifically, this study explores the intersectionality of educational and child protection issues identified in the literature and personal experiences of twenty-nine Urban Indigenous former children in Canada’s child protection system and representatives of two Urban Indigenous delegated child protection agencies. The research participants claim Indigenous membership or ancestry in fifty-two First Nations and Métis communities and either grew up on, or are currently living on, traditional Coast Salish territories in the Urban communities of Victoria and Vancouver, BC.

Saulteaux star blanket theoretical and methodological approaches inform the development of a holistic Saulteaux Star Blanket Urban Indigenous Educational Organizational Model (SBEOM). This SBEOM requires Indigenous advocacy and legislation; governance and staff; cultures, languages, traditions and ceremonies; mentoring by former Indigenous children in care; child in care education and support; specific targeted funding; assessment, planning, implementation and review; service delivery protocols, political collaboration and coordination. The twenty-nine Urban Indigenous “voices of experience” offer audible, and strategically critical guidance to Indigenous and non-Indigenous politicians, policy-makers, social workers, educators and advocates about one model that may help to address the educational abyss between Urban Indigenous children in provincial child protection systems and every other Canadian student population.

The results of this study link the educational outcomes of traumatized Urban Indigenous children to a strategic intersectional approach that accounts for social determinants such as a violent, gendered and racist child protection, educational and colonial history. The enforced relocation of many Urban Indigenous peoples, and enforced constructions of Urban Indigenous children’s socio-cultural and political identities must also be considered. Recommendations asserted by the Urban Indigenous participants, who are rights-based representatives of larger Indigenous nations, are synthesized from the data as necessary components of culturally competent social work and educational legislation, policies and services for the burgeoning Urban Indigenous population in Canada.
Preface

Publication arising from the work presented in this dissertation.


This work is located in chapters two, three and six of this dissertation.

This work is approved by

The University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Certificate number H08-01783

Surrounded By Cedar Child and Family Services Society - on January 21, 2009

Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society - on July 8, 2009
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<td>AANDC</td>
<td>“Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada”</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADD</td>
<td>“Attention Deficit Disorder”</td>
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<td>AFN</td>
<td>“Assembly of First Nations”</td>
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<td>AOPSI</td>
<td>“Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards”</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>“Congress of Aboriginal Peoples”</td>
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<td>CIC</td>
<td>“Child in care”</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCO</td>
<td>“Continuing Custody Order”</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFCSA</td>
<td>“Child and Family Community Service Act”</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPOC</td>
<td>“Comprehensive Plan of Care”</td>
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<td>DIAND</td>
<td>&quot;Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development&quot;</td>
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<td>FAFP</td>
<td>“Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents”</td>
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<td>FASD</td>
<td>“Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBCYICN</td>
<td>“Federation of BC Youth in Care Network”</td>
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<tr>
<td>FNCFN</td>
<td>“First Nations Control of First Nations Education”</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICIC</td>
<td>“Indigenous child in care” or “Indigenous former child in care”</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICIE</td>
<td>“Indian Control of Indian Education”</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCFD</td>
<td>“Ministry of Children and Family Development”</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWAC</td>
<td>“Native Women’s Association of Canada”</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYICN</td>
<td>“National Youth in Care Network”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCYBC</td>
<td>“British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth”</td>
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<td>SCCFS</td>
<td>“Surrounded By Cedar Child and Family Services Society”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCO</td>
<td>“Temporary Custody Order”</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBC</td>
<td>“University of British Columbia”</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBCIC</td>
<td>“Union of BC Indian Chiefs”</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNN</td>
<td>“United Native Nations”</td>
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<tr>
<td>VACFSS</td>
<td>“Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society”</td>
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Glossary

“Aboriginal” refers to one three groups of people (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) who are constitutionally recognized under the Constitution Act, 1982.

“Aboriginal child” refers to a child under the BC Child, Family & Community Services Act (a) who is registered under the Indian Act (Canada), (b) who has a biological parent who is registered under the Indian Act (Canada), (b.1) who is a Nisga'a child, (b.2) who is a treaty first nation child, (c) who is under 12 years of age and has a biological parent who (i) is of aboriginal ancestry, and (ii) considers himself or herself to be aboriginal, or (d) who is 12 years of age or over, of aboriginal ancestry and considers himself or herself to be aboriginal.

“Aboriginal rights” refers to rights that First Nations peoples retain as result of their original possession of the land. They are property rights that date from time immemorial.

“child” refers to a person under 19 years of age in BC and includes a youth;

“child in care” means a child who is in the custody, care or guardianship of a director or a director of adoption;

“continuing custody order” refers to an order under section 41 (1) (d), 42.2 (4) (d) or (7) or 49 (4), (5) or 10 (a) placing a child in the continuing custody of a director;

“delegated agency” refers to a First Nations, Métis or Aboriginal child welfare agency delegated by the Director of Child Protection to provide child welfare services under the BC CFCSA (1996);

“determinants of health” refers to the social, economic, genetic, environmental, and individual factors that have an impact on the level of well-being of individuals or community;

“director” means a person designated by the minister under section 91 of the BC CFCSA;

“First Nations” refers to persons that identify as First Nations people. This term includes those First Nations peoples living on-reserve or off-reserve, those “Indian” persons registered under the Indian Act, and non-status First Nations;

“former Act” means the Family and Child Service Act, S.BC 1980, c. 11;

“guardianship” includes all the rights, duties and responsibilities of a parent; 229;

“honour of the Crown” refers to the principle that Government has a responsibility to honour its commitments to its people;

“Indians” refers to persons (generally including First Nations and Inuit) registered, or entitled to be registered, under the Indian Act, and within the meaning of Canada's federal Indian Act (1985) legislation;

“Indian band” means a band as defined in the Indian Act (Canada) and includes a band council;

“Indigenism”, Native nationalism, or Indigenous nationalism refers to nationalism that emphasizes a group's indigeneity to their homeland.
“Indigenist”, the body of knowledge by Indigenous scholars in relation to research methodological approaches;

“Indigenous”, “First Nations”, “Aboriginal” and “Indian” and is used interchangeably as appropriate;

“Indigenous” refers to persons that are the original inhabitants of a nation (in this instance, Canada) or a geographical area;

“Inherent rights” Rights of people that emerge out of their culture. These are not dependent on the Crown;

“Intergenerational trauma” The process by which the effects of trauma are passed from one generation to the next;

“Inuit” refers to one of three distinct groups (including First Nations and Métis) of constitutionally recognized Aboriginal people in Canada;

“Métis” refers to one of three distinct groups (including First Nations and Inuit) of constitutionally recognized Aboriginal people in Canada;

"plan of care" means a plan relating to a child that (a) contains the information required under the regulations, and (b) is prepared in accordance with the regulations;

“Red paper” also known as “Citizens Plus” authored by the Indian Chiefs of Alberta which details opposition to the 1969 White paper from Status Indians in Canada;

“remove” means to take a child into the care of a director under section 30, 36 or 42 of the BC Child, Family and Community Services Act;

“rights of children in care” means the rights afforded to all children in the custody of the director of child protection in British Columbia under section 70 of the Child, Family and Community Services Act;

“self-determination” refers to the right to participate in the democratic process and to influence one’s future – political, cultural and social;

“self-government” refers to arrangements by which First Nations peoples govern their affairs and have full responsibility and control over decision-making;

“temporary custody order” means an order made under section 41 (1) (b) or (c), 42.2 (4) (b) or (c) or 49 (7) (b) placing a child for a specified period in the custody of a director or another person, and includes any extension of or change to that order;

"treaty first nation", in relation to a treaty first nation child, means the treaty first nation of which the child is a treaty first nation child;

“Urban Aboriginal, Urban Indigenous peoples or Urban Indigenous children in care or Urban ICIC” refers to self-identified citizens of larger collectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who either grew up off-reserve, or are currently living within the metropolitan, urban centres of Victoria and Vancouver, BC. “Urban” is capitalized to reflect the significance of an identity marker, reifies the residence of individuals and families whose actual affiliations o space/place and kindred
are multiple and alternating, and provides nuance to a highly politicized domain (Howard & Proulx, 2011, p. 7):

"White paper", a 1969 Canadian policy document (white paper) that proposed to abolish the Canadian Federal Indian Act, reject First Nations land claims, assimilate First Nations people into the Canadian population with the status of other ethnic minorities rather than a distinct group;

"youth" means a person who is 16 years of age or over but is under 30 years of age.
Acknowledgements

I honour Dr. Jo-ann Archibald for her guidance, encouragement and unwavering support to make these Indigenous stories, and the truth of Urban Indigenous children, youth, adults and Elders, visible in the literature. She said that each member of our Indigenous doctoral cohort has something important to do on behalf of our Indigenous families, communities and nations. Now, I know what my piece is; a part of this "small group" going forward. Me’gweench to Drs. Lorna Williams and Amy Metcalfe for your critical review, and encouragement. I am also grateful to Dr. Lee Brown for his numerous contributions to my academic and Indigenous learning.

I am grateful to the University of British Columbia, Centre for Aboriginal Health Research (CAHR), Network Environments for Aboriginal Health Research, Kloshe Tillicum and legendary Indigenous educator, Dr. Verna Kirkness for the scholarships and awards that support this work, and my journey through this doctoral program. Me’gweench for believing in the importance of this work, and for giving me freedom to meaningfully work with the co-creators of this ground-breaking work, I am grateful to the Urban Indigenous Board of Directors, Council and staff members of Surrounded By Cedar Child and Family Services, and the leadership and staff members of Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services. In particular, I recognize and thank Elders Freda Shaugnessy, Bob Nye, Mickey Cook, Ron George and Bruce Parisian for their guidance, leadership and life examples. I honour each and every one of you for your commitment to family, community and strengthening nations. This work exists because of the respect I have for you.

I am grateful for my family, including the ancestors that came before me, and for the grandchildren that will come after me. I feel your presence with me, every step of the way. Each of you make this work purposeful, meaningful and hopeful. Me’gweench, hy’chka, kleco kleco, gi’lakasla, kustemc!
Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the Indigenous peoples that are, and were, traumatized in Canada's assimilation systems, including my paternal and maternal grandmothers. My paternal Saulteaux grandmother entered the Canadian residential school system in Saskatchewan in 1903. Upon early the deaths of my maternal great-grandparents in the Spanish flu epidemic of 1919, my maternal grandmother, as a newborn infant, along with four sisters aged to nine years, all entered the Canadian child protection system. They would not reunite for sixty years. The “trauma spirits” that circled around their lives also circled the lives of three of my first cousins, and forced them to enter the Canadian child protection system in the 1970s.

I will never forget their stories. What was done, or not done, to them, or for them, in those systems, is not their fault. They did nothing to be ashamed of, or can be blamed for. My children are safer today because of what they taught me; that education, both traditional and academic knowledge, is a path to freedom.

It is also dedicated to my brothers-in-spirit, including Phil Petersen, who grew up in BC's child protection system and reached back to help others; Nuu Chah Nulth hereditary Chief Harvey Charlie whose granddaughter, Sherry, was murdered in the child protection system; and lawyer Lex Reynolds who held Canada to account for its inaction. All are inspirational mentors and advocates that recently left this world to continue on their canoe journeys. At every chance, these three men stood up for Indigenous children in Canada's child protection and education systems and showed me, through their actions, what true advocacy looks like in practice. In their lifetimes, they walked a path of integrity, purposefulness, and determination. The people that encouraged this study, and co-created it with me, are walking on the same path.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Mukwa Mayett the Creator made you this way and put you in that place for a purpose. When you do those things always ask yourself if they are good for your children and grandchildren. Always remember who you are in your heart. Never pick up something new and leave behind who you are, who we are and what we believe (Saulteaux Elder Bones, personal communication, November, 2006).

Research that empowers resistance makes a contribution to individually and collectively changing the conditions of our lives and the lives of those on the margins…it challenges existing relations of dominance and subordination and offers a basis for political action (Brown & Strega, 2005, p.10).

1.1 Protocol of Respect

This Indigenist doctoral research study begins with a respectful acknowledgement of the Coast Salish and Straits Salish owners of the unceded traditional territories upon which the cities of Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia (BC) are located. The Urban Indigenous participants in this study are drawn from approximately 51,215 self-identified status or non-status, treaty or non-treaty, First Nations, Métis and Inuit (Indigenous) peoples living in these urban cities, which comprise approximately twenty-six percent of the total 196,070 Aboriginal population in BC (Statistics Canada, 2008). Respectful Indigenous protocol guides me to acknowledge that the traditional owners of these territories have managed the rich land, water and wildlife resources of their “homelands” since time immemorial. These same traditional owners have witnessed ever-increasing numbers of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal visitors to their territories from the time of initial British colonial settlement in Victoria in 1841, to today, where Victoria is the capital city of BC.

Both the colonial community of Vancouver, and country of Canada, were established on these rich, unceded Coast Salish and Straits Salish territories in 1867, which means that most visitors have lived, and thrived, on these territories for less than 170 years. In this time period, Coast Salish peoples have survived the effects of colonial imposition of foreign laws, institutions, policies and practices, cultural and language loss, enforced poverty, loss of territory and resources (Dickason & Newbigging, 2011; Frideres, 2011). Some Coast Salish peoples, although living on reserve-based
communities within these cities, haven endured enforced Canadian constructions of socio-cultural and political Urban Indigenous identities. For example, both the Esquimalt First Nation and Songhees First Nation are Coast Salish urban reserve-based, communities, now surrounded by the present-day city of Victoria, and Musqueam First Nation is similarly surrounded by the city of Vancouver.

Esquimalt First Nation hereditary Chief, and long-time Indian Act elected Chief, Andy Thomas, embodies the meaning of the word “resilient” when he says that while much has changed, from his perspective, much remains the same. He tells a story that over 170 years ago, his grandfathers stood on their traditional territory to meet the first European visitors to arrive on Coast Salish shores in wooden boats. Today, he jokes, protocol dictates that he must be called to welcome foreign passengers to the same Coast Salish shores, only now the visitors arrive in luxury cruise ships (Chief Andy Thomas, personal communication, June 5, 2008). This Indigenous knowledge and teaching is important to consider within the context of this study, and will be addressed in the final chapter.

First Nations communities in what is now known as BC, suffered from an estimated ninety percent (90%) population loss between pre-contact estimates of 250,000 in the mid-1700s to 23,000 in 1929 (Muckle, 1999, p. 60). The major cause of the population decline was diseases brought to Turtle Island (also known as North America) by European newcomers such as smallpox, tuberculosis, scarlet fever, influenza and measles for which First Nations people had no natural immunity (Lutz, 2008). The introduction of alcohol and firearms contributed to death from accidents, and threw the social organization of First Nations communities into disarray. Poverty, population decline due to death and enforced community amalgamations changed settlement patterns, as did the impact of fur traders, gold seekers, non-Indigenous settlement, lack of treaty settlements, missionary influences, residential school and child welfare policies, and the sexist and racist provisions of the Indian Act enforced by the colonial Federal government (Dickason & Newbigging, 2011; Frideres, 2011; Muckle, 1999; RCAP, 1996). In Canada today, the Indigenous population has recovered from near extinction, and is the youngest and fastest growing demographic in Canada (Frideres, 2011). This resurgence,
resilience and recovery is impressive, and needs to be included as part of “re-storying” the Indigenous experience in Canada.

For the purposes of this study, the terms “Urban Aboriginal or Urban Indigenous” will be used interchangeably, as appropriate. The terms refer to self-identified citizens of larger collectives of Indian, Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who grew up off-reserve, or are currently living within the off-reserve metropolitan, urban centres of Victoria and Vancouver, BC. “Urban” is capitalized to “reflect the significance of an identity marker, reifies the residence of individuals and families whose actual affiliations to space/place and kindred are multiple and alternating, and provides nuance to a highly politicized domain” (Howard & Proulx, 2011, p. 7). The term “Urban Indigenous child in care or Urban ICIC” refers to self-identified citizens of larger collectives of status or non-status, treaty or non-treaty Indian, Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who grew up off-reserve in the BC child protection system within the metropolitan, urban centres of Victoria and Vancouver and/or were living there at the time of the study. I am grateful to the traditional owners for their willingness to share their territories with so many Urban, diverse ethnic and linguistic visitors, including me and my family. I am also grateful to the twenty-eight Urban Indigenous peoples and one non-Indigenous person for choosing to participate in this study. Collectively, the twenty-one women and eight men are members, or have ancestry, in fifty-two First Nations and Métis communities. The next section of this introductory chapter introduces and locates me in relation to my family, Indigenous community, nation and professional life as a social worker and educator.

1.2 Indigenous Self-determination: Putting the “Indian” Back in the Child

Forcibly removing Indigenous children from family and community is viewed as a successor to the residential school system, and a new form of ‘cultural genocide.’ Under article 2(e) of the U.N. Convention on Genocide (1948), ‘forcibly transferring children of the group to another group’ constitutes genocide when the intent is to destroy a culture’ (Sinclair, 2007a; UN Convention on Genocide, 1948).
At the beginning of my doctoral journey, Maori educator Dr. Graham Smith cautioned our Indigenous doctoral cohort to declare our personal stories, biases, perspectives and prejudices at the outset of our dissertations (Graham Smith, personal communication, July 18, 2006). Indigenous Australian academic Dr. Lester Rigney and Coast Salish academic Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald were other educators that encouraged us to tell our stories and acknowledge that there are gaps in our Indigenous knowledge. They taught us that, as Indigenous doctoral students, we may have difficulties telling our respective Indigenous stories because of these gaps and to recognize that our stories are influenced by many historical, political and contemporary forces beyond our control. My own Indigenous story is affected by the early deaths of both of my maternal and paternal great-grandmothers, colonizing, paternalistic and racist Indian Act legislation, historical residential school policies and child protection systems. The intersectionality of these experiences deterritorialized, dis-membered and enforced relocation of my family, and enforced constructions of Urban Indigenous socio-cultural and political identity on me.

The advice of my Indigenous academic professors encourages me to remain committed to transparency and purpose in my arguments for Indigenous self-determination and advocacy for specific educational and child well-being rights, policies, practices and services for Urban Indigenous children and families in Canada. It encourages me to act against Canada’s fundamentally racist, gendered, oppressive and genocidal residential school and child welfare purposefulness to “kill the Indian in the child” (Harper, 2011; John, 2010, p. 53). This study seeks to do this by replacing Canada’s stories about “Indigenous deficit” with Indigenous stories of resilience, recovery and resurgence. Because of the intersectionality of alienating colonizing influences in my family journey, this study is not just another academic exercise. It represents one part of the collective stories of our Indigenous nations and a large part of my personal struggle to “put the Indian back in myself”.

This Indigenist, critical, feminist and anti-oppressive doctoral study draws on Indigenous knowledges and experiences, my commitments to social justice, fairness and equality, to move towards political
action to help “put the Indian back in the child”. It seeks to construct new knowledge about the troubling social, political and economic forces that influence Urban Indigenous children and youth living in Canada’s child protection and education systems; and pays particular attention to the enforced Canadian constructions of their Urban Indigenous socio-cultural and political identities. This work is also informed by my social work and educational experiences, practices, service provision and policy knowledge. I recognize that by being open about this, my “objectivity, neutrality and relativism standpoint as a researcher” may be questioned by some. However I have come to believe, as Dr. Smith and others such as Brown & Strega (2005); Moreton-Robinson & Walters (2007) and Rigney (2001) do, that because my perspective on “subjectivity” is partially grounded in my everyday gendered and racist experiences, it is a more honest position than “objectivity”. In the debate between relativism, the position that there is no such thing as “one truth”, and fundamentalism, meaning that there is “only one truth”, this study challenges fundamentalism and legitimates relativism through the knowledge creation and production of twenty-nine Urban Indigenous peoples that grew up in, and/or are currently working in, Canadian child protection and education systems. Their stories and experiences trouble and interrogate Neo-Liberal economic ideologies, managerialism and Canadian authorities that demand that policy and practice be assessed in terms of fiscal accountability and little else (Brown & Strega, 2005). These Indigenous stories guide a “re-discovery” of what it is the Canadian Neo-Liberal ideologies and authorities would rather not be assessed, troubled or interrogated, and it is in this space that the co-creators of this study make important contributions to social justice, Indigenous resurgence and recovery in Canada.

Cree-Saulteaux academic Kovach (2009, p. 91) suggests that Indigenous researchers be explicit about the reasons for our subjectivity and leave it to others to consider the validity and legitimacy of our arguments. Brown & Strega (2005) argue that “despite the emergence of critical, feminist and Indigenist approaches to research...these emerging methodologies still rate little more than a mention in most research textbooks” (p. 4). Therefore, I encourage readers to consider the Indigenous stories, researcher subjectivity, gendered and racist everyday experiences, and emerging research
methodologies undertaken in this study, within the context of Canada’s Neo-Liberal ideological construct, as political, emancipatory and transformative imperatives.

1.3 Over-arching Goals and Structure

The next section of this introductory chapter introduces two over-arching goals of the study and its “star blanket made with words” structure. The first overarching goal is to learn from Urban Indigenous peoples about their Canadian child welfare and educational experiences within the Urban community contexts of Victoria and Vancouver. The second goal is to privilege Urban Indigenous “voices of experience” and to strategically link this research to the political struggles of Indigenous peoples for self-determination in the Canadian context. It seeks to “re-story” and “speak back” to the “official” Canadian Neo-Liberal ideology of Urban ICIC “deficit”, and replaces it with compelling Urban Indigenous stories and voices that interrogate Canadian child protection and education systems for their “failure to protect” Urban ICIC and “failure to provide” for their educational rights.

Saulteaux teachings regarding adherence to respect and reciprocity protocols guide my work with Indigenous community members and encourage me to “give back” something of value to the Coast Salish peoples, Elders, Urban Aboriginal leaders and research participants in return for all that they contributed, shared and taught me. Therefore, I will draw on Saulteaux women’s ways of knowing, family history and cultural knowledge gathered from the expertise of my family, the research participants and Saulteaux community members, to develop a “star blanket made with words” as my way to give back something of value to the Urban Indigenous “voices of experience”.

Many times when people from our Indigenous communities meet in friendship or gather in ceremony there is an exchange of gifts and/or blankets to demonstrate appreciation, friendship, love or esteem. In many instances, gifts represent both a social and political obligation; sealing and maintaining different kinds of agreements and alliances (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004). In my Saulteaux community, gifting or receiving a “star blanket” is an honor for both the recipient and presenter due to
the number of hours, planning and effort that goes into making one; something that is well understood by Indigenous community members. A star blanket is also known as a ‘quilt’ and reflects a unique eight-pointed Indigenous star, symbolically designed after the morning star, the first star of a new day. In Saulteaux ceremonial gatherings, a star blanket recipient may be publicly wrapped in the blanket as a way to demonstrate protection, love, honor, acknowledgement of accomplishments or adoption.

Through relationship building and friendships developed with Lekwungen Coast Salish peoples of southern Vancouver Island, I learned that blankets continue to be recognized as important wealth, trading and potlatch goods. Historically, traditional blankets were woven by women from domesticated wool-bearing dogs owned by women (Lutz, 2008, p. 63) and mountain goat wool with a “prestige value that far exceeded their utility” (p. 57). With the introduction of a later wage economy, these traditional blankets were replaced with Hudson Bay Company blankets. The Coast Salish peoples living in what is now known as Victoria and Vancouver continue to recognize the value of gifting various types of blankets. In both cities, highly prized button blankets are an important part of traditional Nuu-Chah-Nulth First Nations, Kwakwakawakw First Nations or Haida First Nations regalia and are made of Melton fabric. Melton fabric is a thick to medium tightly woven wool with heavily brushed nap that gives the fabric a smooth finish with no warp or weft yarns visible upon which traditional or family designs are sewn and bordered by stunning buttons. As a non-Coast Salish person, it is not my place or cultural right to create a Coast Salish woven or Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Kwakwakawakw or Haida button blanket; to do so would violate cultural protocols.

Therefore, I choose to create a Saulteaux “star blanket made with words” as a way to represent this research project. More specifically this Saulteaux “star blanket made with words”, symbolically designed to represent the first star of a new day, is offered as a collective Indigenous creation and vision for a new Urban Indigenous learning journey. It is meant to symbolically and metaphorically wrap around, protect, nurture and strengthen the learning and teaching spirits of Urban Indigenous children that are currently living (and formerly lived) in the BC child protection and education systems. This Saulteaux “star blanket made with words” represents one way of understanding the Urban
Indigenous voices of experience. It is recognized that many more Indigenous “blankets” exist or may be created in the years to come, and that Urban Indigenous communities, political or socio-legal bodies will make decisions about where, how, when and with whom it may be used, or not. Having declared my biases, perspectives and prejudices at the outset, next I will discuss the importance of collaborative relationship development and maintenance between the “researcher” and “participants”.

1.4 Relationships: Collective Responsibility and Accountability

In Indigenous communities (both Urban and rural), a relationship-based approach is a practical necessity because access to the community is unlikely unless time is invested in relationship building…Research, like life, is about relationships (Kovach, 2005, p. 30).

An Indigenist approach to research and practice embraces the building of relationships, networking, accountability to community/participants and reciprocity in knowledge exchange (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). The idea to undertake this study gradually developed over many years of respectful and ethical relationship development with Indigenous community partners, Elders, Youth and colleagues. It is grounded in a desire to “do something” helpful on behalf of urban Indigenous peoples. Some of the study participants are people that I knew before the commencement of this research process, or are people that have ongoing relationships with community members with whom I have long-term relationships. The networking, collective learning and relational process means that my role as the “researcher” is not rigidly separate from Urban Indigenous community members or study participants. Rigney (2001, p.9) argues that Indigenous methodological frameworks within research means pushing boundaries “in order to make intellectual space for Indigenous cultural knowledge systems that were denied in the past”. In practice, this means that I continue to make space for cultural knowledge gained through relationships, dreams, prayer, ceremony, rituals, artistic expression, email and telephone contacts, and visiting in person with research participants to ask for guidance about protocols, process related issues, writing opportunities and dissemination plans. The relational quality of our research
also embraces discussions about gatherings and events in the urban communities of Victoria, Vancouver and elsewhere. Gifting this “star blanket made with words” publicly demonstrates that I understand my commitments to collective community work and my agreements to strengthen and support Urban Indigenous children, families and their respective nations. My commitments to ensure that Indigenous peoples are the primary beneficiary of this research is reflected in this attempt to symbolically or metaphorically wrap Urban Indigenous children in educational and child well-being star blankets, and help them find within it safety, belonging, healing, education and justice. Perhaps it will be then that I can respond to the Creator, myself and other Urban Indigenous peoples that “Yes, I am trying my best to do everything I can to help Urban Indigenous children” and by association, help myself, my family and nation.

1.5 Children: A Gift from the Creator

Children are a gift from the Creator; that is what I was always taught by my family, respected Elders and Indigenous community members. My Saulteaux teachings are that our children have always primarily belonged to the women of my traditionally matrilineal and matrilocal nation; that it is just “the way it is” and is accepted as such by the people of my nation that understand our traditional worldviews, ways of knowing and being with respect to children. Matrilineal lineage is “just the way it is” for many other Indigenous nations as well (Anderson, 2000; Lawrence, 2004; Sunseri, 2011). Elders teach us that children come to us in human form from the spirit world and depend on the adults, older children and extended family members in their families and communities to care for them, guide, teach, nurture and protect them. Elders taught me that it is the responsibility of our ancestors to decide which spirit, in the form of a child that they will send to teach us what it is that we must learn in this lifetime. The Elder women of my nation tell me that the learning and teaching spirits of our children are precious and sacred responsibilities for us as Saulteaux women. Our responsibilities as women is to accept, respect and protect the gift of our children’s spirits and lives that the Creator and our ancestors have given to us. They tell me that it is the decision of our ancestors if a child will not be born to us or will come into our lives in some other way than through
birth. In those circumstances, our responsibilities to children through our roles as grandmothers, step or adoptive parents, aunts, friends, professionals or extended family members is no less.

1.6 **Saulteaux Women’s Roles with Children**

As Saulteaux women, when we give life to children it means that we will always carry special child care, child rearing and teaching responsibilities for them and those that come after them. Our teachings are that we must make good decisions because the implications will be experienced by the seventh generation of our descendants. In pre-contact times First Nations women, men and elders shared responsibilities to be our children’s first teachers, protectors and advocates. With European settlement, enforced relocation and the introduction of foreign ideologies and laws with respect to the care and education of children, many times Indigenous people were stripped of their caring and educative roles with respect to children. First Nations women fought to retain child-rearing responsibilities for children despite governmental policies and practices that have concentrated and sustained overwhelming social, legal, economic, political and policing power into the removal of Indigenous children from Indigenous caregivers and the transference of that responsibility to the state through the Federal Indian Act, residential school and provincial child protection systems (Anderson, 2000; Lawrence, 2004; RCAP, 1996; Sinclair, 2009; Sunseri, 2011).

The same Canadian powers that took away some Indigenous women’s roles as teachers and caregivers, provided no political or legal recourse, and few advocates (Milloy, 1999) to stop the residential school and cultural genocide. It was not until 1949 that First Nations (as well as Chinese and Japanese) people were permitted to vote in either Canadian municipal or provincial elections and 1960 before voting rights were extended to First Nations in Federal elections, although it could not be exercised until 1962 (RCAP, 1996). The racist consequences of being excluded from citizenship rights meant that until that time, no First Nations voice, male or female could be heard in the debates
of Parliament or the Legislative Assembly (Johnson, 2001). It proved to be no different in on-reserve communities and according to Absolon & Herbert (1997):

Aboriginal women believe that their traditional role of decision making in their communities was usurped by the sexist assimilative policies and practices of the Indian Act and are still being perpetuated by the current politics of Aboriginal communities. Only 20 per cent of the Chiefs in BC are women, which is related to the fact that First Nations women could not vote or run for position on council in their own communities until 1951 (p. 212).

First Nations peoples in BC were repeatedly told and shown by Euro Canadian colonizing and assimilationist laws, policies and practices that “this is just the way it is” and repeated assertions or arguments to the contrary were ignored or outlawed (Muckle, 1999). Gitxsan social work academic Cindy Blackstock (2007) asks if the residential schools closed or just “morphed” into child welfare and many other Indigenous peoples provide proof that while some things have changed, much work to recognize First Nations self-determination remains incomplete. A clear example is the Laurier Memorial written one hundred years ago on August 25, 1910 by the Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan and Couteau tribes of BC and presented at Kamloops to the Canadian Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier. In it the Chiefs write that “we condemn the whole policy of the BC government towards the Indian tribes of this country as utterly unjust, shameful and blundering in every way. We denounce same as being the main cause of the unsatisfactory condition of Indian affairs in this country” (Muckle, 1999, p. 127). These same sentiments continue to be expressed by First Nations people in BC today, both privately and publicly (Shuswap Nation Tribal Council Spokesperson Chief Wayne Christian, personal communication, April 9, 2011).
It is for these same reasons that settler voices are largely silent in this dissertation. Rather, this dissertation purposefully privileges Indigenous voices, knowledges and our worldviews with respect to the care and teaching of children. It purposefully privileges the voices of Indigenous ICIC raised in Canadian child welfare and education systems and Indigenous voices of the people that work in Indigenous delegated child welfare agencies in the communities of Victoria and Vancouver. For the purposes of this dissertation, “this is just the way it is” because so much is needed to counteract the overwhelming numbers of non-Indigenous voices in government, law, education, child welfare, the academy and elsewhere (Grande, 2008).

Our Indigenous values and beliefs about the ways that we should raise, protect and educate our children in this land, now called Canada, continues to significantly differ from the child caring values and beliefs of the European explorers, French and English missionaries, traders, settlers and other peoples that have come to this land in the past 1,000 years (Greenwood, 2009). According to Miller (1996), “Indians of the 17th century regarded the French mothers as ‘porcupines’ because of their stern attitudes towards the young and child rearing” (p. 56). Further, Miller (1996) argues that “Europeans usually failed to note that, among Indians, discipline was applied to children, although it was administered in ways unfamiliar to the intruders. Usually discipline and social control were exercised through praise, ridicule, rewards and privilege; a subtlety that the Europeans missed” (p. 56).

In contrast, the 17th century European Jesuit Recollet Gabriel Sagaard noted that the Indians of North America “love their children dearly” and resisted separation from them, an attitude that the French thought was unusually strong among the Indians of North America (Miller, 1996, p. 55) and
proved to be one of the main reasons that the Jesuits’ attempts to assimilate First Nations children into French-Canadian society through optional residential schooling was effectively “dead in the 1680’s” (Miller, 1996, p. 55). It would take the Federal government of Canada until 1996 to realize the same thing, however by then the 130 year old residential school project would affect First Nations people through significant trauma and post-traumatic stress for eight generations (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, AFH, 2003; Dickason & Newbigging, 2011; Duran & Duran, 2005; Miller, 1996; Milloy; 1999; Wadden, 2009).

These differences in terms of child rearing practices continue to present day; for example Indigenous grandparents continue to have special responsibilities to care for their grandchildren, particularly the first born whom they may take as their own, to raise and support (Coast Salish Elder, Robert Nye, personal communication, May 20, 2008). This is still considered a teaching, something that is “just the way it is” although the significant health needs of grandchildren living with grandparents in poverty in our Indigenous communities creates new challenges for many (Callahan, Brown, MacKenzie, & Whittington, 2004; Turpel-Lafond, 2010). In previous and contemporary times, it is still considered an honour for grandparents to raise grandchildren; one that I was privileged to experience as a child. Our Indigenous view of this parenting responsibility still differs significantly today than the position taken by some non-Indigenous grandparents who consider that being responsible in their senior years to care for their grandchild as being something that “wasn’t supposed to be this way”.

1.7 The Canadian Child Protection System

For millennia prior to the development of colonial, provincial child protection and education systems in BC and Canada, the safety and education of Indigenous children was incorporated within culturally specific Indigenous knowledges (IK) that cultivated holistic, lifelong, family and community ways of being. These process created a “sustainable lifestyle that contributed sufficiently to the needs of the present and took into consideration the needs of the future seven generations”
In 1951 though, an amendment of provincial applicability to Section 88 of the Federal Indian Act (1985), social workers in Canada were first given authority to provide child protection services in First Nations reserve communities which were reeling from the effects of the residential school project and government mismanagement (Helin, 2006; RCAP, 1996). Since then Canadian social workers, sanctioned by the judicial system and enforced by police action, have removed thousands of Indigenous children from their families and communities and placed them in the custody of not always well-screened non-Indigenous foster and adoptive families or group home parents (Blackstock, 2009; Lawrence, 2004; RCAP, 1996; Sinclair, 2007a). Historically and currently, these child protective services are overwhelmingly provided by non-Indigenous social workers, teachers and foster parents (Blackstock, 2009; Johnson, 2008; Lawrence, 2004; Sinclair, 2007b).

Patrick Johnston (1983) coined the term “sixties scoop” to identify the mass removal of First Nations children between the 1960-1980s, and placement into non-Indigenous foster and adoptive families; a practice that continues to today, unabated. The numbers of status Indian children in Canadian child protection systems jumped by 71.5% between 1995 and 2001 (Blackstock, 2009, p. 30). This is what Gilchrist of Lakehead University in Sinclair (2009, p. 2007, p. 24) terms “the millennium scoop.” Lawrence (2008) argues that this is simply the continuation of a form of colonization and practice to “kill the Indian to save the child” (Lawrence, 2008, p. 105) and is further supported by Sinclair (2007a).

The acronym that is commonly used by social workers to refer to a child placed in a foster home, group home or on Independent living programs within the BC child protection system is “child in care” or “CIC”. The current BC law governing children entering or remaining in the permanent custody of the Director of Child Protection until they are discharged upon reaching the age of majority, die, are married or adopted is the Child, Family and Community Service Act (1996). The
children are identified by their legal status which is that of a “continuing custody ward or CCO”.
This means that they are the legal wards of the BC provincial government and that the Office of the
Public Guardian and Trustee is the guardian of their estate. Their legal status is differentiated from
children with the legal status of a “temporary custody ward or TCO” who, pending judicial reviews
and decisions, may or may not return to the care and custody of their parent or extended family
member and those in “care by agreement” between their parent/legal guardian and representative
of the Director of Child Protection. In other Canadian provinces, CCO’s may be known differently as
in Ontario where the legal term applied there to children in permanent care is a “Crown ward”. From
the vantage point of knowledge regarding complex issues that Indigenous former CIC’s can expect
to experience during and after discharge from “care”, relative to children that have never been in
the child protection system (Rutman, Hubberstey & Feduniw, 2006; Snow, 2009), many of their
experiences cannot be best identified as “care”. Perhaps a more apt description of Indigenous
experiences in the child protection and education systems is as a “child in chaos”. The acronym
used in this dissertation to identify an Indigenous child (in “care” or in “chaos”) is “ICIC” and may
also be used to identify an Indigenous former CIC.

Currently in BC, child protection social workers use colonial risk assessment tools to determine if a
child is deemed to be in need of “protection from risk of harm”. Swift & Callahan (2009) argue that
risk assessments “focus largely on the characteristics of the individuals and not on their social
circumstances, thus feeding into the notion that risk and inequality are unrelated” (p. 63). Under the
Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) (1996) if children are found to be “at risk” they
may be legally removed from their families by social workers and ordered by the judiciary into
Canadian child protection provincial systems. Today in BC, many First Nations and Métis
communities are working towards the day that Indigenous children will no longer be taken into a
foreign or colonial child protection systems, rather they will be cared for according to the customs
and traditions of their own traditional child well-being systems such as currently occurs in Splats’in
First Nation (Walmsley, 2005). Unfortunately in Canada and the United States as well as other
Commonwealth countries such as Australia and New Zealand, Indigenous communities and agencies remain some distance from achieving that goal as well as controlling the resources needed to fund the legislative and traditional child well-being processes. Therefore it is left to social workers and other professionals administering the risk assessment tools, to determine which Indigenous child or family will receive limited available services, culturally relevant they may be, or not.

In 2007, Canadian estimates were that over 75,000 children-in-care were living in alternative away-from-home living arrangements, an additional 25,000 were incarcerated in youth detention centres and youth justice facilities and many thousands more are living on the streets or in shelters (Manser, 2007, p. 5). In BC in 2011 approximately 8,330 children are in the custody of the BC child protection system (MCFD, 2011) while an equal number are cared for in an “underground child protection system” (Callahan, Brown, MacKenzie & Whittington, 2005) by relatives (primarily grandmothers) under income support arrangements. Still more children are not counted in the official numbers as they may remain placed in their family homes through legally sanctioned supervision orders.

The alarming situation for Indigenous children (status, non-status, Urban or reserve based) that are legally mandated into the BC child protection system is reported on a quarterly basis by the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) in their Aboriginal Child in Care Report (Appendix “A”). The most current report, as of April 2011, indicates that there were 8,330 children in care (CIC) in BC, of which 4,608 (55.3%) were Aboriginal (ICIC) and 3,722 (44.7%) were non-Aboriginal (MCFD, 2011, p.3). The number of non-Aboriginal children in permanent care (Continuing Custody Orders or CCOs) has been decreasing while the numbers of Aboriginal children has been consistently high. As a result in April 2011, 61.0% of all children under a CCO were Aboriginal (MCFD, 2011, p. 12). This over-representation of ICIC is identified as being because Aboriginal children, relative to non-Aboriginal children are:
• 4.6 times more likely to have a protection concern reported;
• 6.4 times more likely to be investigated;
• 8.5 times more likely to be found in need of protection;
• 7.2 times more likely to be admitted into care, and
• 13.9 times more likely to remain in care (MCFD, 2011, p. 10).

The development of twenty-two delegated Aboriginal child protection agencies in BC (and eight in development) means that of April 2011, 1,999 Aboriginal CICs were served by delegated Aboriginal agencies, representing 43.4 percent of the total Aboriginal CIC caseload (MCFD, 2011, p. 18).

“Caseload” is a term used by government social service bodies to identify the numbers of children assigned to a specific social worker for statutory services. Social workers, staff members and executive directors of BC delegated Aboriginal agencies are not all Aboriginal peoples, nor are the workers and leaders of MCFD offices that still provide services to 56.6 percent of all Aboriginal children for whom they are statutorily responsible. However this document identifies the delegated agencies as “culturally appropriate services” with no explanation of what makes it so. Finally the report is interesting for what it does not identify or is silent with respect to; namely the types or amounts of resources or support services required or provided to Aboriginal children, numbers of child assessments completed or required, plans of care developed or reviewed, number or types of placement moves, school moves or any educational data to determine tutoring support provided or required or grade placement. Finally there is no indication of proposed or successful family reconnection or recreational activity. It is woefully incomplete, at best, and fails to provide insight or substantive strategic direction on the supports available to, or needed by, ICIC. However, it does offer one more reason to act with strategic intent toward a new vision for the well-being of Indigenous children.

1.8 Traditional Indigenous Education

Prior to contact, Indigenous peoples used the natural environment and elders as our Indigenous ways of educating and protecting Indigenous children (Blackstock, 2007; Sinclair, 2007a). These were based in specific cultural and teaching traditions of sovereign nations. The imposition of colonial
forces, laws, policies and practices meant a change in the ways Indigenous children were “educated and protected” through the residential school project (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2011). Even with the emergence and development of over 125 First Nations and Métis delegated child welfare agencies in Canada (including twenty-four in BC) over the past 25 years, the protection and education of Indigenous children in Canadian child protection and education systems remains under attack (Bennett, Blackstock, & De la Ronde, 2005; Lawrence, 2004; Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007).

It is because these institutions and systems are based upon and embedded with Western philosophies, values and beliefs, structured by Western-based hidden curriculum, legislation, policies and practices and Western institutional ways of raising children. These Euro Canadian methods, values and beliefs remain fundamentally at odds with traditional Indigenous ways of educating and raising children and a new strategic learning journey must begin. This dissertation is a call to action because as Indigenous peoples, we cannot remain “stuck” in this place that offers limited educational progress and minimal positive results.

It has been said that Indigenous children deserve to grow up “with a drum in one hand and a computer in the other” (Cardinal, 1998) meaning that it is important to be educated with traditional Indigenous knowledge and Western ways of knowing and being to help them to be whole and successful peoples at whatever they choose. Instead it appears from national (National Youth in Care Network, 2011) and provincial reports (British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth, 2007) that they can expect to be dependent on income assistance, minimum wage jobs and a life of poverty in this rich country; in their own land. The low levels of educational attainment and dependency on governmental systems leads to what Helin (2006) has called the “welfare trap… a system of wholesale despair and misery” (p. 120) for Indigenous peoples and he asks “What sense of pride, accomplishment, or self-worth can come from picking up a welfare cheque?” (p. 121). While there may be many paths away from governmental dependency, it is important to consider what systems, and supports need to be developed and implemented to ensure that Indigenous children can walk or run away from the “welfare trap”. Power and influence to change the policies, practices,
funding, reported outcomes and research that is needed to support transformational change may be beyond the scope of this dissertation, however it is important that Indigenous models exist to support transformational change. It is this gap that this dissertation fills.

1.9 **Advocacy for Urban Indigenous Children in Care (ICIC)**

In our Saulteaux way, each of us has a responsibility to care for all our children and many Indigenous social workers and educators bring this teaching into their social work and educator practice (Baskin, 2009; Bruyere, 2005; Sinclair, Hart & Bruyere, 2009). There is a cultural responsibility to speak up, advocate with and on behalf of Indigenous children in the BC child protection system made evident through the advocacy work of Gitxsan social work academic Cindy Blackstock (2010), Cree scholar Raven Sinclair (2007a) and Gord Bruyere (2005). However it is a difficult task compounded by systemic barriers, few resources, incomplete reports or reports that do not reflect matters of importance or demonstrate significant gaps in services, and for those working inside child protection systems, a fear of sanctions (Pivot, 2009).

Advocating for transformational systemic change and Indigenous self-determination are goals of this study. Sixty-seven English language peer reviewed articles demonstrate the poor outcomes that can be expected for children during and following transition out of the Canadian child welfare system (Snow, 2009). These outcomes are also identified by youth self-advocate organizations, advocacy watchdog organizations, government inquiries and researchers indicate that relative to children that have not lived in the child protection system, youth transitioning out of the child protection systems can expect to experience lower levels of socio-economic indicators including education, employment, health and experience higher incidences of mental health issues, suicide, early pregnancy, sexual and physical victimization, assault, incarceration, medical restraints, child removal and have more fragile social support networks, less connections to family, community or culture or death (Hughes, 2006; Manser, 2007; Morely & Kendall, 2006; National Youth in Care Network, 2001; Rutman,

Historically, my social work practice focuses on the provision of prevention and support services to vulnerable children and families in efforts to keep them safe within their families and communities and outside the child protection system. This has not always been possible and in some instances I have removed children from parents or caregivers when the children’s safety is at risk of injury or death or placed vulnerable adults in more supported residential programs. During these times, safe placement in Indigenous family or kinship placements have been sought, however at times this has been difficult to accomplish due to policy limitations.

The decision to focus my social work practice on prevention strategies may be embedded in my grandparents’ decision to help my parents to raise my younger brother and me. Our grandparent’s actions to claim us meant that my brother and I grew up knowing our parents and extended family members, could access opportunities to pursue post-secondary education, work at a career of our choosing, raise and educate our children in our own traditional and/or Western education systems, with our Indigenous identity intact. Three of my older cousins did enter the BC child protection system and spent their childhoods and adolescence outside the safe care of our extended family members. Their childhoods and lives were lost through horrific abuse, neglect, loss of identity, loss of their own children to child protection systems, incarceration, estrangement from family, addictions, poverty and early death. These early lessons and losses continue to shape my social work practice with other children and families and influence my teaching style with social work students today.

1.10 Creating a Symbolic Star Blanket of Protection and Oversight
One of my best friends and greatest professional mentor was a lawyer; the late Lex Reynolds. We met after I asked Indigenous community members in Victoria if they could recommend a lawyer to represent the developing Urban Indigenous child welfare agency in Victoria under my leadership.
People suggested that I attend a court session to watch Lex before approaching him and so I did. From my vantage point that day, his expert court work skills and insistent advocacy on behalf of Indigenous peoples in family court was unlike anything I had ever witnessed in my 25 years of social work practice. Right then, I decided that Lex would be the only lawyer that I wanted on our side in any child protection, family or agency matter. Most definitely he would never be a lawyer that I wanted as opposing counsel. Later, I was to discover that prior to becoming a lawyer Lex returned to school after practicing as a child and youth care worker and advocate for many years. The results from his aptitude test indicated that he should choose a career as a religious minister or lawyer; consequently he chose to be a lawyer. Over the years Lex was the only person standing in the settler court system with many Indigenous peoples when they retained, lost or won back custody and guardianship of their children. His representation was the only one any of them wanted for very good reason and he was well known and highly respected in our communities.

1.11  “I am Profoundly Troubled”

At the beginning of each matter before the Court, Lex would always tell the judiciary how “profoundly troubled” he was about injustices affecting Indigenous families and children. When he passed away suddenly at the age of fifty-four, over 500 people came together from all over Vancouver Island and mainland BC to honor him at the largest funeral service ever held for a non-Indigenous person in the gymnasium of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. Speaker after speaker, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stood to speak publicly about their high esteem and admiration for Lex. One of the many BC provincial Court judges in attendance spoke about how she looked forward to hearing what Lex was “profoundly troubled about” each time he appeared before her because she knew that she was about to learn something important.

It meant a lot to me that Lex agreed to be the legal counsel for my friend, the late Nuu Chah Nulth hereditary Chief Harvey Charlie. A skilled lawyer was needed to represent Harvey at the February 2006 inquest into the 2002 murder of Harvey’s nineteen month-old grand-daughter, the late Sherry Charlie. Sherry died one month into her custody of the BC child protection system; her removal from
her mother in Port Alberni completed without the knowledge or involvement of her paternal
grandparents who lived in Victoria and her father who was working on a fishing boat far off the coast
of Vancouver Island. When Sherry died, her father was still working on the fishing boat and learned of
his daughter’s death over a radio speaker phone. Harvey’s life and that of his family members was
forever changed because of Sherry’s murder.

One afternoon in early 2006, I agreed to pick up Harvey and his wife Rose from a meeting with their
long term family physician, the purpose of which was to receive their grand-daughter’s autopsy
results. No other event in my social work practice has ever shaken me as much as those first few
moments as I watched them stumble away from the doctor’s office towards my car, completely
engulfed in their grief for the viciousness of the assaults against their grand-daughter. No words were
spoken as we sat in the car, the silence broken only by Rose’s sobbing and Harvey’s laboured
breathing.

Sherry was murdered by Ryan George, a First Nations male caregiver under contract to the BC child
protection system to provide “care” to the toddler and her three year old brother. George had a violent
criminal record and his rages left the toddler dead of eleven broken ribs, severe bruising that was in
various stages of healing and three blows to her head (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBC,
2006). Despite the suspicions of a paramedic that attended the scene and a pediatric physician at the
local hospital that the story told by the caregiver that the child was pushed down the stairs by her
three year old brother did not “ring true”, they did not report their suspicions to the BC child protection
authorities. Despite the pathologist’s report that Sherry was a “battered child” it would take four
months from the time of her death for the police to launch an investigation. During those months, the
BC child protection system would leave Sherry’s three year old brother in the “care” of the real
murderer (CBC, 2006).
Creating the Office of the BC Representative for Children and Youth

Anger and outrage at the injustice for Sherry, her brother and their family because of the inaction of child protection authorities and bureaucrats, medical personnel, forensics and police moved me to suggest that the family retain legal counsel that could do what needed to be done to fairly represent the family at the February 2006 inquest into Sherry’s murder. It seemed unlikely to me that such systemic inaction would have been tolerated had Sherry been a Caucasian child from middle or upper class family rather than a First Nations toddler from a poor family. Once Harvey requested that I connect him with a lawyer, I drove directly to Lex’s home to speak with him about representing the family. The next day I introduced them to each other. It was largely due to Lex’s tenacious legal skills and Harvey’s unrelenting advocacy in memory of his grand-daughter that the BC Liberal government reversed their funding cut decision that had restricted oversight services to vulnerable BC children (Hughes, 2006) and implemented sweeping changes to the BC child protection system. The 2006 appointment of Cree Saskatchewan Judge Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond as the first Representative of Children and Youth in BC is one of the changes and her five year mandate to provide oversight and advocacy for all children in BC’s child welfare system continues to 2011 (Times Colonist, 2008).

It meant a lot to Harvey that one of Mary-Ellen’s first actions as the new Representative was adherence to Indigenous protocol in that she asked to meet with Rose and Harvey, acknowledged their grief at the loss of their grand-daughter and thanked him for his advocacy on behalf of so many vulnerable BC children. It was after this meeting, in the spring of 2007 that Lex and I attended a gathering in Ahousaht First Nation, an on-reserve community approximately 200 miles north of Victoria and a forty-five minute boat ride across the ocean from Tofino, BC to be with Harvey and his family when they placed a headstone on Sherry’s grave. Their grand-daughter who was murdered while in the “care” of the provincial government and was the centre of so much provincial and national child welfare media attention, a public inquest, numerous reviews by government representatives and hundreds of thousands of dollars of bureaucratic and legal salaries, lay buried in an unmarked grave at the edge of the sea for four years. Not one child welfare bureaucrat or government representative
had thought to ask the family if they had any final requests with respect to Sherry. When I asked the family one evening if they felt there was more to do for Sherry, they simply asked if our Urban Aboriginal child welfare agency could provide a headstone for their grand-daughter. The simplicity of their request after they had lost so much and been through such an appalling ordeal, privately brought me to tears for the insensitivity and disrespect they continued to experience from the provincial government’s child protection system that had put their grand-daughter in the “care” of a violent criminal. Publicly it has done nothing but strengthen my determination to advocate and work on behalf of Indigenous children and families in the BC child protection and education systems.

Harvey passed into the spirit world one year later, in the spring of 2008 when his fight with cancer ended. He was only fifty-eight years old. His passing was front page news in the May 22, 2008 Victoria Times Colonist newspaper which is distributed to communities throughout Vancouver Island. His funeral overflowed with friends, families and allies who spoke about his advocacy efforts on behalf of all children in BC’s child protection system. At that time, Lex spoke about how Harvey’s life was “fundamentally impacted as a child who was traumatized by the residential school experience and how it always informed his later advocacy on behalf of children” (Times Colonist, 2008, p. A1).

Lex followed Harvey into the spirit world one year later in 2009; a massive heart attack took him to the Creator quickly one beautiful spring morning. Once their work was done, the speed of their abrupt departures from this world saddened me beyond words; their deaths still seem surreal. Yet they left me with important knowledge and teachings about how to strategically advocate on behalf of vulnerable Indigenous children. I could not ask for better friends and mentors to teach me about determination, relentlessness and what it truly takes to stand up for children, hold systems to account and make a difference. They paid a high price to ensure justice for Sherry and although they could not bring her back to life or help every Indigenous child in Canada, they proved that we can all do something to help one. Together, they created a symbolic star blanket of protection and oversight for Indigenous children in the form of the Representative for Children and Youth’s office and showed me
a path to make changes for other children. So it is with them both standing at my side and my promise to Harvey fulfilled, that I am left to tell you what it is that I am profoundly troubled about.

1.13 Conclusion: A Symbolic Saulteaux Star Blanket “Made with Words”

A star blanket is sometimes made from the remnants of prayer cloths used in ceremony that are brought into an ordered pattern that gives rise to profound beauty. Indigenous children in care, and we ourselves are remnants, in a way, of something that once was. When we re-enter the ordered harmony of culture, when we stand in the circle again with all our relations, we take our place as a sacred and significant part of the ceremonial beauty of our own interrelated existence (Dr. Lee Brown, personal communication, January 30, 2010).

This chapter introduces the metaphor and symbol of a Saulteaux “star blanket made with words” as a way of understanding the two overarching goals of this study. A Saulteaux star blanket pedagogy and the process of making a star blanket will be used throughout this dissertation as a theoretical, methodological and metaphorical Indigenous research framework. This framework choice is thoughtful and deliberate; informed by my Saulteaux women’s ways of knowing, social work and educative experiences. However it should be explicitly stated that there are common elements that exist in many patterns of Indigenous “blankets” and readers may do well to develop their own Indigenous symbol, metaphor or research “blanket” based on their own traditional teachings.

Each chapter of this dissertation represents a step to make a star blanket as a way of culturally and critically understanding diverse Urban Indigenous voices of experience. The star blanket framework stitches together their individual and collective voices to reveal an educative model that may help to improve the educational outcomes of Urban Indigenous children living in BC’s setter child protection system. It is offered in the hope that, in the future, it will contribute to the strengthening of Urban Indigenous peoples.

Many times this project proved to be emotionally draining for a number of personal and professional reasons. The process of doing this research study in a cultural, transparent and ethical way forced
me to personally confront and to be honest about many issues, contradictions, grief and loss of relatives and mentors in my own life, and my own complicity in a child welfare system that at times I wanted desperately to deny. My decision to be honest in my relationships with research participants meant sharing my own painful family child welfare stories, acknowledging my own child protection removals as a former child protection worker and social work supervisor. Initially I feared that potential research participants would be angry once they understood that child removal is a part of my social work history and this knowledge would deter them from participation in the project. However the opposite proved to be true and what I found was that revealing and acknowledging my personal loss and grief, as well as my professional work history proved to be some of the most healing experiences in our developing relationships.

This teaching has proven to be my greatest learning through this research process; for the freedom it provides through the release of shame and fear and the knowledge that I too, have a place and a role in our collective healing (Baskin, 2009). As one part of the whole, it has helped me to see that we each have a “place” in the ordered patterns of our cultures, whether that is a star blanket, button blanket, weaving or Métis sash. Indigenous pedagogy guides us to respectfully understand that life-long learning offers many unique opportunities to be both learners and teachers. Each one offers unique opportunities to contribute and be included in Indigenous healing, strengthening and transformational efforts of our nations (Baskin, 2009).

The second star section (or chapter) of this “star blanket made with words” provides an introduction to the historic, social, political, legal and economic issues impacting the abysmal educational outcomes of ICIC. The third star section (or chapter) of this dissertation provides a comprehensive literature review of issues and research regarding the unique educational needs of Urban Indigenous CIC. The fourth star section (or chapter) identifies theoretical principles that support this research project while the fifth star section (or chapter) examines the Indigenist methodology and methods used to implement it. The sixth star section (or chapter) introduces the research findings, the seventh star
section (or chapter) provides recommendations and conclusions. The eighth, and final star section (or chapter) is offered as a “give-away” and includes an Elder’s prayer and the artistic representation of the Saulteaux “star blanket made with words” created by the youngest member of this research study. She is a former youth in care of the Canadian child protection system, as was her mother. She is not someone that I knew before beginning this research project, but she is someone that I have come to regard as a close relative. She is Saulteaux, like me and happens to belong to another Saulteaux community. It is humbling and hopeful beyond words to conclude this study with her artistic vision of the future.
Chapter 2: No Right to Education?

One of the things for any youth in care, Aboriginal or not, their ability to get through the school system and graduate is really poor. If kids are going to be in care, there is a responsibility that the state has to provide a better opportunity for them in order to take the steps. Whether that is financial, or whatever. Certainly to be there, because that is part of the responsibility of taking God’s child into permanent care. If you are taking on the role of being legal guardian of the child, you better back it up by providing something for their future and to be there, and not just pat them on the back and say, ‘See you later’ (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

A child who is taken into care at any point in his or her life will probably not graduate from high school...This is a tragedy that calls out for immediate and systemic action. (Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007, p.xi).

Learning, as Aboriginal people have come to know it, is holistic, lifelong, purposeful, experiential, communal, spiritual, and learned within a language and a culture. What guides their learning (beyond family, community, and Elders) is spirit, their own learning spirits who travel with them and guide them along their earth walk, offering them guidance, inspiration, and quiet unrealized potential to be who they are. In Aboriginal thought, the Spirit enters this earth walk with a purpose for being here and with specific gifts for fulfilling that purpose (Battiste, 2009, p. 14).

2.1 Rights of Children in Care

This chapter provides an introduction to the unique and complex historic, social, political, legal and economic issues that influence the Eurocentric educational success of Urban Indigenous children in care (ICIC) and discourse about the life-long learning perspective of traditional Indigenous education (Battiste, 2009). Their Euro-centric child welfare and educational experiences are a result of many adult decision makers; primarily parents, extended family members, social workers, teachers, lawyers, bureaucrats, judges and politicians (both current and historical). Non-Indigenous elected and bureaucratic decision makers were the first to develop and implement Euro-centric legislation, policy and determine funding levels for child welfare and education systems in BC (Strong-Boag, 2011). With the notable exception of Carrier leader, Edward John, who was appointed as the BC Minister of Children and Families by the New Democratic Party in 2000-2001; all of the BC political (Ministerial) and bureaucratic representatives (Deputy Minister) that currently control (and have controlled) the “Indigenous child welfare industry” are non-Indigenous. Since its
inception, the Euro-centric child protection legislation, education and fostering system in Canada remains based on Western principles, values and beliefs (Baskin, 2009; Strong Boag, 2011). From the vantage point of my Indigenous social work practice, educator and research experience, a place that I privilege and write from, the Euro-centric education and child protection systems are hostile, violent, abusive and alienating for many Indigenous children and families.

They [Indigenous peoples] suffer from isolation, unemployment, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and racism (both individual and systemic), as evidenced by run-down schools, inequities in funding of those schools, assimilation to English language and Eurocentrism that is now normalized in all schools, lack of consideration of the cultures or spiritual growth of the students, lack of funding and research on methods for dealing with special needs, and more (Battiste, 2009, p. 14).

Rarely do Indigenous children enter the child protection system because of their own actions. Rather it is a complex web of historic, legal, social, financial and personal decisions of adults that make it so. It is the same Euro-centric bureaucratic, elected political representative decision-makers that determined not to include the “right to an education” in Section 70 (the Rights of Children in Care) of the BC CFCSA (1996) (Appendix “B”). The CFCSA is the child protection legislation, currently enacted in BC, which governs the lives of thousands of children until they leave the system as adults, or through other means such as marriage, death or adoption. The deliberate absence of the “right to education” for Urban ICIC, and all CIC, profoundly troubles me because it is evidence of Canada’s intention not to provide an adequate level of Euro-centric education to Indigenous peoples; thereby maintaining its domination, control and dependency in this next generation of Indigenous peoples.

2.2 Tracking Indigenous Student Rights

The BC Ministry of Education assigns each student a personal education number (PEN) to track student performance, plan programs and services. This PEN is used to collect, analyze and report student performance which is then reported for Aboriginal students in Ministry of Education publications such as How are we doing? (Ministry of Education, 2008). The BC Ministry of Children
and Family Development (MCFD) also assigns each CIC a child services number (CS). By comparing these two numbers assigned to CIC, the BC Representative for Children and Youth and Office of the Provincial Health Officer, Mary-Ellen Turpel-Lafond and Perry Kendall (2007) determined that an abysmal educational attainment exists for vulnerable and marginalized CIC. Their study population consisted of 32,186 school aged children who had been in the care of the MCFD between April 1, 1997 and November 2005 of which 21,775 were in temporary care and 10,411 were in continuing care (p. 9). Aboriginal children are over-represented in BC’s child protection system, and comprise 55% of the total number (MCFD, 2011). However, the results of the 2007 report do not differentiate between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal CIC, or those living in urban or reserve-based communities. That information is critically needed by both systems for a number of policy, practice, planning and systemic reasons, including the enforced and imposed differential community placement mobility experiences of children in care by social workers, as evidenced by this Urban ICIC participant.

I lived in a place on the north shore of Kamloops and then I moved downtown... then I got moved to Richmond and stayed there for a while. Then the Ministry decided to send us to Blue River and we lived there for eight and a half years. That was a tough place to be. After that I went to Whitehorse and was in school there for two years and from there I went to Prince George and went to three different schools there. The last school I went to was in Clearwater (ICIC, 2009).

It is social work practice that is light years removed from what one participant argues is the best policy and practice; one that reflects “placement stability; one placement, one community, one school” (Indigenous agency participant, 2009). According Turpel-Lafond & Kendall (2007), placement instability, and many other factors, contributes to just a 7% likelihood that any CIC will graduate from an academic secondary school stream (Dogwood Certificate) within six years of entering grade eight. This means that social workers and teachers can expect that 93% of all CIC will not graduate from an academic stream; far below of either Aboriginal (50%) or non-Aboriginal children outside the child protection system (73%) (Ministry of Education, 2008). This statistic appalled and shocked me into action for the potential horrific future implications for ICIC. Indigenous, and indeed all children in care,
have a right to an education, and to be supported in their educational plans by adults responsible for their care, don’t they? Yet that is not the case for many Urban ICIC including these ICIC participants who were exploited as a cheap source of labour or subjected to ridicule by foster parents about their future education or employment options.

Some of the foster parents I lived with didn’t see the value in school. They didn’t motivate or push me to do my homework. In (name of community), the lady I lived with would always get me to drop off groceries, chop the firewood, put away the beer bottles, shovel the snow, do all the house chores for her friends, and deliver newspapers. Doing all that, school was secondary. There was never a push to learn how to read and write (ICIC, 2009).

I was told over and over again that I would never amount to anything. That somebody needed to be looking after me. Just really crippled my self-esteem and really had an impact on my education. My foster mother said the only job I would get, would be scrubbing toilets…I got really good at being invisible; just creeping around (ICIC, 2009).

Yet the right to education, particularly for Indigenous children, is evident in a number of relatively recent commitments and apologies from Canada to Indigenous peoples including:

1) Section 35 in Canada’s Constitution Act (1982) that recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada;
2) Canada is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) and member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child making general comment #11 on Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention (2009), that Indigenous children are entitled to, and should enjoy, the same level of rights afforded non-Indigenous children as outlined in the Convention. States should work to strengthen connections and cooperation with Indigenous communities to empower Indigenous children to express their rights;
3) A signatory to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1999);
4) Historic apology on behalf of the government of Canada and all Canadians to the survivors of the 130 year old residential school project (2008) and settling of the largest class action lawsuit in Canadian history for abuse, genocide policies and neglect of Indigenous children in these schools;
5) Apology by the Roman Catholic, United, Presbyterian and Anglican churches for their roles in managing the residential school project and the abuse of Indigenous children in those institutions (1994-2008); and
Within these declarations, education articles apply for this unique and vulnerable group of children as well as other children. Within Canada’s apology to residential school survivors by Conservative Party Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Stephane Dion of the Liberal Party, Jack Layton of the New Democratic Party, and Gilles Duceppe of the Bloc Quebecois, there was acknowledgement that “this policy of assimilation wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country” (Harper, 2008). Based on all these apologies, acknowledgments of wrong-doing, and commitments to “do better”, there is space to ensure that the right to education is included in the BC child protection legislation “rights of children in care” and to comprehensively and inter-governmentally address the abysmal level of ICIC academic education. Instead, it is permitted to continue with the full knowledge of government and society. An Indigenous residential school survivor compared his educational experiences as a child in one of Canada’s most notorious residential schools when he stated “Government never meant to educate us, they needed us for cheap labour on farms. Now the same thing is happening with the education of First Nations children in foster care” (M. Arnouse, personal communication, January 2010).

How can this continue, particularly given the current climate of “reconciliation” underway between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state? For me, the disconnection is profoundly troubling. Gitxsan social work academic, Blackstock (2008) argues that putting children first must be at the foundation of reconciliation in order to ensure that violations of children’s rights are not repeated and ongoing. That argument is echoed by Anishnabe scholar and educator Leanne Simpson (2011), who asks “Collectively what are the implications of participating in reconciliation processes when there is an overwhelming body of evidence that in action, the Canadian state does not want to take responsibility and stop the abuse?” (p. 21). This is a particularly critical question to ask when the BC government reports that almost all children in its care fail to graduate from an academic secondary school program, far below the average graduation rate for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children that are not in government care in BC.
The federal and provincial government’s failure to take action on behalf of Urban ICIC is negligent and unconscionable. Some would argue that this “negligence” by Canada is nothing new (Blackstock, 2010) and is simply a continuation of domination and control tactics used for centuries over Indigenous peoples. However, this challenge is also one for Indigenous governments, communities and families; because to take no comprehensive action on this issue, with the full knowledge of ICIC educational needs, is to ignore Indigenous inherent responsibilities towards Indigenous children. Today, Indigenous governments cannot “disregard” or “run away” from these responsibilities; that is not an acceptable response. However, adults working in dysfunctional bureaucratic child protection systems can choose to leave by taking other employment, being transferred to new social work responsibilities or returning to school (Pivot, 2009). Yet the ICIC must learn to survive in dysfunctional, abusive or violent child protection systems with precious few supportive individuals, advocates, Indigenous support workers, teachers and social workers. Some, like the late Sherry Charlie never survive. Too many others choose suicide (Morely & Kendall, 2006) while others develop addictions, cope with alcohol and drugs, enter gangs or sex trade work as coping mechanisms (Janine Carriere, personal communication, April 21, 2010; Williams, 2000). Some Urban ICIC are forced to flee from unsafe, inappropriate or dysfunctional child protection living situations, only to live in poverty, be exploited, assaulted or murdered (Native Women’s Association, 2010) and with few options, educational or social supports to help them climb out of poverty.

ICIC are a unique demographic in contemporary Canadian society because they stretched between a historical time where Indigenous children were holistic and important members of self-sustaining, self-governing, rich and vibrant societies and today where they represent the bottom of a fragmented and marginalized population in every key income, educational, health, safe housing, labour-force activity and socio-economic indicator that measures child well-being (RCAP, 1996). It is no secret about the overwhelming number of ways in which poverty affects the lives of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and the lives of poor children involved in child protection systems in particular. According to Statistics Canada (2008) poverty disproportionately affects 49% of Indigenous
children living off-reserve in Canada. This is important to consider because off-reserve or in Urban communities is where the majority of Indigenous people live in BC; a trend that continues unabated (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Less than 50% of status First Nations people currently live on reserve in Canada, and there is little information about the over 70% of the 1,172,790 Aboriginal (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) population of Canada that lives in Urban centres, including large cities, census metropolitan areas and smaller Urban centres (Anderson, 2000; Environics Institute, 2010; Hanselmann, 2001; Helin, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2006). Urban Aboriginal peoples live in Urban (off-reserve) centres and represent the larger collectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada. The growth of an Urban Aboriginal population in Canada in the past sixty years means that the older, established way of delivering Federal government services (for example, through the reserve system) are no longer effective for Urban Aboriginal peoples or in all instances. These facts support the need for additional strategies to meet the unique educational needs of Indigenous children living in Urban communities (Williams, 2000).

2.3 Complex and Compelling Issues: Two-Eyed Seeing

The greatest needs are to continue to address racism and Eurocentrism in society and to offer what Elder Albert Marshall called Two Eyed Seeing: that is to normalize Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum so that both Indigenous and conventional perspectives and knowledges will be available—not just for Aboriginal peoples, who would be enriched by that effort, but for all peoples (Battiste, 2009, p. 14).

Six elements of Indigenous culturally based education (CBE) is (1) recognition and use of Native languages, (2) pedagogy that stresses traditional cultural characteristics of adult-child interaction, (3) pedagogy in which teaching strategies are congruent with the traditional culture and ways of knowing and learning, (4) curriculum that is based on traditional culture and that recognizes the importance of Native spirituality, (5) strong Native community participation in educating children and in the planning and operation of school activities, (6) knowledge and use of the social and political mores of the community (Grande, 2008, pp. 235-236).
The enforced relocation of many Urban Indigenous peoples, and enforced constructions of Urban Indigenous children’s socio-cultural and political identities within Canadian child protection and education systems must be considered within an intersectional range of Indigenous historical and contemporary experiences with Canadian society, policies and practices. The overwhelming Euro-centric curriculum and lack of Indigenous culturally based educational experiences contributes to the significantly greater educational needs of Indigenous children in child protection systems than those of non-Indigenous or Indigenous children that have never been institutionalized in Canadian child protection systems (Johnson, 2008; Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007). This is one of the worst kept secrets in child protection work, yet it continues, unabated.

Perhaps the struggle for academic success by Aboriginal children that are not living, nor have ever lived, in BC’s child protection system can provide some clues as to strategies or understanding that may be helpful to ICIC. Research by Morin (2004) suggests that, generally, Aboriginal students in BC’s elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions may take longer than non-Aboriginal students to complete school due to four factors including,

1. competing parental and/or community responsibilities;
2. school barriers that prevent Aboriginal students from developing a sense of belonging in the school setting;
3. the need to leave school and return at a later stage; and
4. increased time required to develop skills (p. 197).

These four factors may be true for Urban ICIC as well; however, the complex intersectional impacts of their enforced socio-political location as “children in care” and “Indigenous rights-holders” (enshrined in the Canadian Constitution and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), must be considered in ways that does not simply take an “additive” perspective. For example, with respect to these four factors, simply prefacing the points with “Who or what is responsible to help Urban ICIC develop rights-based strategies to address” and ending the points with “before and
after they leave the child protection system” opens new conversations about unique implications for Urban ICIC.

It has been said that being born Indigenous means being born into politics (Alfred, 1995, p. 1) and for this group of children, this race-based reality is a very true statement of fact. These are children that are citizens of nations that have diverse, rich and self-governing histories and sovereign relationships with the Crown and Canada. Yet they are at greater risk than any other racial or cultural group of children to enter, and remain wards of, the Canadian child protection system (Morley & Kendall, 2006; MCFD, 2011). From government reports (MCFD 2011), it would appear that Urban ICIC are simply included as a partial component of a “homogenous group of children in care”. However, it is unacceptable to dis-member them from the larger political agreements or declarations of Indigenous rights, or to differentially consider them an inconsequential part of it, or not, when it suits government’s political or international agenda. Currently, release from the child protection system can only be accomplished if it is assessed and sanctioned by child welfare bureaucrats and Canadian laws (CFCSA, 1996). BC statistics identify that once Indigenous children enter the child protection system, release is much less likely to happen than it is for non-Indigenous children (MCFD, 2011). Therefore, unique educational long-term strategies must be developed and implemented with, and for, Urban ICIC, and all Indigenous children, prior to, during and after incarceration in the Canadian child protection system. These strategies must re-member Urban ICIC as a part of Indigenous political, educational rights-holders and Canada’s judiciary responsibilities to meet their educational needs.

Rutman, Hubberstey & Feduniw (2007) identify higher educational attainment to be a protective factor and strategy against poverty; an obvious issue of significant importance to Indigenous peoples in BC and Canada. The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (2001) is a national study that examines the profile of children and families investigated by Canadian child welfare authorities. It addresses four principal forms of maltreatment: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional maltreatment. It found that that the primary reason that
Aboriginal children are removed from their families and taken into the child protection system is due to neglect rather than physical or sexual abuse or emotional maltreatment (Trocmé, MacLaurin, Fallon, Knoke, Pitman, & McCormack, 2006; Trocmé, Knoke, Shangreaux, Fallon, & McLaurin, 2005; Blackstock & Trocme, 2004). The risk factors most closely associated with poverty are inadequate housing and substance misuse (Blackstock & Trocme, 2004) and a history of colonialism (Blackstock, 2010). Poverty is a significant issue for Urban Aboriginal peoples living in BC (First Call, 2010). In 2007, BC had the highest child poverty rates in Canada for the sixth year in a row (18.8% or 1 in 5 children) despite having a strong economy at that time (First Call, 2010). In 2008, high rates of child poverty continued above the provincial averages of all other provinces and “the number of poor children in BC was 121,000 – more than the total populations [of the cities of] Campbell River, Mission, Squamish and Vernon-combined” (First Call, 2010, p. 4).

According to the first Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey conducted between March and October 2009 with 2,411 First Nations peoples (status and non-status), Métis and Inuit in eleven (11) cities across Canada including Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Montreal, Toronto, Halifax and Ottawa (Inuit only), one of the key findings is that increasing educational levels is the top priority of Urban Aboriginal people. Most respondents consider “education to be more than what is offered in mainstream schools, and through existing degree and diploma programs. They believe that education also encompasses what is taught in Aboriginal schools and ‘life-long learning’ from Elders” (Environics Institute, 2010, p. 3). Research demonstrates that the vast majority of Indigenous children in the child protection and education systems are not learning what they need to know to enable them to graduate from Canadian secondary schools at the same rate as those not in the child protection system (Manser, 2007; Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007).

Aboriginal demographics in Canada identify that Aboriginal birth rates are the highest in the country and that Aboriginal peoples represent the youngest and fastest growing demographic in Canada.
(Statistics Canada, 2006) at the same time that adequate housing, safe drinking water, accessible health care, available employment and post-secondary educational opportunities on reserves are increasingly critical needs. It is evident that the sixty-year trend of status First Nations peoples moving from reserve communities to Urban areas, or staying there because of lack of housing, health, employment or post-secondary educational opportunities on reserves will continue. This is not to say that all status First Nations peoples who choose or are forced to Urban areas for health, safety, employment or educational issues want to stay there indefinitely, and certainly for those without status (Métis or non-status) leaving the city may not be an option. Structural issues such as available housing or employment on reserve, worsening water and sanitation infrastructure or legal issues such as Bill C-31 reinstatement of Indian status may dictate whether a return to their reserve-based community is an option, or not. In other instances, such as in Victoria and Vancouver, Urban reserve communities have developed as metropolitan areas have grown to surround reserve communities. The increasing financial investments required by the Federal government into infrastructure needs and lack of employment on reserves, combined with Aboriginal demographic evidence, indicate that strategic actions must be taken to address the Federal government's fiduciary responsibilities to status Indian peoples and the educational needs of all Urban Indigenous citizens (including status, non-status Indian, Métis, Inuit and Urban ICIC) now and in the future. This argument is stitched throughout the dissertation and begins with an explanation of the Star blanket metaphor that connects the research design, literature review, theory, methodology, data analysis and results to recommendations gathered from study participants.

2.4 Privileging Indigenous “Voices of Experience” in BC

As mentioned in the first chapter, there are two overarching goals of this study. The first overarching goal is to learn from Urban Indigenous peoples about their Canadian child welfare and educational experiences within the Urban community contexts of Victoria and Vancouver. The second goal is to privilege twenty-nine Urban Indigenous “voices of experience” and to strategically
link this research to the political struggles of Indigenous peoples for self-determination in the Canadian context. More specifically, this study asked the twenty-nine Urban Indigenous “voices of experience” research participants either part “A” or part “B” of the following questions. (“A” questions were asked of fifteen Urban Indigenous peoples grew up in BC’s child protection system. “B: questions were asked of thirteen Urban Indigenous and one non-Indigenous study participants that worked in and for two Urban Indigenous child protection agencies). The fifth question was asked both groups of Urban Indigenous research participants.

1. A) What facilitated your educational success both during and after you lived in the BC child protection system? B) What facilitated the educational success of Urban Indigenous children that you worked with, both during and after they lived in the BC child protection system?
2. A) What hindered your educational success both during and after you lived in the BC child protection system? B) What hindered the educational success of Urban Indigenous children that you worked with, both during and after they lived in the BC child protection system?
3. A) What educational supports did you access both during and after you lived in the BC child protection system? B) What educational supports did Urban Indigenous children access both during and after they lived in the BC child protection system?
4. A) What does your education enable you to do today? B) What does the education of Urban Indigenous children that lived in BC’s child protection system enable them to do today?
5. A and B) What do you hope your participation in this study will do to support or change the educational outcomes of Urban Indigenous children in care?

These questions were initially developed with Urban Indigenous former children in BC’s child protection system and Urban Indigenous board and agency staff members. They were subsequently refined through the process of completing the research ethics processes required by both Urban Indigenous child protection agencies and the University of British Columbia. The intention of learning from these questions is to support the collective academic and traditional Indigenous knowledge development of Urban ICIC while they live in Canadian child protection and education systems. The answers to these questions may help to unpack the systemic barriers and supports required to achieve the best education possible; and whether this is based in systemic or service provider issues as the following quotes reveal.
The government as parent then should also be concerned with ensuring that children in its care achieve their maximum potential (Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007, p. xi).

When I was in foster care, the social worker told me that I was not allowed to have any contact with the First Nations side of my family, or I would be put in reform school. She said I was being watched. Because it was a small town, I would see my cousins, grandmother and mother in town and I would do anything to avoid them. I didn’t know what reform school was, but I didn’t want to go there. I thought it was probably a prison for young people (ICIC, 2009).

Justice Hughes (2006) argues that “safety is about protection from abuse and neglect and that well-being is about a child’s social, educational and developmental progress”, however the well-being of an Indigenous child must be holistic and include strategies and actions to support their cultural, traditional, Indigenous knowledge and an education that is free of fear. It must also acknowledge Urban ICIC experiences of government enforced separation from Indigenous family and identity, enforced racism in Canada, Indigenous rights, and acknowledgement of their unique racial and cultural identity that differentiates them from other children in the BC child protection and education systems, children that have never been in the child protection system, and the rest of Canadian society. Therefore, their safety, education and Indigenous identity must be considered in a holistic manner, and supported by government, rather than dismissed, minimized or under attack by foreign, colonizing ideologies.

During the process of thinking and writing about what I have learned from the ICICs, I developed a paper to speak at the first national conference in Canada focused on the topic of education for children in the Canadian child protection systems. At the April 21, 2010 conference at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario I was the only person to present a paper arguing for the specific needs of ICIC in the Canadian child protection system. When I asked one of the organizers where the other Indigenous speakers were, she told me that the non-Indigenous speakers could speak for Indigenous students as well, that their papers should be viewed as including Indigenous issues. When I asked where the Indigenous representatives of child welfare agencies and support service agencies or Indigenous foster parents were, she said “We asked them to come but no one is here. I
think most of those agencies are up North”. This story helps to illustrate many things, but I will speak to two. First, that the poor educational outcomes for ICIC is not isolated to BC and second, that working relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous social workers, teachers, government and academics must be better informed and respectful across Canada. Clearly, there is a huge gap in the research and knowledge about the Western based and traditional educational needs of Urban Indigenous children in child protection systems. It was at this same Ontario conference that a young Indigenous woman stood to tell her story about her journey through education as a Crown Ward and I was one of a handful of Indigenous people to hear it. It is retold here in the spirit of Indigenous storywork, advanced by Archibald (2008) to demonstrate how far we have yet to go to support the Indigenous identity and learning spirits of our ICIC across Canada, and about our collective responsibility to listen and act.

2.5 Privileging an Ojibwa “Voice of Experience” from Ontario

In front of a 300 person audience at McMaster University in Ontario, a 20 year-old Indigenous woman stood up to tell her story about being a youth in the child protection system and her struggle to graduate from high school. There we sat, listening; social workers, teachers, college and university administrators, foster parents, university professors, bureaucrats, college instructors, a few of her peers and even fewer Indigenous people. She told us what it was like the day before and on the day that she reached the age of majority and was legally discharged from the Ontario child protection system after being raised as a Crown Ward.

“My birthday is on December 26th” she said. “So, on December 25th I was packing my belongings at the group home that I’d lived at for two years and getting ready to leave the system the next day. My mother died when I was a young child and I don’t have any family to go back to, so I spent a lot of Christmas Day phoning my friends to see if I could stay with them for a few days. On December 26th, the group home staff asked me where I wanted to go, so I gave them my friend’s address. They drove me there and dropped me and my stuff off. I still had six months to go before I graduated from high school and I didn’t know how I was going to do it. That was a hard day.” Her voice trembled when she spoke the last sentence. Outrage washed over me, tears gathered in my eyes and a lump formed in my throat because of the actions of adults and limitations of the child welfare system in her life. I saw some shocked looks on the adult faces of a few other people in
the room; yet in the faces of many others, there was a disengaged “professional” appearance. It was the kind of story that they had heard many times before.

“I went on to stay with a lot of people for the last six months of school and despite how difficult that was I graduated on time,” she said and then sat down to applause. The plenary broke into an intermission. I watched where she sat and saw her bury her face in her hands at the table. It seemed like no one was going to reach out to her, so I made my way over to her table and introduced myself. I explained that in my Saulteaux teachings that if someone shares an important story or teachings, it is customary to provide acknowledgement. I gifted her with a pair of silver carved bear earrings and explained that the bear represents my clan, the warriors and teachers of our people. I recognized the same kind of strength in her and knew that she must belong to strong people. She smiled and accepted them. “Where do you come from?” I asked her. “I know I’m an Indian person” she told me, “I just don’t know what kind of Indian person I am.”

I was shocked by the injustice of her release from the Ontario child protection system without basic knowledge about her Indigenous identity. However I told her, “Well, I’m sure that when the time is right, you will find out who your people are. On that day, I’m sure that you will find out that they are strong and capable people, because you certainly are a strong and capable person.” We hugged, parted and went onto the break.

At the end of the day, the 300 conference participants came back together in a closing plenary and across the room came the young woman walking quickly towards me and smiling. “Shelly I’m Ojibwa!” she said excitedly as she got closer. “I’m Ojibwa!” “How did you find out?” I asked her. “I texted my auntie and asked. She said we’re Ojibwa!” Smiling, I nodded and said “Of course, that makes sense. Ojibwa people are very strong people.” We smiled and hugged again, and then I said “I’m so glad that you found out who your people are today. Maybe the next time we meet, you will be able to greet me in your own language, know how to say “Hello” and “See you later” in your language.” Smiling, she nodded and we parted ways to listen to the closing plenary.

2.6 On the Advocacy Path

Our entire interaction lasted less than ten minutes, yet it seemed that in that brief time, something shifted for me that will never be the same. Maybe it came from my shocked realization that not one other of the 300 adults and youth in the room moved to speak with the young woman after she’d risked and shared so much emotional and spiritual pain so that we could learn. Maybe it was the faces of my children who have never known that kind of pain or felt that kind of loss and fear on their nineteenth birthdays, knowing that they will always have a home to come to when and if they
need or want it. Maybe it was my reflection of my own social work practice and the many children that I have walked out of the child protection system on their nineteenth birthdays. Maybe it is my growing determination and resolution to tell the truth of what that “safer child protection environment” and “abandonment after the age of majority” feels and looks like from the perspective of ICIC across Canada as noted in the quote below:

I think there should be a funding pot for them, for every child that’s been in care. ..There needs to be a liaison or support person who can explain it. Not just the money but the support services afterwards…to have someone to go to, to talk about that, especially if they don’t have Mom and Dad. Some of these kids have no sense of their parents, are really far removed and disconnected and they don’t have their foster parents or social workers in the picture, because they’re done their job. Who is there to support them after they’re nineteen years old? Sometimes, nobody (ICIC, 2009)

There was a spiritual connection with the Ojibwa youth that is difficult to put into English words, however it is supported by Indigenous beliefs that “we are all related and interconnected”. It wounded me to see her so physically and emotionally alone in a public place, after recounting her story of abandonment and fear. I recognize her courage, determination and triumph and it compels me to interrogate, and hold government to account for, negligence of its educational and well-being duty to Urban ICIC. Too many times, government bureaucrats have said “Government makes a lousy parent” as if that somehow absolves them of responsibility to invest in the education of children in BC’s child protection system (Leslie duToit, personal communication, July 12, 2007). It is no excuse for negligence.

Whatever the reason, it was with this Ojibwa youth’s story in mind that I began to look for ways to influence change in BC, and thought about strategic ways to move the issue forward. On June 9, 2010, I presented my preliminary doctoral research findings to the First Nations Directors Partnership Forum in Victoria, BC. This Partnership Forum brings together every Executive Director of the twenty-four First Nations and Metis delegated child welfare agencies in BC, and those in development, with the Federal and Provincial government representatives holding child welfare portfolios. I presented my research findings and told the young Ojibwa woman’s story, commenting that the educational issues for Indigenous children in both provinces need our attention. Then, I asked for two things; first for feedback on my presentation in preparation for my doctoral defense and second, for their support to develop a provincial Educational Strategy Day for Indigenous children in BC’s child protection system. What I said was “If this young woman can graduate from high school based solely on her own determination to succeed, we can do this.” They agreed and
with the endorsement of the Partnership Forum, began to plan the first provincial Educational Strategy Day for Indigenous children in BC’s child protection system. At this time, the planning continues to unfold.

2.7 Stories as Advocates

As the young, Ojibwa woman’s story demonstrates, when told for educative purposes, stories can take on a life of their own and become the teacher; a position supported by Archibald (2008). Perhaps more than that, stories can become vehicles and advocates to move people to places that we need to enter, consider and act. Certainly this young woman’s story moved me to consider the ICIC educational experiences in the national context and it was not until I heard her story that the connection was made in my mind.

This dissertation shares the stories and educational experiences of fifteen Urban Indigenous people that grew up in and were discharged, left, or “aged out” of the BC child welfare system and thirteen Indigenous and one non-Indigenous people that are working in or with two Urban Aboriginal delegated child welfare agencies on Coast Salish territories. Some are child welfare and education stories that have helped Indigenous people to live and thrive. It is evident that without child protective services, some of the ICIC believe that they may not have survived the abuse and neglect that they experienced as children (ICIC, personal communication, December 4, 2009). Yet others are stories of deep intergenerational trauma and pain, loss and the death of important people and assault against their Indigenous identities. Together we have a shared responsibility to keep their Indigenous stories alive and understand that they are Canada’s stories too; as told from the perspectives of those that were raised with Canada and the Province in the place of “parent” and “legal guardian”.

Many important things have been taken from ICIC as children including the safety and security of a childhood that every Indigenous child has a right to know, of being separated from parents, siblings and extended family members, nations, languages and culture (Blackstock, 2009; Bruyere, 2005;
Reid, 2005; Reid, 2009). Some of their stories are of worry and insecurity, of not knowing when they might be reunited with important people in their lives, or feeling instability in their homes, schools and communities. Their stories taught me about the abuse and neglect that they experienced in the homes in which they were placed by social workers, where they hoped to be cared about, and were not. I learned about the bullies that tormented them at school, the teachers that treated them like they were invisible and about social workers that moved them sometimes to more than fifty different foster homes. I learned about shame that at times threatened to swallow me whole for the racism, lack of love and abuse they endured as children and for knowing that in my own social work practice, there may be children that my actions caused to feel the same kind of pain. Throughout this process, I continued to think that “Indigenous ways offer better and more humane options to protect and educate Indigenous children”.

Addressing the increasing dependency on welfare in many Indigenous families and communities in Canada is another reason that this research is important. Speaking in 1997, Saulteaux elder Danny Musqua of Keeseekoose First Nation identifies a new form of hidden genocide, welfare benefits, being perpetuated against Indigenous people in general, however he could just as easily be speaking about Indigenous children in the child protection system who leave it without sufficient education, skills and training that will enable them to be independent of the income assistance rolls. “This welfare! …This hidden genocide that they [government] are practicing…Putting them on welfare and keeping them there. Keeping them from the competitive world and not giving them the skills (Relland, 1998, p. 74). Musqua’s concerns about welfare as a form of hidden genocide enacted against Indigenous peoples is echoed by Calvin Helin, a Tsimshian lawyer who argues that “the solution or moving Aboriginal children out of the welfare trap is “education, education, and education” (Helin, 2006, p. 249). Further, Helin and Hanselmann (2001) argue that the situation is especially important for Urban Aboriginal peoples who receive less than 3.5% of federal transfer payment spending, despite the fact that less than half the Aboriginal population in Canada now lives on reserve (Helin, 2006, p. 241). The caution comes in the recognition that the education
system into which ICIC are placed is also based on foreign ideologies just as is the child protection system and to enter into dialogue and action with these realities, one must be firmly grounded in what it means to be “Indigenous”, what will work for us in order to develop a better way forward. For all these reasons, the perspective of Indigenous peoples is sought in this research project.

2.8 Education: A Right and a Priority for Urban ICIC

In a letter to MCFD employees on July 12, 2010, the former Deputy Minister, Leslie Du Toit (at that time, the most senior civil servant of the child protection system in BC, since politically fired from her position), acknowledged that “BC’s children, youth and families are our priority, and our current service system is not working for many of them” yet it is difficult to determine what significantly changed throughout her tenure. Conversations with non-Indigenous people working as lawyers and child protection workers in the BC child protection system have also convinced me that this research is important because of their theories as to why the education of Indigenous children in BC’s child protection system remains such a low priority for governments.

One discussion on June 2, 2010 with a long time non-Indigenous child protection social worker, who asked to remain anonymous, makes me wonder how widespread his belief is. He shared with me that he believes it is in the Federal and BC government’s best interests and business agenda for the Indigenous population to remain uneducated because “someone needs to work in the Wal-Marts and big box stores for $8.00 per hour” and “if Indigenous people, whom we need to be the stewards of this land, are kept uneducated or bought off, then they won’t be talking about issues like the rape of the land in the oil sands and the tragedy that is unfolding there” (BC child protection worker, personal communication, June 2, 2010).

For all these reasons, this research is important and hopefully it will give others pause to consider the larger systemic reasons that the education of ICIC in the BC child protection system remains a low government priority, unrecognized by legislation and unsupported by adequate funding,
meaningful strategies or coordinated, targeted efforts. If the current child protection and education system were a blanket, it brings to mind those that were infected with small pox and introduced into healthy First Nations communities by European traders in order to get rid of the “Indian problem” (Miller, 1996). As Indigenous peoples, we must take this diseased blanket off our children and replace it with one of our own making.

2.9 Indigenous Principles: Speaking for One’s Self

“I screamed internally for a long time: Traumatized Urban Indigenous children in Canadian child protection and education systems” explores complex issues in the educational experiences of Urban Indigenous people that lived and work in the settler BC provincial child protection system. This is not to say that the educational experiences of non-Indigenous people that lived or work in BC’s child protection system is not important, because it is, as is the experiences of Indigenous peoples that live or lived in land-based (on reserve) community based child protection agencies. As Indigenous peoples we are taught that we only have the right to speak on our own behalf, not on the behalf of others, unless we are asked or given the right to do so. In respect of that teaching, I do not have the right to speak on behalf of all Indigenous peoples, particularly those living on-reserve, nor on behalf of non-Indigenous peoples, although recognize the importance of such research projects. I only have the right to speak of what I know or what was told to me with the consent of the Urban Indigenous peoples to share it. In the spirit of self-determination, reconciliation and healing, Indigenous peoples must tell their own truths and stories about their experiences in Canadian child protection and education systems. Only Indigenous people that lived through the experiences or work in those systems have the depth of knowledge, understanding and the “insider view” necessary to speak to critical issues, rediscover our own answers and take leadership positions to advocate for meaningful change.

2.10 Urban ICIC: Representative and Members of Indigenous Nations

Can you imagine the Aboriginal leaders and communities of antiquity that survived for 9,600 years prior to European contact, putting any decisions concerning their well-being
This chapter centers Urban ICIC in the settler child protection and education systems as important representatives and members of our Indigenous nations. It argues that the Urban ICICs have something important to say about Indigenous futures in Canada and something collectively vital to contribute to the well-being, education, self-determination and healing of our Nations. Their unique experiences and wisdom gained within foreign systems give them tremendous insight and knowledge about how to best nurture the learning spirits of ICIC that currently live in the child protection and education systems and transform it. Urban and non-status First Nations CIC’s represent a population of Indigenous people seemingly outside what the Federal government perceives to be its fiduciary responsibility (Hanselmann, 2001; Muckle, 1999), yet they have knowledge and contributions that are vital and important in the healing of Indigenous nations. Certainly it is for each nation to decide that they represent much more than mere “remnants” existing on the fringes of their nations. They are “real Indians” (Lawrence, 2004), Indigenous rights-holders and deserve to be recognized citizens of their nations. Who they are and what they mean to their families and nations cannot be the decision of the Canadian or Provincial governments for their Urban based families have also suffered past injustices equal to those inflicted on those with recognized status (Muckle, 1999, p. 85). To do otherwise is reflective of colonial thinking; to believe that a status card issued by the Canadian government makes them true citizens of our nations, or not. That is not what I was taught by my elders about Indigenous children, yet as the framework for Treaty negotiations currently exists in BC, they will not benefit from those negotiations and have no similar avenue to address the same issues (Muckle, 1999, p. 85). Further this view is supported by Amnesty International (2009) which claims that “social marginalization and legal discrimination place Indigenous peoples at risk of a wide range of human rights violations directed against community leaders, individuals and Indigenous societies as a whole” (para. 6).
In the process of claiming sovereignty over Canada, the British Crown assumed control over all the land and its resources in exchange for benefits that would be given to First Nations. The spirit of the treaties is such that First Nations were to receive something of significant value, in the case of the Numbered Treaties, this was largely represented by the demand for education that would enable future generations to share in the bounty of Canada (Stonechild, 2006, p. 138).

Canadian governments have critical social, economic and political roles to fulfill towards First Nations citizens and that includes Indigenous children living in child protective custody. Racism, poverty, creation of Indigenous dependency on governmental systems (Helin, 2006), the legacy of residential school and child welfare as well as the engrained and hegemonic systemic barriers created by 500 years of colonizing, assimilation and integrative bureaucratic government policies implemented across Canada (Alfred, 1995) do not make Canada's fiduciary duties towards this population any less. In BC, Indigenous children's experiences are compounded because few treaties exist between the First Nations and the Crown yet it is also here that our Aboriginal past (in terms of sovereign nationhood prior to European contact) is closer than in any other part of Canada (Muckle, 1999). Politically and economically, work is underway to fight for inequity provisions affecting Aboriginal children. In 2011, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal application by the Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Canadian Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International and Chiefs of Ontario was dismissed and is under appeal (Blackstock, 2010). The appeal is to determine if the Canadian government (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada [AANDC] formerly known as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC]) is discriminating against First Nations children and families on the basis of race and national ethnic origin by providing less child welfare funding, and benefit, than to other children (Blackstock, 2010). This example underscores how the Canadian and BC governments continue to demonstrate low priority levels with respect to raising children out of poverty (Callahan & Swift, 2009; First Call, 2009) and inadequate attention to the social risks, posed by poverty, and inequity in resource allocation that differentially impact Indigenous children.
and families. To allow these risks to remain is unacceptable, given the vast, rich resources of
Canada; considered one of the most progressive and stable countries in the world.

2.12 Conclusion: A Token Amount of Support from Canada

This chapter introduces historic, social, political, legal, economic and Indigenous rights-based issues
impacting the educational outcomes of Urban ICIC within the Canadian context. It privileges Urban
Indigenous “voices of experience” and Indigenous stories as self-advocacy work. This advocacy is
needed to focus attention on both short and long-term educational needs of Urban ICIC and the token
(or non-existent) amount of financial, legal, policy and practice support that Canadian governments
allocate to address the educational rights and unique needs of Urban Indigenous children living in
Canada’s child protection system. It asks a key policy question such as “Why is the BC child welfare
legislation silent on the right to education for Indigenous children?” This study, framed as a Saulteaux
“star blanket made with words” is meant to spark action needed to provide protection, oversight and
support for urgent educational advocacy on behalf of Urban ICIC. The next chapter highlights the
invisibility of Urban ICIC voices in the literature reviewed for this study.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

Maybe it’s not us that are at fault…Maybe the school system needs to be changed (ICIC, 2009).

National attention and a consistent approach to improvement, with a strong emphasis on educational attainment and performance improvement in all regions are crucial to closing these gaps. No such agreement of national approach has been developed. Until such changes are realized, the “right to learn” for Aboriginal children and youth in Canada remains a hollow promise (Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, 2010, p. 9-10).

The development of this “star blanket made with words” signals that a new learning journey is urgently required for ICIC in order to close the learning gaps between them and every other student population in Canada. This learning journey must be national in scope and consistent with their right to learn in school systems that are more reflective of their Indigenous identities and unique child protection experiences in the Canadian context. The specific studies, reports, programs and examples in this literature review are described as a star blanket pattern metaphor that can help movement toward the creation of a safe, supportive and urgently needed new learning journey for ICIC.

Sometimes when we are beginning to make a new star blanket, it is helpful to look for ideas in the materials, colors or designs chosen by others and to assess choices in terms of rejections, innovations and helpful uses for our creation. There are many questions to consider such as,

1. Why is it important to gift this person with a star blanket? What is the purpose and intent?
2. What about the size? Is it meant for just them or should you consider that the recipient may want to share it with someone else in their life?
3. Should it have borders? Should the colors be complimentary or contrasting?
4. What will the star blanket design and your color choices “say” to the recipient/s?
5. What if there is not another one like it? Is that ok?
6. Does it have to conform or can it be unique and very different?
7. If you are asked, can you explain why you chose to make the Star Blanket in this way, with these materials and choices for this particular person or people?
Assessing the literature that frames this research project feels much like the process of gathering and assessing the materials and equipment needed to make a star blanket. It follows the same kind of process in that it begins with determining the purpose and for whom this “star blanket made with words” is intended.

3.1 For whom is the Literature Intended?

Initially, this literature review sought to prioritize the voices of Urban Indigenous children or adults that were formerly ICIC, regarding their educational experiences in Canadian child protection and education systems. This literature review deliberately seeks to benefit Urban Indigenous peoples, particularly those living in Canada’s child protection system, and working on behalf of ICIC. Once it became evident that the voices of ICIC is virtually non-existent in Canadian literature, the literature review was expanded to include the voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in government child protection systems in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States of America (USA), Australia and New Zealand. Searches conducted on article databases, indexes and library catalogues at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and Thompson Rivers University (TRU) included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, dissertation and reports that included the words “foster care”, “child welfare”, “out-of-home care”, “youth-in-care”, “children in care”, “education”, “Urban”, “off-reserve”, “Indigenous”, “Indian”, “Maori”, “Aboriginal”, “First Nations”, “Métis” and “transition”.

While much of the literature reviewed does not detail, or minimally includes, Urban ICIC voices “of experience” related to their educational experiences, this omission is useful in that it exposes a significant gap in the literature and demonstrates the need for this study.

3.2 What does the Literature Tell Us?

From the passage of the Indian Act in 1876 to the 1960’s child welfare for First Nations peoples was dominated by a massive attempt to use educational methods to change
both their cultures and characters. This attempt at large scale social engineering was fundamental to the policy of assimilation. The church-operated residential school was the central institution used in this strategy. When the policy of assimilation was replaced with the policy of integration, a child welfare strategy was again used in an attempt to ensure that the next generation of First Nations children did not emulate that of its parents. Children separated from parents whom child welfare authorities considered negligent or abusive were either raised in foster care or were adopted (Armitage, 1995, p. 100).

When I find out that a child in my classroom is in foster care, I don’t give up on them, exactly, but honestly I don’t put much effort into their learning. From experience I know that they’ll be moved to another foster home or school soon anyway. (Teacher at BC Teachers Federation Annual Conference “Equity and Inclusion”, personal communication, January 25, 2008).

3.3 Self-Advocates and Others

The sustained and overwhelming resources expended by the Canadian government at large scale Indigenous social engineering through residential school and child protection policies and practices, and lack of educational advocacy by many mainstream educators of Indigenous students, means that self-advocacy by ICIC is critically important to counteract the prevailing story of ICIC educational deficit. The Canadian National Youth in Care Network (NYICN) is the strongest self-advocate voice for Canadian youth in Canadian child protection systems, and its survey of 100 youth in care documented the actions, including meaningful engagement, resources, placement stability, and inclusion, that they report are required to create more positive school experiences and improve the outcomes for future youth in care (NYICN, 2001). Unfortunately the number of Indigenous (Urban or rural) youth participants in the study is not identified nor are any Indigenous “voices of experience”. Mitic and Rimer (2002) provide an analysis of BC government data regarding the educational attainment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in care in BC in 2001 and find that their academic performance is significantly lower than the general population of students. However the study does not differentiate between the educational attainment of the Aboriginal children in care that reside on reserve, off reserve, in Urban communities or those that are Métis. Also missing from this study are any ICIC “voices of experience”. A small (n=37) longitudinal three-year study by Rutman, Hubberstey & Feduniw (2007) report that youth leaving
the child protection system were found to have a “lower level of education; be more likely to rely on income assistance as their main source of income; have a more fragile social support network; experience considerable transience and housing instability; and be parenting” (p.vi). The study identifies that 9 % or 3 of the 37 youth identify as having Aboriginal ancestry, however it does not identify if these youth are among the final sample (n =11) and missing in this study are also any ICIC “voices of experience”.

3.4 Sixty-Seven English Language Peer-Reviewed Research Articles

A recent, comprehensive integrative literature review by Snow (2009) examines sixty-seven peer-reviewed research articles published in the English language (including those from Australia, Sweden, the USA and Canada) between 1980 to present, regarding the educational and social outcomes of children transitioning out of child protective services. The study identifies a number of common themes that negatively influence and increase the risk of poor educational attainment of children during their placement in child protective systems including

1. poverty (housing insecurity, abuse, neglect, child welfare, developmental risk such as poor nutrition, homelessness and family strain);
2. pre-placement history and child maltreatment;
3. special education needs of children in child protection systems;
4. system coordination and effects such as frequent placement changes; instability, repeated attachment disruptures, separation from siblings, unavailability of natural advocates, lower educational testing scores;
5. high school mobility as a function of frequent foster placement changes;
6. high school absenteeism rates;
7. high rates of mental illness and maladaptive behavior that increases with age;
8. disciplinary action by school authorities in terms of suspensions and expulsions;
9. high rates of grade repetition; and
10. lower scores on standardized tests.

Snow’s (2009) literature review also found the following outcomes for young adults discharged from child protection systems compared to those that had not been in foster care,

1. lower graduation rates;
2. less likely to have completed a GED or received a high school diploma at the six year and follow up point;
3. small improvements for youth that had participated in independent living situations; and
4. limited amount of independent living skills training.

Finally, Snow (2009) found that adverse adult outcomes as a result of early emancipation and developmental risk experienced by former youth in child protection systems include:

1. poor mental health, unemployment, teenage pregnancy and early parenthood; and
2. disproportionate representation in homelessness, transience, social assistance, unemployment and incarcerated populations; and
3. victimization

With the exception of two BC studies by Mitic & Reimer (2002) and Turpel-Lafond & Kendall (2007), Snow’s (2009) literature review is silent regarding identification of issues specific to Aboriginal or Indigenous students and makes no distinction between those living on-reserve or in urban communities. As with the studies by the Canadian NYICN (2001), (Rutman, et al., 2007), Snow’s (2009) comprehensive English literature review renders the Urban ICIC “voices of experience” inaudible. Fortunately, the issues of Aboriginal or Indigenous learners and Urban-based Aboriginal educational programs are identified in other literature and it is to these studies, books and reports that this review continues.

The educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations remains between youth in urban settings (Richards & Vining, 2004; Donovan, 2011) and there are few urban Aboriginal based elementary or secondary educational programs to offer guidance as to what “works” or “helps” Urban Indigenous students to be “successful” from either an academic or Indigenous community perspective. Scholars such as Bouvier & Karlenzig (2006); Ismail & Cazden (2005); Wilson & Wilson (2002) have commented that “educational strategies must move away from additive approaches and toward more qualitative and transformative ways of teaching and learning” (Donovan, 2011, p. 133) and promote a more “positive Aboriginal identity, particularly bilingual/bicultural types of education
that allow Aboriginal students to function in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities” (p. 133).

Indigenous scholars such as Mi’kmaq academic Dr. Marie Battiste (1995) and Chickasaw educator, Dr. Eber Hampton (1995) have written about the importance of transformation of Euro-western education systems through promotion of positive Indigenous identity. Hampton (1995) first wrote about the importance of incorporating standards of “Indian” education for Indigenous students, including spirituality, service, diversity, culture, tradition, respect, a history that does not avoid the reality of conquest, relentlessness in the battle for children, vitality, conflict, importance of place and transformation. For Indigenous educators, the need to incorporate these standards to support Indigenous student learning is nothing new; however getting them funded into urban-based curriculum in meaningful ways, remains a significant obstacle.

3.5 Joe Duquette and Wiingashk Urban Alternative Secondary Schools

This review discusses two alternative high school programs; the Joe Duquette High School in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and the Wiingashk Alternative Secondary School, a program based at the N’Amerind Friendship Centre in London, Ontario as examples that demonstrate the importance of culturally responsive education that makes a positive impact in Urban settings. The Urban Aboriginal Joe Duquette High School in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, originally named the “Saskatoon Native Survival School” when it opened in 1980, was renamed in 1989 in memory of the first Elder that worked with the students and staff and influenced the spiritual direction of the Aboriginal school (Haig-Brown, Hodgson-Smith, Regnier & Archibald, 1997). The Urban Aboriginal schools’ holistic Medicine Wheel philosophy is to serve the Urban Aboriginal student population of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The school motto of “making the spirit dance within” is included in the book title “Making the Spirit Dance Within: Joe Duquette High School and an Aboriginal community”. This book was published in 1997, and is authored by Dr. Celia Haig-Brown, Dr. Kathy Hodgson-Smith, Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald and Dr. Bruce Regnier, a former principal of the school. It includes a variety of
prominent Indigenous voices including Urban Aboriginal youth enrolled at the school from a variety of backgrounds including on-reserve, small towns and city dwellers. At that time, the focus of the Joe Duquette High School was to reengage and keep Aboriginal students in an academic school program, offer Cree language classes, after school support circles, infant day care, Plains Cree ceremonies and holistic cultural opportunities. Many of the youth identified that “respect is the number one rule” (Haig-Brown, Hodgson-Smith, Regnier & Archibald, 1997, p. 117).

In 2000, Anne Mahkoul of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy authored “The spirit is still dancing: Joe Duquette high school” that provides an overview of changes and increased staffing levels at the school. These changes include curriculum innovations, building renovations, student-led breakfast programs, a purposeful lack of staff rooms necessitating that students and sixteen employees eat together in the cafeteria, a yearly school-based education conference, Indigenous and non-Indigenous staffing complements, various partnerships including theatrical supports, social workers and counselors and widespread mainstream acceptance. Each of these innovations for the over 235 students is necessary to address the many and complex Aboriginal youth drop out (or push out) rates.

Some have been hurt by students and teachers who ignore or ridicule their culture and traditions. Curriculum materials traditionally have been designed to suit the learning styles and cultural references of the mainstream groups. The students’ life histories often made high school completion next to impossible (Makhoul, 2000, p. 2).

Sadie Donovan (2011), an Anglo-Celtic current doctoral student at Simon Fraser University in BC, conducted her Master’s field work research, and worked for a semester in 2006-07, with nine Indigenous students attending the Wiingashk Alternative Secondary School, a new program based at the N’Amerind Friendship Centre in London, Ontario. None of the students is identified as being in the Ontario provincial child protection system, rather her Aboriginal student research participants are identified as living with one of their parents. The Urban Wiingashk academic educational program conceives education as a holistic Medicine Wheel model, “with all directions being of equal
importance and interconnected” (Donovan, 2011, p. 132). The program includes holistic educational strategies, such as Elders, Indigenous language teaching, traditional cultural teachings and ceremonies that help the students reconnect to their Indigenous cultures. None of the student’s specific nations are identified nor is the traditional territory upon which the Friendship Centre is located. The program employs culturally sensitive Indigenous and non-Indigenous teaching and support staff that demonstrate respectful relationship building with Aboriginal students and respect for their issues.

The Wiingashk alternative program was developed because of the large numbers of Aboriginal students in the city that are designated by policy-makers and administrators as “at risk” of leaving mainstream school programs due to “poor attendance, poor academic achievement and behavior such as disrespect towards teachers and school codes of conduct” (Donovan, 2011, p. 129). The reasons that these Urban Indigenous youth are deemed by education authorities as being “at-risk” are many and varied. However, they appear to cluster around issues of student transiency, including frequent moves between parents living in different cities, provinces and reserve communities, racism experiences in schools that result in students disengaging or lashing out in anger, personal issues such as family deaths, drug and alcohol use and low academic achievement that negatively impact the student’s access to educational resources or supports. Donovan (2011, p. 129) argues that additional structural issues such as poverty, belonging to an ethnic minority, inadequate housing and personal issues such as student experiences of child abuse, single parenting, teen pregnancy, loneliness, poor peer group influences, negative attitudes of teachers and administrators towards categories of students and negative opinions of parents toward schools as contributors to students being considered “at-risk”. These risk criteria together with the “reserve-centric…legislative jockeying over who is responsible for urban Aboriginal education is further compounded by the ever-growing and youthful nature of urban Aboriginal populations” (p. 137) encourages Donovan (2011) to advocate for more Urban Aboriginal alternative school programs in Canada.
According to Donovan (2011) “success” for urban Indigenous students in the Wiingashk program, is measured both in terms of academic success and personal success to account for the differences between administrative and Indigenous community definitions.

Academic success provides students with skills that make them marketable in a job economy; consequently for Aboriginal communities searching for economic equity and sustainability, academic success is indeed important…The crux is that, for Aboriginal people “success” is defined by and dependent on how effectively one can navigate within a Eurocentric framework…albeit grounded in the knowledge of who they are as Aboriginal people and their responsibilities in their communities… successful in both academic credits obtained and reengagement with the education process (Donovan, 2011, pp. 133-135).

When I read Donovan’s (2011) contention “The crux is that, for Aboriginal people “success” is defined by and dependent on how effectively one can navigate within a Eurocentric framework” (p. 134), I could not help but react to the hegemonic, euro-centricity of the statement. “Success” being defined by and within a Eurocentric framework only serves to put the colonial socializing purpose of education back at the centre of the discussion and once again, relegates Indigenous peoples as the “other” that must “conform”. Further, I reject the notion that all “Aboriginal people” define “success” in this way.

Evaluating the studies of Donovan (2011) and Haig-Brown, et al., (1997) reveals that while the voices of Urban Indigenous students are evident in both studies, they are much more prevalent in the work by Haig-Brown, et al., (1997) which includes more Indigenous scholars. Both studies identify the presence of non-Indigenous academic teachers, Indigenous cultural and Elder support people and the importance of holistic educational curriculum development and implementation. Both appear concerned with respectful urban Indigenous student reengagement, retention, academic and traditional knowledge development. While the Joe Duquette High School in Saskatoon has been in existence for a significantly longer period of time than the Wingashk Alternative School in London, both are based in urban Aboriginal communities and close to, if not included in, urban Aboriginal organizations upon which they can draw upon for student and family service support. These two studies offer important guidance in the development of other alternative schools for Urban Indigenous
youth. However a key limitation is that due to the scant urban Indigenous elementary and secondary educational programming available in Canada, neither offers a long term evaluation. This presents a problem in terms of projecting their efficacy into the future, into other Urban Indigenous communities or with Urban ICIC populations. Another limitation is that there are no explicitly Urban ICIC voices included in either study.

3.6 International Struggles

Another book, entitled “Resting lightly on mother earth: The Aboriginal experience in urban educational settings”, is edited by non-Indigenous women academic, Angela Ward and Métis scholar Rita Bouvier (2001). It offers ten chapters and includes six Indigenous authors that describe the diverse experiences of Aboriginal student and teacher struggles to develop relevant places of Aboriginal learning and teaching in Urban contexts in Canada, Australia and the United States. While many of the chapters identify and include various Urban Indigenous voices of experience, two chapters written by non-Indigenous academics, including “On the margins of the middle: Aboriginal girls in an urban middle school” by Heather Blair of the University of Alberta and “No friends barely: A voice from the edge of Indian identity” by Carol Leroy, also of the University of Alberta, offer relevant Urban Indigenous student voices. In Leroy’s chapter, social workers investigate the home situation of a Métis student, Shannon, whose lack of contact with her Indigenous relatives is detailed within the context of her educational experiences. Leroy (2001, p. 90) argues that “we need to remember that a lack of contact with one’s cultural heritage and a lack of support in developing ethnic identity” may be the stronger problem rather than simplistically accepting that children’s cultural backgrounds are barriers to their academic and social success.

Blair’s chapter examines the intersectionality of ethnicity and gender in socially constructed identity development within a Canadian western province’s Urban based, mainstream Grade eight classroom. Seven Cree, Métis and Saulteaux female students are among sixteen female students in the Grade eight classroom observed by Blair. She assigns them into a range of five “friendship groups” and in
conclusion argues that “the margins are very powerful realities for Aboriginal girls in school today, and these realities need to be recognized and better understood” (Blair, 2001, p. 79).

Angela Ward, of the University of Saskatchewan, identifies a role for social workers in connection to Urban Indigenous students. From her position as a non-Indigenous educator, Ward compares Indigenous family based support networks in a small BC on-reserve based community, in which she formerly taught school, to support available to Indigenous peoples in an Urban based community.

In the city, help could be found, but it was most likely from an official source [Social Services or the police]. The bureaucratization of support services seems to be an inevitable result of living in communities where members did not know or trust each other (Ward, 2001, p. 41).

Ward, Blair and Leroy are all non-Indigenous academics writing about their perceptions and experiences of Urban Indigenous peoples and students. From my Urban Indigenous “insider” perspective, Ward’s perception and notion that Urban Indigenous community members “do not know or trust each other” is a disturbing, sweeping generalization. This statement is one example that supports the importance Indigenous studies conducted by and with Indigenous peoples.

Studies that are informed by Urban Indigenous peoples, including those with lived experiences, community members, contractors and agency representatives are critically needed to balance and accurately represent Urban peoples, rather than be filtered through non-Indigenous perspectives. The intention to support Urban Indigenous peoples to speak on their own behalf about the development of Indigenous educational and child protection policies, practices and advocacy opens the next section of this study.
3.7 Education: A Matter of Inherent Aboriginal Right

Our aim is to make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of the Indian people. We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity, with confidence in their personal worth and ability. We believe in education as a preparation for total living, as a means of free choice of where to live and work, as a means of enabling us to participate fully in our own social, economic, political and educational advancement (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972).

3.8 Indian Control of Indian Education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972)

The commitment to provide education to the original, First Nations peoples living in what is now known as Canada, is identified in treaties between these two sovereign nations and the Federal Indian Act. The first written policy by Indian peoples in Canada on Indian education is entitled Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE). On December 21, 1972 the National Indian Brotherhood (now known as the Assembly of First Nations) (AFN), led by Secwepemc First Nations leader George Manuel from BC, presented the policy to the Federal Minister of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), Jean Chretien. This comprehensive education policy followed the 1970 Alberta Indian Chiefs “Red Paper” rejection of the Federal governments’ 1969 “White Paper” policy plan to abolish the Indian Act, reject First Nations land claims, and assimilate First Nations people into the Canadian population with the same status of other minorities, thereby eliminating the “special treatment” of Indigenous peoples in Canada or the need of a unique Indigenous educational strategy.

The ICIE policy articulates three key First Nations principles related to lifelong Indigenous education; local control, parental responsibility and culturally based curriculum (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). On February 2, 1973, former Canadian Federal Minister Chretien officially recognized the ICIE policy, approved its proposals and committed the Federal DIAND to implement them. However, full implementation of the policy is yet to be achieved due to legal and jurisdictional barriers including the Federal government’s autonomous redefinition of “control” to now mean “allow First Nations gradual degrees of participation”. For the past four decades, this redefinition has allowed the Federal
government to slowly delegate educational administrative functions to First Nations, however the Federal government continues to manage, direct or control over-arching policy development and financial resources. The ICIE policy also largely excludes discussion about the educational issues of urban Aboriginal peoples because, at that time, most Federal social benefits were associated with on-reserve status Indians.

3.9 First Nations Control of First Nations Education (Assembly of First Nations, 2010)

In 2010, the AFN (2010) issued a comprehensive policy document and strategy entitled First Nations Control of First Nations Education (FNCFNE). The 2010 policy framework reaffirms the ICIE (1972) policy and reasserts First Nations inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights to life-long education. This educational policy framework provides strategic recommendations that will enable the development and implementation of education legislation, governance frameworks, policies, programs and services for all levels of education for First Nations learners at all stages of lifelong learning. Key elements of First Nations’ lifelong learning addressed in this paper include language immersion, holistic and culturally relevant curricula, well-trained educators, focused leadership, parental involvement and accountability, and safe and healthy facilities founded on principles that respect First Nations jurisdiction over education (AFN, 2010, p. 3).

Underlying the ICIE (1972) and FNCFNE (2010) policies is the critical question of securing adequate Federal funding to realize their objectives and activities for status First Nations peoples (as identified in treaties or the Indian Act). Both the ICIE (1972) and FNCFNE (2010) policies maintain that it is the “financial responsibility of the Federal Government to provide education of all types and all levels to all status Indian people, whether living on or off reserves” (2010, p. 29). According to the AFN (2010) chronic Federal government underfunding for on-reserve schools across Canada has resulted in a cumulative funding shortfall of almost $1.2 billion since the national First Nations educational funding formula was capped at 2% per year since 1996, steady growth in both inflation and the First Nations population over the same period, and the funding shortfall does not include costs needed to support the educational components of a 21st century school system that are currently missing from INAC’s funding. This includes such basic services as school libraries, technology
A search of both policy documents fails to find the word “Urban” or “non-status” in either, and few references to “off-reserve” status First Nations peoples, except with respect to increased access to lifelong learning, Federal funding expectations, evaluations, grade advancement, the importance of homelike accommodations and counselors. At this time, First Nations control of First Nations education is yet to be fully realized and is greatly under-funded; therefore is likely to experience immense challenges, fail (Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald, personal communication, August 1, 2010) or move slowly forward for decades (Dr. Nathan Matthew, personal communication, June 17, 2011). The FNCFNE (2010) policy asserts that any “transfer of jurisdiction for Indian education can only be from the Federal Government to Indian Bands. Whatever responsibility belongs to the Provinces or Territories is derived from the contracts for educational services negotiated between Band Councils, provincial or territorial school jurisdictions, and the Federal Government (p. 2). These Federal, Provincial and Band Council jurisdictional issues are on-going and work to address the complex educational issues of ICIC must include the involvement of all of these parties.

3.10 **First Nations educational advocacy memory in BC**

The rich advocacy history of First Nations educational efforts in BC since the early 1970s, remains vested in the memory of a few key Indigenous educational academics, educators, politicians and activists including, but not limited to, Drs. Nathan Matthew, Jo-Ann Archibald Lorna Williams and Ed John (Nathan Matthew, personal communication, June 17, 2011). Their memories, and that of other First Nations educational and political leaders, are the repositories of Indigenous knowledge gained from their involvement in educational development in BC, specifically following the 1969 White Paper. According to Dr. Nathan Matthew, there were no First Nations on-reserve band administration offices or reserve based schools across Canada until 1973; rather First Nations children were either still educated in residential schools or the public school system (personal communication, June 17, 2011). He cautions us to consider the context of the development of First Nations band schools in that they
initially began in the absence of Federal infrastructure or administrative funding, in spaces provided in personal homes, church basements or other makeshift facilities, with the considerable efforts and resources of First Nations parents, community members and educators.

From Dr. Matthew’s vantage point, the development in the past forty years of over 518 First Nations locally controlled elementary and secondary schools, 45 locally controlled Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning, numerous early childhood development programs and over 80,000 First Nation students in these First Nation educational programs in Canada (AFN, 2010, p. 6-7) is proof that First Nations educational progress will continue despite immense challenges. It is the personal memories, reflections and stories like his, and others, that help us to understand that challenges to the development and innovation needed in Indigenous education in Canada is nothing new. Indeed, this Indigenous reflection by Dr. Matthew offers a number of important teachings with respect to this specific doctoral study. First, it teaches us to maintain a long term vision of Indigenous education for Urban ICIC; second, it identifies the importance of looking back at Indigenous educational history in BC (and Indigenous education prior to the establishment of BC) to fully appreciate its development in a relatively short period of time. Third, it provides hope that the demonstrated efforts, activism and commitment of Indigenous peoples to persevere in our collective vision of better education for all Indigenous peoples, both living on and off-reserve can occur despite seemingly insurmountable odds including funding and jurisdictional complexities. Finally, it encourages us to collectively acknowledge and address new educational challenges that confront Indigenous peoples living in contemporary Urban contexts, particularly younger Indigenous generations currently living in provincial child protection systems as integral, rights-based citizens of our First Nations.

3.11 Aboriginal Children’s “Right to Learn”: A Hollow Promise

On June 23, 2010 the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates (the Council) released a position paper with respect to Aboriginal children and youth in Canada. The Council is an alliance of government-appointed children’s advocates from nine Canadian provinces and one
The advocates are concerned about the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in Canada’s child protection system in that Aboriginal children in Canada only represent approximately five percent (5%) of the population yet account for twenty-five percent (25%) of all children in the child protection system. They are concerned that the “outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth in key domains like health, education and safety is one of the largest national, provincial, territorial and regional challenges faced by Canadian governments and Canadian society” (Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, 2010, p. 3).

With respect to the education of Aboriginal children in Canada, the Council states that improvements are needed at the national political, policy and practice levels and that particular attention must be paid to the educational needs of Urban Aboriginal children.

We note that the majority of Aboriginal children and youth live in Urban centres and attend non-Aboriginal schools where they continue to lag behind their peers. Education, like child welfare, is a provincial area of responsibility in Canada, although the federal government retains responsibility in areas where transfer agreements are not in place with provinces. In any case, the attainment of Aboriginal children and youth has important national dimensions. Education policy to support better achievements is patchwork and inconsistent. Strategies that work in some regions should be extended to others through positive social policy innovation, and national progress should be measured and promoted given the dimensions of the problem. National attention and a consistent approach to improvement, with a strong emphasis on educational attainment and performance improvement in all regions are crucial to closing these gaps. No such agreement of national approach has been developed. Until such changes are realized, the “right to learn” for Aboriginal children and youth in Canada remains a hollow promise” (2010, p. 9-10).

3.12 **Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates Recommendations**

The Advocates recommend the following:

1. Creation of a statutory officer independent from the Parliament of Canada, but accountable to the Parliament, a “National Children’s Commissioner” with particular emphasis on Aboriginal children and youth and the national dimension of the work on programs, evaluation and outcomes;
2. A national initiative to measure and report on child welfare, education and health outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth. This will require creation and coordination of data, and clear assignment of roles and accountabilities;  
3. Creation of a national Aboriginal children and youth participation initiative, with training on child and youth rights, leadership, voice, and civic participation, to fully implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and reduce vulnerability; and  
4. That a special conference of Federal/Provincial/Territorial First Ministers, with Aboriginal leaders, and child and youth delegates, be convened to receive a report on outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth. A national plan to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth would be a desired outcome of this process (Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, 2010, p. 13).

At this time, there is no response from government to the Council’s (2010) report or recommendations for a National Children’s Commissioner, National youth participation initiative, or conference, although all are required to provide direction to Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership.

3.13 **Looking at the Literature through Indigenous Eyes**

One of our greatest challenges has been to help teachers and administrators to curb their first impulse to push First Nations students out of the school as quickly as possible and to direct them towards other resources (Williams, 2000, p. 142).

A comprehensive literature review undertaken by the BC Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Education Enhancement Branch (2008) demonstrates that nearly identical education statistics exist for Aboriginal peoples in colonizing countries including Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. This review suggests that Indigenous educational challenges are reinforced by the legacy of colonialism, including racism in schools, and identifies a number of issues that must be improved to increase educational outcomes for Indigenous kindergarten to grade twelve (K-12) learners. A limitation of the review is that it does not specifically identify unique issues involving Aboriginal children in BC’s child protection system; rather it includes all Aboriginal students which presumably include the ICIC population. Essentially the review identifies that Aboriginal students are more likely to succeed if they are strongly rooted in their identity as Aboriginal peoples and if
the education system assumes some responsibility for regenerating and reinforcing the student’s Aboriginal identity. It asserts that change must begin with those in charge of education becoming “students again themselves” (BC Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 57-59) by being patient, observing, listening and learning from failure to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students.

While “listening and considering their failure” to improve educational outcomes of Indigenous students may be one strategy for non-Indigenous leaders in education, the review fails to discuss ways to implement specific strategies that would meaningfully include key recommendations from either the ICIE (1972) or FNCFNE (2010) policies or consider the unique needs of ICIC. Therefore it offers an ineffective, and incomplete, mainstream strategy that will do little other than maintain the status quo. Effective strategies must include responsibility, resources, policy and practice direction by Indigenous educators, leaders and “voices of experience” including those in or formerly in the BC child protection system. Indigenous youth voices exist and are constantly being sought, but were not included in the review in a meaningful way. That must change. For example, the findings of the McCreary Centre Society (2007) report of 762 street youth in nine BC communities found that Aboriginal youth were disproportionately represented among youth who were marginalized and street-involved and that 40 percent of the surveyed youth had spent time in government care (pp. 9-10). There is a fifty-year history of Indigenous youth that have lived in the BC child protection system and been “educated” in the education system, as well as numerous provincial and national Indigenous educational policy statements. Future BC government educational reviews must include this valuable knowledge, insight and direction in order to make meaningful change.

3.14 **Race: Cognitive Imperialism and a Systemic Form of Cultural Genocide**

This literature review includes the academic work of Indigenous people who have experienced the Canadian child welfare systems as either former youth in care or adoptees, or worked as social workers and educators in trying to influence change for Aboriginal students. Many offer blunt assessments of significant challenges and recommendations about a way forward, however
perhaps none are as direct as Marie Battiste (2000) a member of the Mi’kmaq Nation, former teacher, director and professor at the University of Saskatchewan who describes the impact of a foreign school system on Aboriginal children as cognitive imperialism and a systemic form of cultural genocide. Further Battiste asserts that the education system renders Aboriginal peoples invisible and has “degraded and demoralized cultural minority students, assigned them to transitional classes, failed them, and then accused them of lacking motivation, attention or spirit” (p. 198). In social work jargon this is called “blaming the victim”.

Lorna Williams is a member of the Lil’wat First Nation from Mount Currie, BC is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. Writing about the challenges and successes in Urban Aboriginal education from her Vancouver (K-12) experiences Williams (2000) emphasizes that “providing appropriate educational services for the Urban Aboriginal population is a complex undertaking that requires an understanding of the many interacting forces in the lives of students” (p. 129) including the diversity of Urban Aboriginal populations in terms of linguistic and cultural traditions. Williams identifies a plethora of life issues that can negatively affect an Aboriginal child’s ability to be actively engaged in school learning such as poverty, poor nutrition or exhaustion, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD), unstable housing and multiple social difficulties that include children living with mothers or grandmothers fleeing domestic abuse, grief for lost reserve-based support systems, lack of knowledge about how to access support services in the city, fear of child welfare authorities and gang recruitment. While Williams (2000) declares that education can be a powerful force to help Aboriginal people determine their own future, she also identifies significant educational funding challenges, entrenched negative stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples, racism at the teacher and board level that require long-term flexible and multifaceted strategies. According to Williams (2000) the theories and mediated learning interventions designed by Israeli educator Reuven Feuerstein offers hope for the future of Aboriginal education, through teaching problem solving tasks, however it is clear that much more coordinated, targeted systemic support for Aboriginal students is required far beyond school walls.
The educational experiences of Urban Aboriginal populations in Winnipeg, Manitoba appear similar. According to Silver, Klyne & Simard (2006) the mainstream school system continues to be a negative experience for too many Aboriginal people. The system has made relatively few concessions to Aboriginal people’s different cultures and worldviews. It has proved to be, for far too many Aboriginal children and youth, a foreign place, where they and their people are not respected, where Aboriginal teachers and curricula are rare, and where racism is a common experience (p.70).

Their study of Urban Aboriginal learners in four innovative adult learning centres (ALCs) in Winnipeg may offer some clues to better support Urban Aboriginal CIC’s. It found that the adults who took advantage of a "second chance" to graduate with a grade 12 diploma benefited from the personalized and holistic approach, warm and friendly environment and non-hierarchical organizational structure (Silver, Klyne & Simard, 2006, p. 95). Further, the study found that a process of healing can occur in an ALC in terms of a revived sense of community and revitalization of Aboriginal cultures.

Cree academic Raven Sinclair (2007b) explores literature concerning the transracial adoption (TRA) of Native children into non-Native families in Canada between the 1950s and the early 1980s, also known as the Sixties Scoop, and points to research findings that indicates TRA outcomes are a blending of both positive and negative outcomes, depending upon many factors (p.97). The educational experiences of TRA played “important roles in adoption experiences; for some participants, school was a positive experience while for others it was a site of racist and abusive behaviour perpetrated by peers and teachers” (Sinclair, 2007b, p. 247). Métis academic Janinne Carriere (2008) explores issues of connectedness and health for First Nation adoptees claiming that she has used Western education as a “means of survival and to get important messages out to others” (p. 60).
3.15 Medication: A “Quick, Cheap, and Easy” Method of Educational Intervention and Control

Two important Canadian studies address possible contributory health factors that may negatively influence the learning capabilities of children in Canadian child protection systems. An exploratory study of the chemical management of forty-one youth in Canadian child protection systems by the National Youth in Care Network (2009) included 17% of participants that indicated Aboriginal heritage (Native/First Nations). It found that 70% of both the youth respondents and adult participants in the survey indicated that there is an overuse of psychotropics for youth in care; that the medications are administered by caregivers/service providers as a “quick”, “cheap” and “easy” method of intervention and control for youth in care when compared to expenses related to intensive psychotherapeutic services such as counselling or “talk therapy” (p. 6). The most common psychotropic medication administered to this group is:

1). Ritalin® (34%)
2). Paxil® (17%)
3). Dexedrine® (15%)
4). Effexor® (15%)
5). Prozac® (15%)

Of the forty-one young people who said they had been medicated while in the system, the top five psychiatric diagnoses reported by the National Youth in Care Network (2009, p. 4) were:

1). Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (41%)
2). Depression (39%)
3). Anxiety (15%)
4). Bipolar Disorder (7%)
5). Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (7%) (p. 4).

The study findings about the high rates at which youth in the child protection systems are medicated by caregivers to “assist” them to perform better in school, reduce problematic behaviors at school and home are supported by Morley & Kendall (2006) whose joint review of Indigenous
and non-Indigenous children in the BC child protection system revealed the same type of 
overmedication strategies by caregivers. Their study found that mental disorders are experienced 
by approximately 65% of children in continuing care and that in comparison to children that have 
ever been in child protective custody they:

1) are diagnosed and prescribed medications much more frequently and for longer 
periods of time than are children who have never been in the child protection system 
(by 4X)

2) are prescribed Ritalin-type medications at a rate 8.5 to 12 times higher than were 
children who had never been in care,

3) are prescribed psychotherapeutic agents at a rate 5.5 to 8 times higher are 
hospitalized more frequently and for longer periods of time

4) experience a higher prevalence of respiratory conditions

5) experience higher rates of death and intentional and unintentional injury and 
poisoning, caused by motor vehicle accidents, suicide and poisoning, especially 
among adolescents

6) experience a higher prevalence of depression and anxiety

7) experience earlier and higher rates of pregnancy and use of contraception among 
females (p. viii-ix).

3.16 Looking After Children: Class and Poverty

Kufeldt, Simard, Tite and Vachon (2003) used the Looking After Children approach developed in 
the United Kingdom to pilot a three year research study in six Canadian provinces to address the 
question of how effective child welfare services are in meeting the needs of children in care. The 
goal of the Looking After Children approach is to measure a CIC’s developmental progress over 
time through the exploration of seven dimensions in the child’s life including health, education, 
identity, family and social relationships, social presentations skills, emotional and behavioural 
development as well as self-care skills. Strengths are identified within the seven areas, then social 
workers, youth and caregivers are expected to develop plans, steps for completion, identify 
responsible individuals and timelines for review and future planning. Their research findings 
reinforce the work of British researchers (Parker, 1998; Parker, Ward, Jackson, Walker, 1994; 
Ward, 1995) who concluded that far greater priority must be given to the educational dimension in 
work with CIC.
This theme is also expressed in the British research of Martin and Jackson (2002) who interviewed a group of thirty-eight non-Indigenous former youth in care identified as high educational achievers. Their findings indicate that these youth believed that supportive attitudes of social workers and teachers, ongoing financial support, and a “guardian angel” to support and encourage them in post-secondary education were key factors in achieving success. Another study by Hayden (2005) pointed to a lack of confidence by social workers and foster parents when dealing with the education system. The findings suggest that this is compounded by staff turnover and other work pressures when social work teams do not have their full complement of staff; a situation well-known to affect child protection workers in BC (Pivolt Legal Society, 2009).

British researcher Berridge (2007) argues that the issue of low educational attainment of children in English child protective systems is typically met with an insufficient and simplistic response by researchers and policy makers that do not consider the systemic issues of class and poverty in wider social theories. Further Berridge (2006, p. 8) states that “looked-after children originate from the most disadvantaged social groups, characterized by family breakdown, parental poverty, low parental support, maltreatment and, consequently, a high level of special educational need – all of which are strongly linked to low educational attainment” (p.8). The study does not include the issue of race in its analysis.

3.17 Promoting Access and Achievement: Self Esteem

Indigenous research in North America speaks to the issues of promoting access and achievement in education for Urban Aboriginal populations (Archibald, 2008; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Baskin, 1997; Castellano, Davis & Lahache, 2000; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Regnier, 1995; Silver, 2000; Williams, 2000), for Urban Aboriginal peoples with disabilities (Durst & Bluechardt, 2001), and traditional Native educational practices advanced by Brokenleg, Brendtro, & Van Bockem (2001) in their book “Reclaiming Youth at Risk: The Circle of Courage.” The authors argue that fundamental differences exist between Native American and Western educational philosophies and that a theory
Advanced by Coopersmith (1967) cited in Brokenleg, Brendtro, & Van Bockem (2001) regarding the four antecedents of self-esteem must be included in Native American educational curriculum. The four bases of self-esteem for Native American children include (1) significance nurtured in a cultural milieu that celebrates the universal need for belonging, (2) competence insured by guaranteed opportunities for mastery of problem solving, (3) power fostered by encouraging the expression of independence, and (4) virtue is reflected in the pre-eminent value of generosity (Brokenleg, Brendtro, & Van Bockem, 2001, p. 6). There is no doubt that increasing the self-esteem of Aboriginal learners is important and requires good communication and clear strategies developed and implemented in both homes and schools. As the Urban ICIC voices will tell us, in their experiences, these are four strategies that are minimal or non-existent.

3.18 Human Rights, Jurisdictional Issues, and Inequitable Funding Models

According to the federal government Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (2010) website, elementary and secondary educational services are available to Registered Indian children living on reserves through three education systems:

- First Nation-operated schools on reserves
- Provincially-administered schools off reserves
- Federal schools operated by DIAND on reserves

This website makes clear the limited view that Canada takes with respect to jurisdictional issues of all First Nations children in that the focus is on First Nations children living on-reserve. This encourages the question central to this study which is "What about Canada's support for educational issues for First Nations children living in Urban communities, particularly those in child protection systems?"

Similarly, much of the child welfare research written by Indigenous academics in Canada reflects a focus on issues relevant to on-reserve concerns such as jurisdictional issues, inequitable child welfare and educational funding models (Bennett, Blackstock, & De la Ronde, 2005; Blackstock, 2009a; Gough, Blackstock & Bala, 2005; Kovachs, Thomas, Montgomery, Green, & Brown, 2007;
Sinclair, Bala, Lilles, & Blackstock, 2004; Trocmé, Knocke, Shangreaux, Fallon, & McLaurin, (2005). According to Blackstock (2010), McDonald & Ladd (2000), Blackstock, Prakash, Loxley, & Wien (2005), on-reserve based First Nations children and child welfare agencies are funded at 22% less than other children in Canada “despite the fact that First Nations children have higher child welfare needs” (Blackstock, 2010, p. 1) and the funding shortfall “is particularly acute with regard to services intended to keep children safely at home” (Blackstock, 2010, p. 3). This inequity is the current subject of a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal complaint against the Government of Canada launched by two national First Nations organizations; the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (FNCFCS).

This funding inequity between First Nations and other children is echoed for First Nations children by shortfalls in education funding, housing and publicly funded voluntary sector supports (RCAP, 1996; AFN, 2007; Blackstock; 2007; 2008; Loppie-Reading & Wien, 2009; National Council on Welfare, 2008;) and creates a negative cumulative effect. For example, the federal government shortchanges First Nations elementary and secondary school funding even though one only in four First Nations children finishes high school. Estimates are that federal funding for elementary schools on reserves falls short by 40%, and the problem is even worse in secondary schools where the federal government spends 70% less on First Nations students than they do for other children (Matthew, 2000).

There is much evidence as to the complexity of jurisdictional and funding inequities for First Nations children, living both on and off-reserve, which is compounded by political representative issues (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, 2010). Addressing these jurisdictional and political issues is beyond the scope of this dissertation; yet it is apparent that a lack of equitable federal funding exists to support all First Nations children in Canada, no matter where they live. In addition, non-Indigenous BC academics, such as Ball and Pence (2006), Strong-Boag (2011), and Walmsley (2005), have
highlighted the importance of Aboriginal issues in their publications on child welfare both in BC and Canada.

In Canada despite the fact that the majority, sixty percent (60%) of First Nations peoples live off-reserve (Statistics Canada, 2008) approximately ninety-five percent (95%) of the $10 billion per year that the Government of Canada invests in Aboriginal-specific programming is allocated to assist First Nations people living on-reserve (Frideres, 2011). For the past 150 years, this is the bureaucracy that continues to control the lives of First Nations people in Canada through its mandate to fulfill the conditions of the Indian Act (Frideres, 2011; Johnson, 2001). Little is said, however, about the considerable amount of the $10 billion funding that is required to pay for the salaries, benefits, travel and building occupancy costs of the 4,500 full-time people working in the relatively low-level federal bureaucracy now known as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

The on-reserve population is less than one-third of the total Aboriginal population and in recent years, funding to this population has grown to over ninety-six percent (96%) of the federal budget (Helin, 2006). While this sounds like a lot of funding, in reality it represents an annual expenditure of approximately $10,000 per status Indian person in Canada (Frideres, 2011, p. 191). Disagreements, squabbling and positioning over jurisdictional responsibilities (Frideres, 2011), and the fact that the Federal government refuses to recognize portability of Treaties off reserve, means that the needs of the majority of Aboriginal peoples (Urban First Nations, Métis and Urban Inuit) have been ignored or over-looked by public policies and programs. Provincial governments maintain that the federal government is responsible for judiciary obligations to all Aboriginal peoples, so have “limited their responsibility for off-reserve Aboriginal peoples to programs and services available to the general population” (Canada, 2003, p. 6). Policy and funding changes must reflect the realities of Indigenous population shifts, growth and increasingly young Aboriginal demographics in both Urban and on reserve communities. In BC this must include the increasingly
complex and diverse Urban community issues, including lack of Urban Indigenous agency capacity and culturally safe and responsive educational programming (Frideres, 2011).

3.19 Conclusion: Silence, Invisibility, Suppression, and a Jurisdictional Nightmare

This literature review identifies a gap in the knowledge with respect to provincial and national oversight, policy, practice, research and evaluation strategies to address the educational needs of Indigenous children and youth in care of the Canadian child protection systems; and particularly Urban Indigenous children in these systems. This is a troubling literature gap, despite a number of reports that identify contributory reasons for the low educational attainment of Aboriginal children in child protection systems, scant evidence of program innovations, evaluation or efficacy, particularly for Aboriginal children (Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, 2010) and a shocking lack of apparent political will, interest and active ignoring by governments to address the issue which has life-long implications for Indigenous peoples.

The low educational outcomes of Indigenous children in BC’s child protection system are acknowledged and included in quantitative government (MCFD, 2010) or advocacy statistical reports (Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007) but little comprehensive planning or significant improvement has occurred and the reports are simply ignored. This same “ignoring” strategy is identified by Sheila Fraser, the former Auditor General (2006) with respect to concerns expressed by her office that in six years, INAC had failed to take action on nearly half of her recommendations to strengthen the management of First Nations programs (Frideres, 2011, p. 195).

between $125,000 - $150,000 per year to enhance access to opportunities for youth with Crown Ward status, and in particular to help Crown Wards succeed in high school and post-secondary education. The purpose of the established teams is to provide mentorship, peer support, motivation and guidance for Crown Wards. At this time, no evaluation data is available, nor is the number of First Nations or Aboriginal students helped under this three year initiative known. This is typical three-year strategy of Canada and Provincial governments which are good at starting new initiatives, policies or programs, but demonstrate difficulty in follow-through and evaluation against concrete benchmarks which may or may not have been established at the outset (Frideres, 2011). In BC no such initiative exists between the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Advanced Education.

There does need to be advocacy. Kids in care are vulnerable. As a parent we could go and be as snarly as we want to be with the system that we feel is not treating our kids fairly. And I’ve done that. I think we need to be that way, individually and collectively, for our kids in care. That we take on that kind of advocacy, the same as we would for our kids…. I wonder how many of our kids end up getting labeling because they just don’t belong. It’s a multi-layered issue and I don’t know that there is just one single answer, other than for us as the adults to be alert to what the issues are and to be activists on behalf of future generations (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

Many recommendations are evident to support measurement, improvement and innovation to support better educational outcomes for Aboriginal children in Canada and those in child protection systems (Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, 2010), yet the literature suggests that the unique educational needs of Urban Aboriginal CIC remains subsumed. Given evidence as to the increasing numbers of Aboriginal peoples moving to the cities in Canada (Helin, 2006), a BC child protection system that seems doomed to lurch from crisis to crisis (Pivot Legal Society, 2009) and ineffective educational systems (Battiste, 2000), this is an important policy and practice issue worthy of closer examination. More needs to be done because what exists is ineffectual in demonstrating any significant systemic transformative change or significantly improved educational results for Urban ICIC. Rather than staying “stuck” repeating what is already known; including a lack of political will,
lack of bureaucratic support, lack of a comprehensive strategy, target measures or plans to address ICIC educational needs, lack of resources, lack of policy, it is time to identify steps or an Indigenous model that can point us toward transformative change. It is into this gap that this research may offer a contribution to the body of knowledge to support improvement of Western academic and traditional Indigenous education for Urban Indigenous children in BC’s child protection system.
Chapter 4: Theory

An “Indigenist” theoretical framework is research that is conducted by Indigenous researchers whose primary informants are Indigenous and whose goals are to serve and inform the Indigenous liberation struggle to be free from oppression and to gain power (Rigney, 1997, p. 120).

4.1 Toward the Development of a Saulteaux Star Blanket Theoretical Framework (SBTF)

The development of the Saulteaux Star Blanket theoretical framework (SBTF) used in this research project influenced the development of a Saulteaux Star Blanket methodological framework (SBMF). This chapter explores the development of the SBTF while the next chapter discusses the SBMF. The theoretical and methodological relationship will be discussed in these chapters and work together to create a holistic Saulteaux Star Blanket framework (SBF). The SBTF is uniquely Saulteaux and framed by Saulteaux values, beliefs and “knowing” about reality that guides actions in this research project; as such they are based on theories which are subjective, biased and never “value free”. They represent a function of ‘praxis’ which is born of reflection and action (Friere, 2001). The SBTF is a visual, symbolic and metaphorical representation of a theoretical research framework and design that puts being Saulteaux at the centre. I have already openly acknowledged my biases, perspectives and prejudices; they are inherent in my particular Saulteaux worldview, personal and professional experiences in Canada and perspectives on the issue of Indigenous children in the settler child protection and education systems.

This exploratory discussion stitches together Saulteaux ontological questions regarding the nature of reality or “what is real?” and theorizes how as Saulteaux peoples we come to have knowledge, or epistemology which is, how as Saulteaux peoples do we know that we know something or “how do I know what is real?” It also explores my Saulteaux methodology and theories about how knowledge is gained and Saulteaux axiology (ethics or morals that guide my research) and judge which information is worthy to search for (Wilson, 2008, p. 34). According to Saulteaux/Cree
academic Kovach (2009) there are important epistemological and political motivations to distinguish Indigenous methodologies from qualitative approaches. She argues that “given the assimilative tendency of Western culture, highlighting the tribal-knowledge basis of an Indigenous research framework rather than identifying it as a more generic relational, holistic epistemology, lessens the risk of a qualitative research community assimilating it” (p. 177).

An important distinction between “having information” and “knowing something” is learned by Cree academic Hart (2002, p. 21) through his discussions with Indigenous Elders. Gently, the Elders remind Hart that learning is a life-long process, continually evolving and comes in many forms, through dreams, interactions with other people, stories, ceremonies, animals and the environment; all of Creation. Together, these teachings and questions frame this Saulteaux theorizing.

### 4.2 Indigenist Theoretical Framework

They [Indigenous peoples] remain a threat to neo-liberal capitalism because there is no conceptual, political, or social space within neo-liberalism that would allow the continued existence of First Nations people and their claim to autonomy (Frideres, 2011, p. 198).

Brant-Castellano (2000) identifies three broad aspects of Indigenous knowledges (IK) that influence this discussion about Indigenist theories including “traditional knowledge” which is passed on by community elders, “empirical knowledge” which is gained through close observation of the surrounding environments (nature, culture or society) and “revealed knowledge” which is provided by dreams, visions and intuition. All IK influences Indigenous theories including the “Indigenist” theoretical framework, a term coined by Rigney (1997), an Indigenous Australian educational academic and current Dean of Indigenous Education and Director of the Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research at the University of New South Wales in Australia. According to Rigney (1997), the three inter-related and fundamental principles that inform an “Indigenist theoretical framework include 1) resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist
research, 2) political integrity in Indigenous research and 3) privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenist research” (p. 118).

When Rigney (2007) states that the first fundamental principle of Indigenist research is an “emancipatory imperative” he is referring to research that is undertaken as part of the struggle of Indigenous peoples for recognition for self-determination; a concept that Indigenous peoples in Canada understand as the right to be recognized as distinct peoples with all the rights afforded to sovereign nations (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008, p. 256). This research project engages with the child protection and educational experiences of Indigenous peoples on Coast Salish territory as one part of a long and complex history of oppression enacted against Indigenous people in Canada. It is ambitious in that it is research that offers stories of survival, details their struggles and resistance to racist oppression as well as their attempts to heal from past oppressions and our collective efforts to develop Indigenous cultural freedoms in the future.

“Political integrity” as the second principle in Indigenist research refers to linking research with the political struggles of Indigenous communities and sets our own Indigenous political agendas for liberation. Indigenous struggles to reclaim generations of Indigenous children from the notorious residential school project were recognized in the political apology and request for the forgiveness of Aboriginal peoples by the Canadian Federal Government Prime Minister Steven Harper to Residential School survivors on June 11, 2008. However, today there are more than three times the numbers of Aboriginal children in the Canadian child welfare systems than there were at the height of the residential schools in the 1940’s (Blackstock, 2003; Blackstock, 2011), inequities in service access, prevention services and limited policy and research capacity within First Nations communities (McDonald, Ladd et al., 2000). These contemporary struggles were not recognized in the Prime Minister’s historic speech and Aboriginal people’s acceptance of the governmental apology remains a highly personal decision on the road to individual healing and reconciliation. This struggle is far from
over and this research is firmly committed to moving forward through the third principle of Indigenist research, that of privileging Indigenous voices.

The Indigenous peoples and voices in this study focus on their lived experiences in the settler child protection and education systems; their struggles, successes and recommendations for improvement. Fundamentally this research project is a collective reflection of their Indigenous experiences and stories as re-told through relationship with this Indigenous researcher. The decision to tell the stories from their perspectives is fully intentional; it unites a collective resolve to speak and push back against systemic oppressions. Collectively the Indigenous voices and stories serves to resist settler child institutions, actions, policies and procedures; “good intentions” notwithstanding, and to say “stop”. Wilson (2008) elaborates on this unique issue of Indigenous research justification when he asserts that “unfortunately Indigenous researchers have often had to explain how their perspective is different from that of dominant system scholars; dominant system scholars have seemingly needed no such justification in order to conduct their research” (p. 55), an issue of inequity evident to this Saulteaux researcher.

Rigney’s (1997) Indigenist theoretical framework builds upon and incorporates theoretical principles found in critical theory and feminist theory which will also be discussed in this chapter. The developing SBF also includes critical and feminist theory as well as the principles found in historical trauma theory (HTT) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) theory. Together with the questions that frame my Saulteaux theorizing (ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology) these theoretical principles are conceptualized in the following SBTF (Figure 1) as fabrics that serve as the background to the top fabric layer of fabric into which is stitched the eight-pointed morning star design in Saulteaux star blankets. This conceptualization helps to move toward the development of a SBF and is envisioned by putting Western theoretical concepts into an Indigenous theory, rather than putting Indigenous theory into Western theoretical concepts. This is an important distinction and one that Kirkness (1998) relates to education in terms of putting Western educational concepts into Indigenous education rather than the reverse.
Figure 1: Saulteaux Star Blanket Theoretical Framework (SBTF)

Methodology asks
“How do I find out more about this reality?”

Ontology asks
“What is real?”

Feminist Theory
Critical Theory

Axiology asks
“What will this knowledge be used for?”

PTSD Theory
Historical Trauma Theory

Indigenist Theory

Epistemology or “How do I know what is real?”

Principles of all these theories work together to guide me towards a Saulteaux Star Blanket Theoretical Framework

4.3 Rejection of Positivist and Post-Positivist Research Paradigm

One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding (Paulo Freire, 2001).

Strategies to maintain colonial power over Indigenous peoples: (1) stressing real or imaginary differences between the racist and the victim; (2) assigning values to these differences, to the advantage of the racist and to the detriment of the victim; (3) trying to make these values absolutes by generalizing them and claiming they are final; and (4) using these values to justify any present or possible aggression or privileges. All of these strategies have been the staple of Eurocentric research, which has created and maintained the physical and cultural inferiority of Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 2008, p. 504).
As an Indigenous female social worker and educator, my perspectives and approach to research incorporates a holistic theoretical framework informed by a struggle between my Indigenous and Euro-Canadian ontologies and epistemologies, my experiences as a Saulteaux woman in contemporary Canadian society, a former social worker, supervisor, manager, doctoral student, academic, mother and grandmother. These experiences, biases or perspectives, influence this research study and my work and as an academic educator of undergraduate social work students that may, one day work within the BC child protection or education systems with Indigenous peoples.

The awareness of my Indigenous perspective, or bias, and my choice to identify with a critical theoretical paradigm, rather than a positivistic or post-positivistic dominant research paradigm, is an important ethical decision; at this point, there can be no other.

Wilson (2008) argues that the axiological foundation of early positivists and post-positivists was that the “pursuit of knowledge in itself was the ideal goal of research…and remain as a main objective in the axiology of these two paradigms” (p. 36). One of the worst examples of Western scientific positivistic research is identified by Maori academic Linda Smith (1999) who asserts that “scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism… Just knowing that someone measured our ‘faculties’ by filling the skulls of our ancestors with millet seeds and compared the amount of millet seed to the capacity for mental thought offends our sense of who and what we are” (p. 1).

While this type of pursuit of positivistic or post-positivistic research as a goal in and of itself may “work” (or “worked” historically) for dominant systems scholars and researchers intent to adhere to scientific “rigour” of “validity” and “reliability” it is not value free, unbiased or my goal. From my perspective, there are many “valid and reliable” dominant systems assessment tools used by child protection bureaucrats to measure “potential risk” to children and educational assessment tools used by school administrators to measure reading or math skill levels of Indigenous students; however they are based in Western hegemonic epistemologies and begs questions such as “valid
and reliable for whom?” and “measured against what or whom?” and “how will the knowledge be used?”

There is little evidence to suggest that the “valid and reliable assessment tools” such as child safety/risk assessments have done much more than justify to the dominant society systems and the over-representation of Aboriginal children in child protection systems (Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, 2010; Morely & Kendall, 2006; Swift & Callahan, 2009; Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007) while underlying contributory factors such as poverty, apartheid, underfunding, racism, unsafe housing or drinking water, government corruption, lack of Aboriginal agency capacity and treaties in BC goes largely unaddressed (Blackstock, 2010; First Call, 2010; Swift & Callahan, 2009).

4.4 Indigenous Feminism and Feminist Theory

Aboriginal feminism brings together two critiques, feminism and anti-colonialism, to show how Aboriginal peoples, and in particular Aboriginal women, are affected by colonialism and patriarchy…is a theoretical engagement with history and politics…an ideological framework not only of intellectuals but also of activists… it interrogates power structures and practices between and among Aboriginal and dominant institutions. It leads to praxis; theoretically informed, politically self-conscious activism (Green, 2007, p. 25).

Feminist theory and Indigenist theory share similar foundational assumptions including the primary importance of collaborative and non-exploitative relationships, the positioning of the researcher within the research process, and the emphasis on transformative research. Indigenous feminist researchers view Indigenous culture and gender as the basic organizing principles that shape the conditions of our lives. Indigenous feminist values and beliefs are further influenced by understanding how patriarchal power, sexism, racism and the impacts of other social, economic, political and historical issues differentially impact the lives of Indigenous women and children. More specifically, feminism views patriarchy and sexism in the federal Indian Act is a direct attack on
Indigenous women (Hurley & Simeone, 2010; McIvor & Kuokkanen, 2007). All of these factors place Indigenous women at risk in Canada (NWAC, 2010); and if Indigenous women are not safe, then their children are not safe and at greater risk of entering Canadian child protection systems (MCFD, 2011).

Indigenous women’s resistance, resilience and decolonizing efforts persevere despite colonizing powers that affects our roles in communities through sexist attitudes, physical assault and cultural attack (Baskin, 2003). More than ever, we are gathering strength and resolve to bring Indigenous female power into the twenty-first century (NWAC, 2010).

These values and beliefs encourage contemplation about issues such as “Are there ‘Saulteaux / Indigenous women’s ways of knowing’ and ‘Saulteaux / Indigenous women’s knowledge’? and “How does the knowledge that Saulteaux / Indigenous women produce about themselves differ from that produced by patriarchy, be it Indigenous or non-Indigenous patriarchy?” Indigenous feminist theorists have also proposed the “Indigenous women’s standpoint knowledge” that attempts to model knowing from a view of Indigenous women’s lives”. When violent acts are perpetrated against Indigenous women or children, or they object to being denied fair and equitable access to programs or funding, resist violations of women’s rights or identify sexist provisions the Indian Act (Hurley & Simeone, 2007; McIvor & Kuokkanen, 2007) the label of “feminist” can be quickly leveled with the intention to silence Indigenous women by questioning their status as a “traditional or real Indian” (Johnson, 2001; Lawrence, 2004; McIvor & Kuokkanen, 2007). A strategy to address the issue of the rejection of Aboriginal feminism as “un” or “anti-traditional” is offered by Blaney (2003) cited in Green (2007, p. 27) who asserts that as Indigenous women we must always consider that following sustained assimilationist policies and practices that “reinstated tradition” may be steeped in misogyny.
4.5 **Native Women’s Association of Canada**

The threat of violence, real or perceived is never far from the consciousness and actions of Indigenous women (Baskin, 2003), including those in leadership positions in BC (Johnson, 2001). The “view” from Indigenous women’s lives in Canada is the subject of the recent April 21, 2010 report by the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) entitled “What Their Stories Tell Us: Research findings from the Sisters In Spirit initiative.” The five year research, education, and policy initiative report received a $5 million federal grant from the Status of Women branch, was the catalyst that brought to light approximately 582 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada, sparked educational and activist responses in the Canadian public. The report states that of the 582 missing or murdered Aboriginal women 115 women or girls are still missing, 393 were found murdered, twenty-one are deemed “suspicious deaths” and fifty-three are ‘unknown’.

This report critically informs feminist theory and the developing SBF for a number of reasons including 1) over two thirds of the missing or murdered women or girls are from the Western provinces of BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba of which BC has the highest number of known cases at 160, 2) the majority of the cases occur in Urban areas, 3) more than half the cases of disappearance and death involve young women and girls under the age of thirty and 4) where information exists, the vast majority (88%) of women were mothers. This indicates “significant issues related to the intergenerational impact of missing and murdered women as children have lost mothers, and there are many questions about how children may cope with this information? Where can they live? Where is their support system?” (NWAC, 2010, p. ii). Further, the implications of loss, grief and fear for their own safety as children may be heightened.

In March 2010 the five year funding ended and in April 2010 Canada announced that it would invest $10 million over two years to address the issue of missing and murdered women through strengthening of police data base systems; however the Sisters in Spirit (SIS) funding was not renewed under the terms of the original agreement nor was the organization invited to consult on
the $10 million funding allocation (NWAC, 2010). Rather six months of bridge funding (April – October 2010) was allocated from the Status of Women's Community Fund to NWAC which allows no SIS work to be conducted for research, policy or advocacy. At this time, it is not clear if additional funds will be allocated to the SIS initiative or even if the NWAC can use the SIS name.

The prevalent issue of violence in the lives of Indigenous women in Canada is sobering. Statistics Canada (2006) reports that

1. rates of spousal assault (physical or sexual assault and threats of violence) against Aboriginal women are more than three times higher than non-Aboriginal women;
2. Aboriginal women also report experiencing more severe and potentially life-threatening forms of domestic violence, such as being beaten or choked, having had a gun or knife used against them, or being sexually assaulted (54% of Aboriginal women versus 37% of non-Aboriginal women);
3. 44% reported fearing for their lives, compared with 33% of non-Aboriginal women;
4. 27% of Aboriginal women reported experiencing 10 or more assaults by the same offender (as opposed to 18% of non-Aboriginal women) (ibid., 66);
5. Aboriginal women are significantly more likely than non-Aboriginal women to suffer physical injury, receive medical attention or take time off daily activities as a consequence of these assaults;
6. while non-Aboriginal women reported a decline in most severe forms of violence (from 43% in 1999 to 37% in 2004) the number of similar attacks against Aboriginal women remained unchanged since 1999, at 54%; and
7. One NWAC (2010) report finding is that Aboriginal women and girls are as likely to be killed by a stranger or acquaintance as they are by an intimate partner. This is very different from non-Aboriginal women who are most likely to be killed by a partner and suggests that there has to be a change in the response to violence prevention and safety planning for Aboriginal women and girls, because the threat of violence may not always be known to the victim.

There is good reason to emphasize and connect Indigenous women's public safety and health issues to an Indigenist feminist theoretical framework and it is grounded in tensions that continue to exist in statutory social work policies and practices. There is recognition of a long list of failed bureaucratic reorganizational efforts in BC, identified by Hughes (2006) and Armitage (1995) that the current BC child welfare bureaucracy is attempting to address in the current Strong, Safe and Supported document (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2008). This document outlines the Ministry's current commitment to principles such as prevention, family support, and integration.
of Aboriginal perspectives into planning and decision making. Yet according to the recent report by Pivot Legal Society (2009) Hands tied: Child protection workers talk about working in, and leaving, BC’s child welfare system, the system is continuing to fail to meet its goals. The 109 former MCFD social workers involved in the study identify that much of the work by bureaucrats and politicians is “heavy on lofty principles but lacks a clear strategy for implementation” (p.v). Further the social workers in the study described a crisis-driven and under-resourced system that does not afford most workers the opportunity to engage in quality social work practice; instead social workers struggled to do too much with too little. Social workers reported leaving child protection work for four main reasons: unmanageable caseloads, a lack of confidence in all levels of leadership and management, high stress levels, and a lack of preventative and supportive resources for children and families (Pivot Legal Society, 2009, p. iv).

It is evident that the intersectionality of violence, safety and health concerns in Indigenous women’s lives, poverty and the over-representation of Aboriginal children in Canadian child protection systems are but a few of the critical public policy issues that require systemic and Indigenous feminist attention, yet at present, no national or effective provincial strategy exists to do so. These issues must be addressed through stable funding support, research, policy, educational efforts and political activism by Indigenous women and allies. If Indigenous women do not speak up and act, who will?

4.6 Critical Theory

As a philosophical lens, critical theory can help to articulate race, class, culture and gender influences; all of which are pertinent to this issue of Indigenous children in settler child protection and education systems. Acceptance of the complex, multiple and interactive social contexts in which Indigenous children live when placed in the dominant child protection and education systems helps us to explore the power of the intersectionality of systems on their lives, that of their families and Indigenous communities. Critical social theory is particularly relevant for Indigenous peoples.
and this study in particular, given that it directs attention towards the issues of oppression and freedom. Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (2001) introduced a critical approach to freedom through the notion of “conscientization” or critical consciousness. According to Freire (2000) conscientization refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (preface). Maori academic Graham Smith prefers the term conscientization to “decolonizing” because he posits that the latter term puts the “colonizer at the centre of the discourse and we are positioned to be reactive” (Kovach, 2009, p. 91). Freire’s theory influences this study on a number of levels. First because the lack of knowledge and education in dominant Canadian society about the historical, economic, social, political and safety conditions in the lives of Aboriginal people needs to be strengthened. Second, Aboriginal people are aware of the dichotomy that exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal world views and interact with this on a daily basis. The challenge for non-Aboriginal people is to become equally aware of this dichotomy and to respond by promoting needed changes in institutional forms and practices (Sinclair, 2007a, p.80), something that this study also seeks to highlight.

The process of resisting and decolonizing our Indigenous experiences within the dominant system presents many struggles, challenges and obstacles for Indigenous peoples. Freire (2001) identifies three obstacles in resisting colonial oppression including awareness of the following, duality; 1) internalization of the oppressor’s consciousness and 2) the elimination of critical thinking and reflection. Duality refers to a tension that exists in being pulled in one direction to be true to our Indigenous identity and culture and pulled in the opposite direction to remain in the safety and familiarity of and conformity with our states of unfreedom (Hart, 2002, p. 31). The internalization of the oppressor’s consciousness refers to identification with the oppressor’s way of being human and rejection of being Indigenous. The elimination of critical thinking and reflection occurs when Indigenous people give up questioning the systems imposed upon us by oppressors and instead seek to live within it (Hart, 2006, p. 31). Within the child protection systems, these obstacles create much tension for Indigenous social workers who may be working within systemic frameworks and
Legislation created by Canadian (or settler) society. This is “reality” for Indigenous social workers and teachers who must struggle to address these dilemmas, paradoxes and obstacles. Fortunately, Friere (2001) claims that praxis, involving consciousness and actions on individual, family, community and nation levels, can offer strategies to exit from oppression and that it is within our ability to transform it through our own struggles to free ourselves (p. 31). It is towards the development of these “strategies to exit from oppression” and transformation in the child protection and education systems that this collective Indigenous research project is directed.

4.7 Historical Trauma, Theory, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Theory

Intergenerational trauma was first recognized in the mid-1960s by clinicians working with the children of Nazi Holocaust survivors. Today the evidence is clear: intergenerational transmission of trauma exists. Empirical evidence from the Holocaust, Vietnam War, rape victims, the Indian residential school experience, (both in the United States and Canada), and more recent events in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that trauma and its after-effects are real (Dickason & Newbigging, 2011, p. 80).

This discussion contributes to an understanding about how historical trauma theory (HTT) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) theory contribute to a SBF in this study regarding Indigenous children in BC’s child protection and educational systems. HTT is the relatively new concept in public health; the premise of which is that “populations historically subjected to long-term, mass trauma – colonialism, slavery, war, genocide- exhibit a higher prevalence of disease even several generations after the original trauma occurred” (Sotero, 2006, p. 93). The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) describes historical trauma as a historical cluster of traumatic events and as a disease in itself. The symptoms of historical trauma as a disease are the maladaptive social and behavioral patterns that were created in response to the trauma experience, absorbed into the culture and transmitted as learned behavior from generation to generation. According to Krieger (2001) four assumptions underpin HTT including:
1. mass trauma is deliberately and systematically inflicted upon a target population by a subjugating, dominant population namely by overwhelming physical and psychological violence, segregation and/or displacement, economic deprivation and cultural dispossession (Sotero, 2006, p. 99); 
2. trauma is not limited to a single catastrophic event, but continues over an extended period of time; 
3. traumatic events reverberate throughout the population, creating universal experience of trauma; and 
4. the magnitude of the trauma experience derails the population from its natural, projected historical course resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, social and economic disparities that persists for generations (Sotero, 2006, p. 94-95).

Generations of Indigenous peoples in Canada (and the United States) experienced involuntary displacement into residential schools, forced relocation and enforced constructions of Urban Indigenous socio-cultural and political identities (Frideres, 2011; Miller, 1997; Milloy, 1999; Sinclair, Hart & Bruyere, 2009). Therefore, according to HTT (Brave Heart & DeBryn, 1998; Duran & Duran, 1995; Sotero, 2006), many Indigenous children, including those living in BC’s contemporary child protection systems are negatively affected by historical trauma or “soul wounds” (Duran & Duran, 1995). BC advocates (Hughes, 2006; Morley, 2006; Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007) acknowledge that traumas continue in contemporary child protection populations and are enhanced by numerous experiences such as separation from siblings, parents, extended family members and communities, abusive experiences in dominant systems and repeated failed attempts to flee the child protection system. Evidence of heightened suicide attempts and completions, strategies to over medicate behavioral issues and poor educational outcomes are but a few of the trauma responses by both the Indigenous systems youth and professionals (Morely & Kendall, 2006). Attempts by Indigenous youth to leave the child protection system can be effectively blocked by social workers, lawyers and judges with statutory authority under the BC Child, Family and Community Service Act (1996) and can compel youth to remain in the child welfare system against their will. In addition, the legal powers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) can remove children from their families under the CFCSA or return them to a foster or group home against their will in the same way that their powers could compel Indigenous children to return to the former residential school system.
Without advocacy support and cultural knowledge many Indigenous children lack sufficient resources to re-connect with Aboriginal families or communities.

Indigenous experiences in residential schools and child protection systems are transferred to the next generations through stories (Baskin, 2009; Carriere, 2005; Grant, 2004; Sinclair, 2007b) and it is difficult, in my experience, to visit any First Nations communities or extended families in Canada that have not experienced significant child welfare interventions and removals, my own included. Stories of lost children, nephews, nieces and grandchildren into the residential school and lost childhoods in child protection systems or adoption are common and contribute to a cumulative traumatic affect. According to Sotero (2006), issues like these may trigger PTSD, depression, self-destructive behaviors, severe anxiety, guilt, hostility and chronic bereavement in survivors (p. 99).

The grief, loss and fear of more child protection removals by authorities is also common among secondary or subsequent generations and can be more clearly understood as vicarious trauma. Vicarious trauma occurs when the originating trauma is transmitted to successive generations and can result in devastating results. For example, storytelling is an Indigenous oral tradition that can be used to transmit stories to children about members of the clergy and police that arrived unannounced in the communities to collect children for a return to residential schools. It may be accompanied by stories of attempts by family members to “hide the children” on the land away from the communities. It may include stories of punishment or abuses experienced or witnessed in residential schools or foster care, feeling a lack of safety, exposure to substandard food, clothing, education and lack of trusting relationships with people in positions of power. Extreme trauma may lead to subsequent impairments in the capacity for parenting, ability to form trusting relationships, transmit cultural and language between generations (Danieli, 1998).
4.8 Conclusion: A Canadian Formula for Learning or Knowledge Development?

This Indigenist research study is informed by four theories that contribute to the development of this Indigenist star blanket theoretical framework. These four theories are critical theory, feminist theory, HTT and PTSD theory. Together these theories represent a visual Indigenist SBTF that depicts how the interconnectedness of different theoretical influences impact on the educational needs of Urban ICIC peoples in this study. These theories tell us that this is not an Indigenous method (or formula) for Urban ICIC learning or knowledge development. Instead these theories point us to the need to develop a holistic, and strategic intersectional approach on behalf of Urban ICIC; one such as the SBTF that accounts for Urban ICIC experiences with social determinants such as violent and racist child protection, educational and colonial histories. The enforced relocation of many Urban Indigenous peoples, and enforced constructions of Urban Indigenous children’s socio-cultural and political identities must also be considered as contributing factors to the historical trauma and post-traumatic stress disorders in this child population (Sotero, 2006).

Sinclair (2007a) argues that the residential school project contributed to Indigenous social disorganization, trauma and cultural breakdowns in contemporary Indigenous societies, that the Sixties Scoop, dominant child protection systems and adoption of Indigenous children is merely another genocidal act disguised as concern for the welfare of Native children and serves to completely sever traditional socialization structures in affected individuals (p. 81-82). Sinclair’s assessment of intergenerational trauma is supported by other Indigenous social work scholars (Baskin, 2009; Blackstock, 2009; Carriere, 2008; Hart, 2002; Johnson, 2008) and advocacy organizations (NWAC, 2010) who also note the disproportionate violent, political, social, legal and economic attack against Indigenous women and their roles in the care and education of children (Baskin, 2003). By visually depicting Indigenist, feminist, critical, HTT and PTSD theories within a SBTF model, it conceptualizes the intersectionality of theories that focus this researcher’s choice of methodology and methods. In the same way that different fabrics are chosen for a star blanket, various sizes are considered and colors are chosen, these theoretical choices may not be
considered by other researchers for their research projects. However, given the research topic which is set against the historical, social, economic and legal context of Urban ICIC, and my experiences in the field of Indigenous child welfare and education, these theories best reflect the epistemology of this study.

The next chapter discusses the methodology and methods chosen to examine this research topic; specifically it identifies the star blanket methodology framework (SBMF) that guides this study. Subsequent chapters will also include discussion about how the theories identified within this SBTF, assist in the data analysis, research findings and conclusion.
Chapter 5: Methodology and Methods

An indigenous methodology must be a process that adheres to relational accountability. Respect, reciprocity and responsibility are key features of any healthy relationship and must be included in an Indigenous methodology (Wilson, 2008, p. 77).

There has been a crisis in Indigenous educational and child welfare policy (among other sites) in this country. Why? Because the research that influences policy and shapes practices that impact Indigenous communities emerges from Western, not Indigenous, knowledges or forms of inquiry. The proposition is that methodology itself necessarily influences outcomes. Indigenous research frameworks have the potential to improve relevance in policy and practice within Indigenous contexts (Kovach, 2009, p. 13).

Indigenous methodological frames also recognise all knowledge as socially situated, partial and grounded in subjectivities and experiences of everyday life. This translates into a redefinition of traditional methodological meanings and values, generation of theoretical perspectives from which dominant knowledges are critiqued, and the development of new, Indigenous-centred methodologies (Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2007, p. 2).

5.1 Saulteaux Star Blanket Methodology Framework (SBMF)

This chapter identifies the Indigenous methodology and methods used to explore the educational experiences of Urban Indigenous children in the BC child protection system. More specifically, it articulates a Saulteaux Star Blanket methodology framework (SBMF) and describes the Indigenous methods used in this research project through a Star Blanket Indigenous pedagogy. This SBMF draws on a number of Saulteaux-Cree, Cree, Coast Salish and Maori Indigenous research methodologies. These include the seminal decolonizing Indigenous research methodologies articulated by Maori academic Linda Smith (1999), the ceremonial aspects of Indigenous research methods identified by Cree academic Shawn Wilson (2008), the Cree Indigenous methodologies developed by Cree-Saulteaux academic Margaret Kovach (2009), all of which is informed by Indigenous storywork methods developed by Coast Salish academic Jo-ann Archibald (2008). The reasons for including Coast Salish and Maori concepts with Cree and Saulteaux-Cree concepts in a SBMF is based on respect for the decolonizing work of the Maori peoples and for the Coast Salish peoples upon whose traditional, unceded territories this research is undertaken.

Briefly summarized, these seven principles advanced by Archibald (2008) provide a useful framework for this Indigenist research project by demonstrating;

1. respect toward Aboriginal peoples’ cultures and communities by valuing diverse Indigenous knowledges, particularly of those who grew up and work in the BC child protection and education systems;
2. reverence toward research that is meaningful to Indigenous peoples (those growing up or working within the child welfare and education systems) rather than the researcher and the academic research process and showing appreciation for the reverence for spirituality and honoring our respective teaching and learning responsibilities;
3. reciprocity by entering into a two-way process of learning and research exchange with the co-creators of the research while ensuring that the community, agencies and peoples benefit from the research relationships;
4. responsibility through active and rigorous self-reflection, engagement and consultation with the community members and agencies and an ongoing emphasis on our respective roles and research ethics;
5. holism by considering how the “interrelatedness of intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical realms of the whole person, extends and is mutually influenced by one’s family, community, band and nation” (Archibald, 2008, p. 11);
6. interrelatedness; and
7. synergy by considering one’s own “historical, cultural and current contexts in relation to the stories being told through the use of personal real-life examples” (Archibald, 2008, p. 32).

The Saulteaux star blanket methodology framework brings together Archibald's (2008) storywork principles and pedagogy, Saulteaux tribal knowledge and worldview (Kovach, 2009), Indigenous research methods, ethics, protocols and ceremony and decolonizing methodologies. The principles, methods and methodologies are brought together and represented in the following diagram.
Indigenous pedagogy, according to Battiste (2002) is pedagogy learned by observation and doing, through authentic experiences, individualized instruction and learning through enjoyment; the SBMF is one example of this pedagogy. This SBMF identifies the Indigenous methodology and methods that were incorporated into the research study to find out about the educational influences in the lives of Urban Indigenous children living in the BC child protection system on Coast Salish territory (see Figure 2) and “brings it all together”.

Principles of all these methodologies work together to guide me towards a Saulteaux Star Blanket Methodology Framework.
The SBMF incorporates principles of qualitative inquiry in that it requires a commitment to spend extensive time with the participants (Creswell, 1998). However in addition to the time commitment, relationships between and among the researcher and co-research participants can create pathways to collective healing, relationship maintenance and action that exceeds the length of the formal data collection process. According to Wilson (2008) an Indigenous research paradigm seeks to build relationships on multiple levels, helps to form a stronger relationship with the idea that we share, ensures my responsibility to fulfill my role and obligations to the participants, to the topic and all of my relations, and ensures that I contribute or give back something to the relationship. Finally it helps to ensure that the sharing, growth and learning that is taking place is reciprocal (p. 77).

5.2 **Star Blanket Pedagogy Story**

Like many people, I learned to sew though a number of different learning opportunities. I learned by watching the interactions between my grandmother and her friends, one to one instruction and demonstration by Elders, through the instruction and curriculum of secondary school home economics teachers, through the instruction and demonstration of my own friends, reading books and websites and by “doing it”. Each way of learning was different however if I wanted to learn, it was my responsibility to find ways that “work” for me. Through that process I learned that I have some preferred ways of learning.

As a small child, I recall sitting with my grandmother and her friends as they sewed; being careful to be quiet and unobtrusive so they would allow me to stay and watch. The laughter, stories and conversation were just as interesting to me as were their blanket or projects; many that I remember to this day.
As I grew older, my grandmother’s friends would help me learn to sew while my grandmother took a leadership role in helping me to refine my technique. I recall the first significant project we undertook together was a pink gym draw-string bag that I needed to hold my sneakers, shorts and t-shirt for physical education class. I remember shopping for the pink material, the accomplishment and pride I felt each time I saw the gym bag hanging in the school change room and knowing that it was our first “project” together. I used that pink gym bag throughout my elementary and secondary school years, smiling each time I caught sight of it in the locker room, like an old friend.

My grandmother’s friends were long time family friends and people I knew in other ways that contributed to an atmosphere that felt supported, safe and warm. It was important to me to be on my best behavior when they were around because I knew that if I were not, it would be commented upon by them to others and may reflect badly on my grandmother and our family. Worse, their children or grandchildren, my friends and school friends would know about my bad behavior and might tell others about it at school. The potential shame of this possibility always kept me on my best behavior in the company of my grandmother’s friends.

My learning experience with my grandmother and her friends was quite different than the learning environment in my home economics classes where the teachers taught the lesson, checked on our progress and prepared for the next class. I did not have any type of relationship with either woman outside the school. I do not recall any laughter or warmth they shared with students, in retrospect they both seemed bored and distant as if after ten or fifteen years of teaching students to sew, they wanted to be anywhere else but in the classroom with a new group of learning students. The items made in school ranged from an apron to a tailored jacket; however I cannot recall any projects between those two skill levels. I did not feel a connection to any of the items, they were just objects that I had to complete in order to fulfill the curriculum requirements and were quickly forgotten or set aside upon completion. It seemed to be a feeling shared among and between many of the students in both classrooms.
This was in marked contrast to a handmade star blanket that my grandmother made for my mother; something that my mother kept until it physically fell apart from old age, washings and use. I recall the star pattern made from many different kinds of interesting older fabric designs, its tattered and frayed edges and the even spacing of my grandmother’s hand stitches. More than that, I recall that the star blanket was something very significant and special made by my grandmother, how highly it was treasured both while she lived and after she passed away into the spirit world and how difficult it was for my mother to dispose of when no amount of stitching it back together again could keep it intact.

It was two years after my grandmother’s passing that an opportunity arose to make a star blanket. I had set aside any sewing projects other than occasional clothing repairs until a friend, who also happened to be a social worker, offered her home for a star blanket sewing project. Slowly, my grief began to dissipate with encouragement, support and the creation of a star blanket with my friend. It was then that my healing began. Sewing the star blanket holds so much meaning in my memory and culture; it was then that I understood that the process is much richer when it is shared with important people in my life. The process of choosing colors and fabrics for the Indigenous design, cutting, sewing the strips together, talking with my friend and smiling at the memories of my grandmother and her friends, helped me to feel whole again.

There are many steps and different kinds of equipment, fabric and patterns required to make a star blanket. That star blanket did not look like what I had envisioned when I chose the materials because it had a bump that remained in the centre of the star that would not lie flat as much as I tried to fix it. I have only one biological brother and when he saw the star blanket, he commented that it was beautiful and reminded him of our grandmother’s star blanket, long since discarded.

I was grateful for his encouragement and so gave it to him, promising to gift him with a better one in time. Since then I did make him another star blanket which is technically sewn in a superior
manner, yet it is the first one that he keeps on his bed to this day. Through the process of washing and use, the bump has reduced to the point of being just as flat as the rest of the blanket and today I can see what he saw; clear similarities in the design colors chosen by my grandmother for the blanket she gifted to my mother are evident in the blanket that I gifted to my brother. It was a similarity that I did not recognize until much later although he saw it from the beginning. From this experience I learned that projects do not have to be flawless “or perfect” in the beginning, rather they can become that way over time with use or they can simply appear to be that way to some people from the beginning.

Other teachings from the first star blanket project included coming to understand that it is wise to expect the unexpected and that usually there is support and encouragement from people from which to ask for guidance and assistance at those times. It means being secure in the knowledge that the people will take me back to wherever my confusion is greatest and walk me through that place. Eventually and over time, my healing, confidence and skills strengthened and I began to enjoy the ceremony in making star blankets for important people in my life. Still I enjoy the company of others when I am making them, something that is typical of many Saulteaux and Plains women because their company seems to add so much more to the project. Still there were times I had to muddle through on my own, frustrated by designs or fabrics that do not “feel or look right” yet determined to work through the obstacles and challenges; finding joy in developing more complex designs, patterns or new styles of star blankets. From this I learned that there is always a purpose and intent in making star blankets and that they can also become “teachers” and “healers” through the creation and gifting process.

Many times addressing the obstacles or participants’ pain in this research project meant taking a break from it, praying about it, smudging, talking it through with others, finding release in tears or thinking about it in ceremonies. Sometimes in the quiet or in my dreams, the answers reminded me of the importance of making space for the sacred in the research process. Other times the process
seems to unfold in a rush, like someone else, or a spirit, is guiding the process and are so sure in its development that very few revisions are required. Now there is security in knowing that while this SBMF may not be perfectly articulated, it may grow to be that way with the efforts of others to build upon it. Yet the process to get to this place is not easy and at times it meant picking the whole SBMF design apart, “stitch by stitch and word by word” and starting over. That too is an important part of both processes, this star blanket research process “with words” and an actual star blanket making process.

The SBMF used in this research project feels similar to the process that I undertook in learning and re-learning to sew star blankets and presents its own unique learning opportunities. In this written SBMF I used many different kinds of Indigenous “equipment” or “methods” such as interviewing, talking circles, observation, following up with participants after the interviews, adhering to protocol and ceremony in order to draw on the different knowledges and educational experiences of Indigenous peoples.

The interviews followed somewhat different processes. Prior to beginning the research process I consulted different Elders and colleagues asking for their guidance and suggestions as to how to conduct the interviews and talking circles. I explained that participants would have a choice as to which method they would like to use to talk about their educational experiences. With respect to the talking circles, the Elders guided me to provide food to the participants, open and close with prayers, try to have an Elder or cultural person present at all talking circles and give people enough time to listen to others and share what they have to say. They suggested that I should follow up with all the participants shortly after the talking circles and if required, provide information about available support services. The provision of a small cultural gift was discussed and I was told to provide this gift at the outset of the process to thank the people for being present and sharing what they would. This Indigenous community-based advice is supported by Cree academic Laara Fitznor.
who agrees that the “tribal protocol around the social encounter within a circle differs from the epistemological underpinnings of a focus group” (Kovach, 2009, p. 124).

The ethical research approval seeking processes at U.BC and the ethical research approval process required by the two Urban Indigenous child welfare agencies ensured the development of an ethical research plan which was approved by the two agencies prior to being approved by UBC.

My Saulteaux knowledge and teachings instilled me with the desire to approach Indigenous peoples in traditional ways to ask for involvement, guidance and direction. However, because of the choice that participants had about how they might contribute to the research project, I did not have a clear vision of what the research project would “look like” upon completion. Much like sewing a star blanket for the first time, there were “bumps” along this research process and it is not perfect. However it has offered invaluable opportunities to develop long-term and important relationships with other Indigenous peoples that I now consider friends and to create a star blanket methodology that demonstrates a collective ability to heal and care for those of us involved in this research project. Today I fully understand what Wilson (2008) means when he says that Indigenous research is a life changing ceremony and if it does not do that for you as an Indigenous person, then you are not doing it right.

5.3 Indigenous Research Methods

This section outlines the Indigenous methods used in this research study, how they were “sewn” into the SBMF and how these might be used as a “pattern” for future studies with other Indigenous communities or groups. An Indigenous framework was chosen for this study because these methods provide culturally appropriate elements that are congruent with an Indigenous methodology. The methods included two talking circles with fourteen Indigenous child protection agency representatives (one in each Urban Indigenous delegated child protection agency) and fifteen semi-structured interviews with Indigenous individuals that are former youth in the custody of the BC child protection system on Coast Salish traditional territories. These methods represent
Indigenous oral traditions and processes most relevant in Indigenous community and Indigenous based child welfare agencies.

There are many voices and systems that purport to speak and advocate on behalf of youth in the child protection system including those of bureaucrats (MCFD, 2011), foster parents, academics (Blackstock, 2009; Carriere, 2005; Sinclair, 2007a) and advocates (Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007; Morley, 2006, Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, 2010). This research is grounded in the belief is that it is important to speak directly with, and listen to the Indigenous people that have the lived experience of growing up in the child protection system and those that are currently working in Urban Indigenous child protection agencies. This research represents their Indigenous voices of experience and is an important contribution to building research from Indigenous perspectives within the settler child protection system.

Perhaps the methodological multi-step process undertaken in this Indigenous research project can best be understood in relation to the typical process or method used to make a star blanket. Both the research and star blanket creation processes demonstrate respect for protocol, making space for dreaming and spirituality necessary to further develop and create new Indigenous knowledge. The star blanket creation is dependent upon the choice and purchase of fabrics, sewing notions, supplies and equipment such as a sewing machine, mat and iron while the research methods requires Indigenous peoples, agencies, policies and procedures.

This section will demonstrate how the following eight (8) steps are required to complete a star blanket. Further it will demonstrate how that process can be stitched together with the steps (research methods) undertaken in this research project to create an Indigenous educational star blanket model for children and youth in BC’s child protection system.
5.4 Step 1: Making a Star Blanket

Typically a star blanket making process begins with a dream or an idea about the person for whom the star blanket is intended. In most instances my star blankets are for family members, close friends or people that I care for and want to honour. The idea about the specific colors and fabrics to be used in the Indigenous design can begin in quiet contemplation, prayer, discussion with other people or contemplating other star blankets that I or others have made. Usually, but not always, I have a purpose to create a star blanket for a specific individual or couple. The star blanket project requires the selection and purchase of eight different but complementary 45 inch wide fabrics to form the star. The amount of fabric needed depends on the size of star blanket to be made. Next, to cleanse the materials, it is important to wash, dry and iron all the fabric. Then I smudge the fabric, notions, sewing machine, cutting mat, rotary cutter and room in preparation for the project.

Each of the fabrics should be purchased in the following amounts.

A ¼ yard, cut 2 strips
B 3/8 yard, cut 4 strips
C ½ yard, cut 6 strips
D 5/8 yard, cut 8 strips
E ¾ yard, cut 10 strips
F 7/8 yard, cut 12 strips
G 1 yard, cut 14 strips
H 1 ½ yards, cut 16 strips

Background fabric should be 2 1/3 yards for a large lap star blanket. Borders fabric should be 2 ¼ yards for lap star blanket, cut lengthwise. It requires king size quilt batting to fit a kind size blanket and 9.0 yards is required for the backing fabric.

5.4.1 Ethically Recruiting Urban ICICs

To determine the level of community interest in the proposed research project, I personally visited, and spoke with the leadership of two Urban Aboriginal delegated child welfare agencies in Victoria and Vancouver. During these meetings, I explained my interest in the specific area of research, sought their ideas about potential benefits and concerns about their involvement and discussed
their thoughts about the value of research done as a partnership between Indigenous peoples, researchers and Urban agencies. During the meetings the leadership of both Urban agencies expressed interest in developing a research project with me and asked that their internal formal research proposals be completed and submitted to their Board of Directors for consideration and approval. Two research proposals were completed and approved by both Urban Aboriginal delegated child welfare agencies prior to the submission of the UBC ethics approval process. During the initial meetings we created a draft recruitment poster and discussed some initial open-ended research questions. Both agencies and I agreed that upon receipt of the U.BC ethics approval, the poster would be further developed by me and that each agency would be responsible for distributing the poster among their respective agency worksites as well as their formal agency networks and informal social networks. The agency staff members were also encouraged to share the poster through email and word-of-mouth with people that they thought may be interested in the project and I agreed to share the poster and information with Urban Indigenous organizations and peoples within my formal and informal networks.

At these initial meetings we discussed the principles of voluntary participation, free, prior and informed consent and the importance that participants understand that they can choose to disengage from the research project at any time, without repercussions. This discussion and decision is critical given the history of Indigenous peoples that may have been coerced into participating, not fully understanding or feeling “locked into” or “obliged to continue” research projects in the past (Smith, 1999).

In addition we discussed the issues of risk of harm or trauma that may be triggered in or experienced by Indigenous individuals entering discussions about their experiences in child protection system. The agencies agreed to provide counselling support to any participants should any research participant require it and I agreed to advise all participants of this counselling support option during or following the interview process. In addition, the research participants were to be
guaranteed confidentiality during and after the interviews and that their identifying information would not be made available to anyone not directly involved in the study. There was a discussion regarding the small size of Urban Aboriginal communities and recognition that some potential participants may know or be related to each other. In instances where the participants wanted to meet one another in a talking circle, or otherwise, connections were made on an invitation or case by case basis.

We agreed that the Urban Indigenous delegated child welfare agency participants would meet the following selection criteria, 1) be a current employee, board member or contractor of either Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society or Surrounded By Cedar Child and Family Services Society, 2) self-referred and 3) willing to participate in a talking circle process in either agency. We agreed that the Indigenous former CIC must meet the following selection criteria which is 1) have been legally defined as a “continuing custody” ward under the BC CFCSA or a “permanent ward” under the BC Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) or other Canadian child welfare legislation, 2) be at least 24 years of age, 3) was a child and/or youth that grew up in the BC child protection system in either the Urban communities of Victoria or Vancouver, BC, 4) self identify as “First Nations, Aboriginal or Indigenous”.

5.5 Step 2: Making a Star Blanket

The fabric that represents the background to the star requires 2 and 1/3 yards of fabric and the border requires 2 and 1/4 yards. First, organize the fabric into a star pattern design. Cut each of the eight star fabrics into strips 2 and 1/4 inches wide times the length of the fabric. For example, with 45 inch fabric, the strips will be 2 and 1/4 inches by 45 inches. The first fabric needs two strips, the second fabric 4 strips, the third fabric 6 strips and so on to the eighth fabric, which requires 16 strips.
5.5.1 ICIC Sample

Distribution of the doctoral research recruitment poster resulted in 17 enquiries from Indigenous former CIC that expressed interest in participating in the study. Fifteen of the 17 potential research participants (nine female and six male) completed the research interviews. Two people contacted me long after the data analysis was complete, and are not included in the study; however we spoke at length about their experiences. Thirteen of the fifteen Indigenous former CIC participants identified as registered status Indian people as defined by the Federal Indian Act (1985), and two are non-status First Nations people. In total these participants represent ancestry from twenty-five (25) First Nations from within and outside the borders of BC. None of the study participants self-identified as being of Inuit ancestry.

Each participant grew up in and were discharged from the BC child protection system on the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples in the Urban communities of either Vancouver or Victoria BC. Once the potential research participant contacted me, I confirmed that they had a copy of the recruitment poster, then emailed or mailed them a copy of the invitation letter, consent form and interview questions. These were received at least one week prior to each interview and any questions were answered prior to meeting in person.

5.5.2 Free, Informed, and Prior Consent

Each of the former Urban ICIC research participants were provided with options to meet in a talking circle or independently. All fifteen independently chose to meet with me in a one-to-one interview setting at a time and place of their own choice. At the time of our interview, every person had been discharged from the BC child protection system for at least five years and had had at least one week to consider the interview questions. Of the fifteen Indigenous former CIC participants, eight grew up in and around the Urban community of Victoria and seven grew up in and around the Urban community of Vancouver. All fifteen people were individually interviewed between August to December 2009 and the interviews lasted between one to four hours.
The research recruitment poster resulted in a total of fourteen Indigenous agency participants, (twelve female and two male) in agreement to participate in the project. The sample includes positions such as executive director, administrative assistant/s, guardianship and community services manager/s, team leader/s, delegated social worker/s (guardianship, resource, child protection), finance manager, board member, teacher, cultural support worker, counsellor and foster parent contractor/s. One non-Indigenous and thirteen Indigenous agency participants is included in this sample. A joint decision was made between the researcher and the agency leadership to include the non-Indigenous participant in the agency sample due to the large numbers of non-Indigenous caregivers of First Nations youth in the BC child protection system, and the long term and respectful agency relationship with the non-Indigenous participant. The other thirteen Indigenous agency participants represent Indigenous ancestry from twenty-seven First Nations and Métis communities inside and outside BC. One talking circle of eight participants occurred in Victoria in August 2009 and one talking circle of six participants occurred in Vancouver in December 2009.

This type of sample is called a snowball sample (Creswell, 1998; Wilson, 2008). In this method, participants with whom contact has already been made use their agency and social networks to refer potential participants to the researcher. In this instance, the recruitment poster and "word of mouth" (or what is typically known in the Urban Indigenous communities of Vancouver and Victoria as the "moccasin telegraph") provided the researcher’s contact information and people self-referred to the study for consideration. The discussion about the recruitment process began at the initial meetings between the researcher and agency leadership and concluded the week prior to the research talking circles (in August 2009 in one agency and December 2009 in the other). Once the posters were initially distributed they took on a journey of their own, and I became aware that they were eventually posted by others in such diverse sites as the Caring for First Nations Children’s Society of Canada website (based in Ottawa), the Musqueam nation newspaper (in Vancouver) and an Inuit educational program in Iqaluit, Nunavut.
5.6  **Step 3: Making a Star Blanket**

Lay out the strips in the following order. Each letter represents a different fabric.

A B C D E F G H
B C D E F G H G
C D E F G H F
D E F G H F E
E F G H F E D
F G H G F E D C
G H G F E D C B
H G F E D C B A

At the conclusion of the cutting, there should be eight sections of eight strips each.

5.6.1  **Interviews and Talking Circles**

Each of the fifteen one-to-one interviews began in a place identified by the research participant and at a time that was mutually agreed upon. Interviews were held in five of the participant’s homes, four restaurant settings, three offices, two outdoor settings (on a college and university campus), and one was conducted in my home. Both of the talking circles with agency staff and contractors were held in the boardrooms of each of the Urban Aboriginal delegated child welfare agencies in Vancouver and Victoria.

Altogether the twenty-nine Urban Indigenous former CIC and Indigenous agency participants represent fifty-two First Nations and Métis communities including those within the following nations:

Beaver, Carrier, Coast Salish, Comox, Cowichan Tribes, Cree, Gitxsan, Haida, Kwakwaka’wakw, Métis, Mohawk, Nisga’a, Nlaka’pamux, Nuu Chah Nulth, Ojibway, Okanagan, Musqueam, Nuxalk, Saulteaux, Secwepemc, Qualicum, Sliammon, Stl’atl’imx, Sto:lo, Squamish and Tahltan. In addition one non-Indigenous agency participant self-identified as a “Canadian”. In total twenty-one participants (72.4%) were female and eight participants (27.6%) were male.

Each of the fifteen one-to-one participants met with me at a time and place of their choosing; at different times it was outside in nature, at their home or in a mutually agreed upon restaurant. At all
of these meetings I asked each person if they would like to share a prayer with me prior to our meal. Both meetings with people working in the two Indigenous agencies happened in the agencies and began with a prayer and meal. Following the meal and opening prayers we reviewed the research project, UBC informed consent form and proposed semi-structured questions. If the participant had any questions about the forms, processes or questions, they were addressed at this time and clarified. At the time of the interviews or talking circle, a copy of the questions were again provided to the participants and served as a guide to the discussion. In addition we again discussed the safety and support needs of each individual. This is important because for many of the participants, it was the first time that they had an opportunity to speak about their experiences in the BC foster care and education systems. I explained that arrangements were in place with counsellors in both Urban Aboriginal delegated child welfare agencies and that support people were available to meet with them if they so desired. I provided contact information to the participants and also indicated that I would be following up with a telephone call in two days' time. They were advised that they were also welcome to contact me if they wanted to in the interim time period.

A small cultural gift of appreciation was offered to each participant in the form of either food (if we met in a restaurant I paid for our meals as well as brought food and drinks to each of the talking circle groups), a hand-made cedar rose from Coast Salish territory and a journal that had been donated to me for each participant from an elder friend. These small gifts were given to each participant prior to beginning the taped interviews and food was passed around the table. Once the prayers and introductions were complete, the consents were discussed and signed, the digital tape recorder was turned on and either the interview or talking circle began.

A talking circle is a process whereby people sit in a circle and each person has an opportunity to take an uninterrupted turn at discussing the topic (Wilson, 2008). In the two Urban Indigenous agencies, the talking circle occurred in the board rooms and the people sat around the table. In
both instances, a carved talking stick belonging to the researcher was used, although an eagle feather or other sacred object may also be passed person to person. This particular talking stick is approximately fourteen inches in length with a bone, carved eagle head. It was given to me by my Saulteaux uncle, Glenn Stevenson, before he journeyed on to the spirit world. It was smudged (cleansed with smoke and prayers) both prior to and following each talking circle. A common teaching is that participants are not to speak when another person is holding the talking stick, rather they are to listen and must wait their turn to speak about the topic. In these two talking circles, the participants were free to discuss the questions in the order of importance to them and both talking circles lasted for two to three rounds.

At the conclusion of the talking circles, I asked the participants if there was anything else that they wanted to say that I did not think to ask. The talking circles formally ended when the digital tape recorder was turned off, however in all the interviews and both talking circles this merely meant that we had an opportunity for informal visiting, debriefing and discussion. The talking circles both ended in ‘a good way’ with elders or cultural people closing in prayer. With each of the individual participants, I asked again if they perceived a need for follow up support and offered the contact information of the counsellors in the delegated agencies. At the conclusion of some of the interviews, we took time to debrief the interview, went for a walk, smudged or prayed together.

5.6.2 Ensuring Confidentiality and Approving Transcripts

Sew the strips in each section together, starting each strip two inches below the previous one. Each section is a line from the above step. Sew the strips together along the long 45-inch sides, starting each one two inches in from the end of the one before it. Each section should appear to have stair-steps on either end. Press seams open with a dry iron. Do not use steam because this may cause the fabric to stretch. Lay out a section and place a ruler at a 45-degree angle on one side, cutting off the stair step of fabric to create a straight solid line. Measure and cut along that same angle new strips 2 and 1/4 inches wide; cutting across all eight of the different fabrics. These
new strips should measure 2 and 1/4 inches wide by approximately 16 inches long. It may be a little longer or shorter, depending on the width of the seam allowances. Repeat with all the sections. It is important to keep the strips from each section together.

Following the interviews, I returned to my office, made copies of each signed consent participant forms and downloaded the digital interview onto a secure file on my computer. Following the interviews, I would take a walk down to the ocean or have a shower and then smudge to cleanse myself. If particularly troubling stories had been shared, I would pray and journal. Within forty-eight hours I would telephone and connect with each research participant to ask how they were after the interview, if they wanted to speak with a counselor, or if they wanted to debrief the interview with me. In most instances, we had an informal discussion that lasted anywhere from fifteen minutes to one hour. In nine instances, I made arrangements to meet with the individuals in person to follow up and debrief their feelings. To my knowledge, none of the research participants met with the Indigenous counsellors that were offered as supports.

The participants were told that in the next two or three business days, they would receive a copy of their signed consent, a card from me to thank them for participating in the research study, and an approximate date that they could anticipate receiving a transcribed copy of our interview. As the completed interviews were transcribed, each was assigned a specific code. “A1” was assigned to the first Urban ICIC interview through to “A15” for the last Urban ICIC interview. The talking circles were coded “B1” and “B2”. This data was added to a portable data memory stick, and kept in a locked and secure storage cabinet in my office. I entered into a signed confidentiality contract with a transcriber, who returned groups of transcriptions on the same memory stick. No copies of the data were kept on the transcriber’s computer.

Once I reviewed each transcription, I provided an email copy of the completed transcript to each participant except for two that requested a physical copy. This coding structure, based on the date of their interview, allowed me to determine which transcript belonged to which person or agency. I
requested that they verify the data for accuracy. Once their review was complete, any changes that they requested were completed and resubmitted to them for approval. In thirteen of the fifteen one-to-one interviews, no changes were necessary and all transcripts were subsequently approved by the participants. Three of the agency participants requested minor changes to the data and once these were completed, both transcripts of the two talking circles were approved by all participants.

5.7  Step 4: Making a Star Blanket

The next step requires that two strips of one section are brought together, and the cut edges are matched. Sew them together, making sure to match the points. Continue adding strips until the diamond is complete. Press all seams open with a dry iron.

Repeat the above step with each section, creating eight diamonds in all. Measure a few diamonds on the straight edge and take an average of the numbers. Add two inches to this number, and cut four squares measuring this length on each side of the background fabric. For this star blanket, it will be approximately twenty-three inches square. Lay out two diamonds as if they were sewn together and measure between the outside points. Add three inches to this measurement and cut one square of this length on each side of the same background fabric. For this star blanket, it will be approximately thirty-two inches square. Cut this square into four triangles by cutting on the diagonals. Sew the diamonds to the corner squares and to the side triangles, matching all corners and edges. Sew the diamonds together, followed by the border. This will finish the top of the star blanket.

5.7.1  Data Analysis and Building Relationships with, and Among, Participants

The engagement with large amounts of data is complex and time-consuming, as is the writing to substantiate claims and show multiple perspectives and participation in the research. Once the required changes were made to the transcripts, and approved by the participants, I went to a quiet place alongside a river to begin the data analysis process. My process began with a prayer to the Creator and my ancestors. I asked them to be with me, to help me do the work in a good and
respectful way. Then the specific data analysis procedures began with multiple readings of all data, color coding the data with highlighter pens, followed with a computer data analysis program, NVIVO 8, to organize the data into emerging themes or categories. Once the emerging themes, identified by the NVIVO 8 system was complete, it was compared with the highlighter pen color coding to confirm the emerging themes and categories.

Once this was complete, I spoke with one of the Vancouver group of study participants to see if she might be free for lunch or dinner in December 2009, to talk about the preliminary data analysis. She agreed and expressed some curiosity about the other people in the “Vancouver group.” I agreed to maintain confidentiality and personally canvas the rest of the participants to determine if they were interested in meeting as a larger group. Five Indigenous former CIC met for dinner in December 2009. It was a lively, engaging and thoughtful gathering that lasted for five hours. It was the beginning of some relationships that continue to grow. A similar gathering happened on March 28 and April 23-24, 2010 with twelve of the Victoria area research participants.

On May 10, 2010 nine of the Vancouver delegated agency participants, former Indigenous CIC and I met a second time to discuss a book chapter, conferences papers and how to disseminate the project information. By this time, three of the Indigenous “Vancouver group” participants had plans to complete their GED or undergraduate university degrees. These exciting new developments were discussed and applauded. Since that time, one of the Vancouver participants has successfully completed the GED requirements and a Victoria participant has completed a Master’s degree.

5.8 Step 5: Making a Star Blanket

Place the backing of the star blanket right side down on the floor. Smooth it so that the fabric does not wrinkle. Hold it in place and tape it to the floor with heavy tape. Cover the backing with batting (the filler of the star blanket). Pin the top to the batting and backing of the star blanket and either pin in place.
5.8.1 Data Dissemination Suggestions from Participants

At the March 28, April 23, 24 and May 10, 2010 meetings the Urban ICICs first suggested the involvement of the delegated agency executive directors as allies and people that may be interested in learning about our Indigenous educational research project. Another suggestion came from a research participant who is a former youth in child protective custody who noted that the BC Association of Social Workers (BCASW) annual conference was forthcoming in November 2010 and that she would like an opportunity to co-present the research findings and emerging themes with me.

5.9 Step 6: Making a Star Blanket

Quilt all three layers together with either stitch-in-the-ditch or free-motion quilting. Add a binding around the entire star blanket. Clip any extraneous threads that are left hanging.

5.9.1 Following Up on Data Dissemination Suggestions

On November 30, 2010 a call for papers for an Indigenous academic journal was also discussed with the participants to determine if anyone might be interested in contributing to the development and submission of a potential paper. Following these discussions I did four things. First I contacted a research director at BC’s Caring for First Nations Children’s Society (CFFNCS) to request time on the June 9, 2010 provincial quarterly Partnership Meeting agenda. Second I worked with the research participant from Victoria to develop a workshop proposal for the BC Association of Social Workers (BCASW) conference to be held in Vancouver in November 2010. Third, I contacted Yvonne Andrews, the acting executive director and research coordinator of the National Youth in Care Network (NYICN) to discuss the preliminary research findings. I invited Yvonne to join me at the June 9, 2010 Partnership Meeting to discuss the research project with the First Nations Directors and government representatives. Fourth, I developed a paper outline for a possible submission to the Indigenous academic journal and circulated it to the participants for their comments or response.
By May 14, 2010 my requests to present the research project to the Partnership Meeting with Yvonne Andrews and co-deliver a workshop with one of the Indigenous research project participants were approved. By May 26, 2010 a power point presentation and paper was sent to CFFNCS for inclusion in the Partnership meeting syllabus. By June 9, the Partnership presentation was complete and by August 2nd, four participants had submitted comments on the paper outline.

5.10  **Step 7: Making a Star Blanket**

Once the star blanket is completed, cleanse (wash and dry) and smudge it in preparation to be given away. After the star blanket has been smudged, people are typically invited to witness its gifting to the individual/s. Food and drinks are typically provided to the guests, and the person/s to whom it is gifted is honoured with a story about how this star blanket came to be. What happens to the star blanket next is typically left to the discretion of the recipient.

5.10.1  **Giving Away the “Star Blanket Made With Words”**

In early to mid 2011, this “star blanket made with words” study entered a process of being drafted and redrafted. It was provided to my dissertation supervisor and committee members for their review and direction, formatted into an approved dissertation style and the raw data was removed from my memory stick device. Once the final draft was approved by the dissertation committee supervisor, all the raw data was given to my UBC academic committee supervisor, who locked it in a secure filing cabinet at UBC. It will be kept there for five years, and then destroyed. All paper copies of the participant data were destroyed. Plans were made to set dates, times, places and refreshments for the study defense and to complete the UBC defense requirements for this “star blanket made with words”.

5.11 **Step 8: Making a Star Blanket**

Once the star blanket is gifted, the star blanket creator is typically left to reflect upon the lessons learned throughout the star blanket-making process in preparation for new star blanket projects.

5.11.1 **Reflexivity**

This quiet time of reflection lends itself to considering what went well in the research process and what could be improved. This is the first time that I have completed a dissertation, and the following section highlights some of the methodological challenges and successes. This dissertation process feels much like the first time I made a star blanket. While I was pleased with the finished product, I noticed certain imperfections, recognized there is always room for improvement and considered what I might do differently in the next star blanket. This "star blanket made with words" process brings forth the same reflections.

5.12 **Conclusion: Methodological Challenges and Successes**

Within this “star blanket made with words” developmental process, there are five methodological challenges and successes that provide learning and reflection opportunities. First, the inclusion of the non Indigenous agency participant, although well-known by the other people in one of the agency talking circles, may have created a lessened sense of safety for some of the agency participants. One of the Indigenous participants commented that in her experience, foster parents were “money grabbing” people who provided the service only for the remuneration benefits. The surprised vocal reaction of the non Indigenous talking circle participant, who happens to be a foster parent under contract to the agency, caused the Indigenous participant to backtrack slightly and to comment “I don't mean you”. There was some nervous laughter around the table, which in hindsight may be both positive and negative.

It could be positive in that information was shared which reflects some deeply-held beliefs by some Indigenous peoples (and non Indigenous peoples) about foster parent providers, and in the future,
may spark a more detailed discussion about racism, stereotypes or abuse in foster care placements. However it could be negative in that the all talking circle participants may have been more careful in their comments following this exchange and reaction. It was not the only time that the Indigenous participants reacted to something that the non Indigenous participant stated. The quote below also elicited non-verbal language amongst the Indigenous agency participants including a number of raised eyebrows and quick head movements that indicated surprise.

The teacher just blew me off. Just walking into those rooms you’re at a disadvantage. I sometimes felt so hopeless on how to try to help him to succeed. How I feel today is – I don’t want him to go to school because I feel I am losing him (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

I also felt a surprised and troubled reaction to this statement, given the context of the talking circle; however no one challenged or asked for clarification of the statement during the talking circle or to my knowledge, afterwards. In future research studies, this lesson will encourage me to have a more detailed internal and external discussion with colleagues, research supervisors and co-investigators about my role as researcher to address stereotypical issues or conflict. At the time that the comment was made, I looked immediately at the Elder within the group and observed her head bowed, merely listening. It was from her guidance, that I took a non-verbal cue to do the same and did not intervene in the exchange. In other instances I also witnessed non-verbal cues among some Indigenous agency participants, including lightning-fast wrinkling of noses indicating disagreement, raised eyebrows and audible release of breath through noses. I made notes to review the context of these comments at the end of the talking circle. These examples of student confinement, lack of acknowledgement of diversity, student obstacles within curriculum, complex physical school settings, social worker paperwork requirements or teacher extra-curricular constraints caused Indigenous participants to react in non-verbal ways.

Her [the teacher] idea of supporting this kid was putting him in the smallest room at the school where there was one bed and a sink and keeping in there if he was acting up (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).
The school system is not conducive to him being successful. There are obstacles and barriers all the time…But when he’s thrown into that school system that is so chaotic and so confusing. My biggest challenges were to help him figure out how to get from this building over to this building (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

How the teachers at the beginning of the school year say, ‘Bring a picture in of your family, when you were a baby.’ Kids in foster care may not necessarily have that. Just raise awareness of the diversity and not isolating children as a result of your curriculum (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

I do recognize that teachers are under such enormous constraints and they don’t have the ability to do all the things that they want to do… And social workers as well – how much time can you spend with your kids? Look at the paperwork you have to do (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

A second methodological challenge involves the differential length of time it took to organize the two talking circles in the two agencies. In one agency, the talking circle was scheduled quite quickly and resulted in a larger number of participants than occurred in the second agency. This may be because the first agency, participants were aware of the research project planning for a longer period of time and that the idea for the project was developed from educational CIC issues arising in the agency. The level of “buy-in” may have been larger in the first agency, which is much smaller in terms of program staff and budget than the second agency. I had a former leadership role in the first agency, and the relationships between the participants and researcher are stronger than they are in the second agency; although both are respectful and continuing. Alternately, the second agency operates between three different city sites as compared to the first agency that has one office site. Coordination duties between the offices presented some challenges for one of the “agency lead people,” whose research responsibilities competed with significant staffing, practice and coordination duties across numerous offices. While this issue was capably addressed by the agency lead person, in future, some respectful practice options may be to acknowledge, discuss, plan and support the multiple and competing agency duties of leaders. Upon reflection, this example provides some insight into Indigenous teachings that “things will happen when the time is right” and acceptance that the “time” may not have been “right” for the second agency to participate until toward the end of the year.
A third methodological challenge occurred when one of the former Urban ICIC participants self-identified a struggle with dyslexia, mental health, addiction and homelessness. In one participant gathering, this participant commented that he felt “like an “outsider”; something that we later spoke about privately and is an on-going issue for which he is seeking support. It is interesting to note, however, that while the participant was the first to leave the gathering, he did attend, laughed, joked and spoke with others for the entire duration. Privately, he commented that it “felt good” to be with people that share his child-hood child protection experiences and that he hoped to attend the dissertation defense to meet other Urban ICIC study participants. This example provides some insight into why it may be important to develop voluntary cohorts or sharing opportunities for former Urban ICIC, which are non-existent in any of the participant experiences.

An example of a methodological success, and unintended outcome of the study, occurred after the conclusion of the interviews and talking circles. A number of Urban ICIC participants contacted me to discuss their decisions to begin new educational plans to increase their academic educational levels. This unanticipated outcome is the subject of continued discussion between the participants and researcher. They explained it was the process of their involvement in the research that encouraged them to reconsider their academic educational levels. One participant was approved for graduate school, one completed a Master’s degree, one completed a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, and two are in the process of completing their undergraduate degrees. Sharing these experiences with other former ICIC may be a catalyst to encourage others to return to school. I am not aware of any similar participant decisions regarding traditional Indigenous educational plans, however a number of research participants continue to participate in various Indigenous cultural, traditional ceremonies and gatherings.

Finally, my choice to use “plain language” within this dissertation and its relational quality initially caused me to consider how it may be viewed or accepted by both the academy and community members. I choose to use “plain language” as much as possible in order to make this knowledge
accessible in Indigenous communities and for people that continue to struggle with literacy. My relationship with community members, prior work to support the educational needs of Indigenous children in the community, being known as trustworthy, and “from the community” may have helped to mitigate potential feelings of “outsider” University researcher-mistrust in some participants. There is no way to know if my prior work in the community discouraged potential participant involvement, although that is possible. In many ways this sampling process felt reciprocal, in that the participants were choosing to be involved rather than my “choosing them”. This reflects the relational quality of Indigenous inquiry noted by Kovach (2009); Pillwax (2001) and Wilson (2008). In both instances, my decisions are influenced by Indigenous teachings that guide me to maintain relational connectedness and accountability to family and community. It is a teaching about respect, choice, inclusion and educational relationships that is echoed throughout this study, not just by Indigenous academics that may be viewed as “from the University” but by Indigenous peoples that are working with ICIC. For example:

I was just thinking about a lot of our kids that don’t have a school placement. We make a referral to the Vancouver School Board and then they meet, and they decide what school the child will go to. The youth never has a voice in the process. They could end up at a school that they feel they don’t fit in to. I think that we also, the social workers, as well as the child, should have a larger voice in what school they go to (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

This chapter identifies the development of a Saulteaux star blanket methodology framework (SBMF) used in this study. It explains, and provides a “pattern” for the eight steps that are typically used to make a star blanket. Each step in the pattern is paired with one or two research methods. These steps or “pattern” may provide some guidance to other researchers entering into research relationships with other Indigenous communities or groups. For example, the process of consulting with the participants about potential dissemination opportunities mirrors discussion and consultation that occurs with family members or friends about opportunities or choices to finish, or quilt, physical star blanket projects. Guidance must be sought from Indigenous communities about their specific cultural traditions, such as textile or basket weaving, totem pole carving, or beading, that may be
used as research methodology metaphors or “patterns” that are relevant to their community-based research project. The decision to use a specific Indigenous cultural tradition or process, as an appropriate “pattern”, is dependent upon ongoing discussion and dialogue between the participants and researcher. The next chapter focuses on the themes and findings that emerged from the data gathered from the twenty-nine research participants.
Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis

That truth of how bad we really are doing as a society, not blanketeting with everybody else but breaking it down, needs to be told. We did it at my school, and guess what, the School District got very, very angry because they didn’t want to know the truth of how badly they were doing with our First Nations students… That’s what needs to be talked about (ICIC, 2009).

How do we do that as an Urban community to support kids who are moving forward in their lives? It seems to tie back into leadership. “OK you’ve finished this now. What does it mean to be an upcoming leader in community? How can you lead in a good way? How do you look after yourself? How do you let go of pain?” All of those things would be so powerful in reaching our kids and showing them healthy ways to do things. They really absolutely respect and embrace the sacred (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

6.1 Eight Key Findings

This chapter first identifies eight key findings, Urban ICIC participant statistical data, and then provides an analysis of the eight key findings that emerged from the SBTF (theories), STMF (methodology and methods) and data. This data is gathered from one-to-one interviews with fifteen Urban ICIC formerly in the custody of the BC child protection system and two talking circles with fourteen employees and contractors of two delegated Urban Indigenous delegated child welfare agencies in the Urban communities of Vancouver and Victoria, BC. The statistical data is supported by summaries, graphs and participant quotes. The eight key findings include participant quotes and short summaries to provide a greater level of analysis of each key finding. The Urban ICIC quotes are identified as Urban “ICIC” or “ICIC” while the Urban Indigenous agency participant quotes are identified as “Indigenous agency participant”. The key analysis and findings chapter is structured by the same star blanket design that was used to discuss both the SBTF and SBMF. Each of the eight key study findings is represented by one of the eight “star points” of the star blanket design. This means that the eight key points are not arranged in a hierarchical order, nor are they mutually exclusive or separate; indeed each is interconnected to the others and provides a holistic and balanced model to support the educational needs of Urban ICIC. There is recognition of overlap within and among the data (or star blanket points), and this is framed as a strength of this Star Blanket Analysis Model (SBAM). This SBAM is merely chosen as one way to represent the key
findings of this study and is in keeping with the theoretical and methodological chapters. Many other ways exist, or may be developed, to represent the eight key findings of this study.

The data emerged from a series of semi structured research questions posed to the research participants, including what they believe to be the reasons that they were initially removed from their families and legally ordered into BC child protection system, their individual number of placements in foster homes, schools and numbers of social workers they experienced while in foster care. Next, they were asked "what" or "who" they believe contributed towards their educational barriers and successes, both during and after they were discharged from the child protection system. Finally, they were asked if they wanted to make any recommendations to improve the educational success of ICIC. The fourteen Indigenous agency participants were asked about the length of time they worked in the field of child welfare or education and what they believe facilitates and hinders the educational success of Urban indigenous former youth in care while they were in foster care and after they leave care. They were also asked what they hope will change by participating in the research project and if they have any recommendations to improve the educational success of ICIC.

The eight key finding of this study suggest that in order to better support the educational needs of Urban ICIC, the following must be implemented:

1. Develop an Urban Indigenous educational advocacy body and specific educational legislation for Urban ICIC;
2. Provide leadership by Indigenous peoples to Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples (which is identified as "Urban Indigenous governance, culturally competent teachers, social workers, caregivers and counselors for Urban ICIC");
3. Promote Indigenous cultural values, policies, practices, languages and beliefs in Urban based educational curriculum and social work practice with Urban ICIC;
4. Reflect Indigenous perspectives about "all our relations" by building mentoring relationships between current and former Urban ICIC in the BC child protection system;
5. Provide culturally competent educational and social work support services for trauma, grief, loss, violence and abuse issues, both current and historical, and lack of attachment and undiagnosed health issues, for Urban ICIC, their teachers, social workers, counselors and/or caregivers;
6. Secure specific and targeted educational funding for Urban Indigenous youth that grow up in BC’s child protection system (elementary, secondary and post-secondary);
7. Develop and implement early educational interventions and cultural options in traditional and Western educational assessments, reviews, and plans for Urban ICIC; and
8. Collaborate with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and systems to promote good, politically collaborative & coordinated, culturally competent practices with Urban ICIC.

Once the statistical information of the participants is identified and discussed, a deeper analysis of these eight key findings will be provided.

6.2 Who are Urban ICICs?

Collectively, the twenty-nine research participants represent fifty-two First Nations and Métis communities (see Figure 3). The diversity of nations represented in the Urban Indigenous communities of Victoria and Vancouver context is evident and may begin to provide some understanding of the challenges experienced by agencies and Indigenous individuals to provide or access culturally relevant programs and services specific to their nation.

**Figure 3: Ancestral Nations of Research Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beaver</th>
<th>Canadian</th>
<th>Coast Salish</th>
<th>Carrier</th>
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<th>Cowichan</th>
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<td>Gitxsan</td>
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<td>Métis</td>
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<td>Nlaka’pamux</td>
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<td>Ojibwa</td>
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Note: some research participants claimed ancestry in more than one First Nation or Métis Nation premised on the community in which their parents were born. Only the one non-Indigenous participant identified as Canadian.

The research participants included both Urban ICIC and Indigenous agency representatives. Nine Indigenous female and six male former Urban ICIC participants ranged in age between twenty-four and fifty-five years of age. Of the fourteen Indigenous staff and contractors working for the two
Urban Indigenous agencies, twelve were female and two were male. All the Indigenous agency participants lived in the communities of Victoria and Vancouver. These individuals represented agency positions as board members, managers, supervisors, delegated guardianship, child protection and resource workers, administrative assistant, foster parent, counselor, support worker, roots worker, elder, and teacher.

The majority (10/15 or 66%) of the ICIC participants were in custody of the government since they were an infant or toddler (4 years of age or less) and “government” represents the only “legal parent” they have known (see figure 4). Their placement in the BC child protection system ranged from six to eighteen years with an average length of stay in foster care of 13.66 years which represents 71.89% of their childhood and youth spent as a legal ward of the child protection system. Their combined total number of years spent in foster care is 205.

**Figure 4: Age of ICIC Entry into the BC Child Protection System**

Fourteen of the fifteen ICIC participants (or 93.3%) were currently living in the Urban Aboriginal communities of Victoria or Vancouver and one former youth in care (or 6.7%) was living on a First Nations on-reserve community in central BC Of the fifteen ICIC research participants, thirteen (or
86.9%) are the child of a residential school survivor, one is the child of a former ICIC and one did not have access to this information. All were either ‘permanent wards’ or ‘continuing custody wards’ depending on whether they entered the BC child protection system under the CFCSA or former BC provincial child protection legislation. Their combined total of 125 placements in foster homes ranged from a low of one placement to more than fifty with group average of 8.3 placements. Only 4/15 (or 26.7%) of the ICIC had experienced an Aboriginal foster placement where at least one caregiver was of First Nations or Métis ancestry, the majority 11/15 (or 73.3%) did not.

**Figure 5: Number of Foster Home Placements per ICIC**

![Number of Foster Home Placements Per ICIC Chart](image)

The fifteen ICIC experienced a total of 149 school placements ranged from a low of two school placements to more than twenty with the group average of 9.3 placements. Most of these school placement changes were precipitated, and/or accompanied, by changes in foster home placements, neighborhoods, cities and friendship groups. Only 3/15 (or 20%) recalled experiencing an Aboriginal teacher, counsellor or support worker employed in their schools; the majority (12/15 or 80%) could not recall any Aboriginal school employees.
The combined numbers of 118 social workers assigned to the ICIC ranged from one to more than twenty-five with the ICIC recalling an average of 7.86 social workers. Two of the ICIC participants with larger numbers of social worker relationships estimated the numbers of social workers assigned to them, however all ICIC were emphatic about the numbers of Indigenous social workers assigned to them. Only 3/15 (or 20%) ICIC were assigned to Aboriginal social workers. At the time of this study, ICIC participants had been discharged from the child protection system for between five and thirty-six years.

The ICIC participant education levels at the time of the study ranged from one ICIC that completed grade six to one that earned a Master’s degree.
Of this sample, the ICIC Western based education levels at the time of the study ranged from one person that completed grade six to one person that earned a Master's degree. Specifically, 3/15 (or 20%) of the Indigenous former CIC’s achieved some elementary and secondary school, 2/15 (or 13.33%) achieved G.E.D.’s, 1/5 (or 6.66%) achieved a School Leaving Certificate, 4/15 (or 26.66%) achieved a diploma or certificate, 4/15 (or 26.66%) achieved an undergraduate degree and 1/5 (or 6.66%) achieved a Master’s degree. Within this study 6/15 (or 40%) of the Indigenous former CIC’s achieved less than an academic graduation from grade twelve and 9/15 (or 60%) achieved some level of post-secondary education ranging from a certificate, diploma, undergraduate or graduate degree. None of the fifteen ICIC participants had completed a formal trades certification or a doctoral degree, although one of the participants had extensive certificates gained through specific job-related requirements.

The participants with the lowest level of Western based education described memories such as racism, bullying, suspensions from school and lack of trust in child protection or educational institutions as negatively affecting their educational experiences.
I got to find out about prejudice. I met my first bully in kindergarten. I got my first slug in the eye by a bully. I know TV programs like the Simpsons, mock and make fun of the bullies, but it was a pretty significant experience for me. It definitely played a role in derailing what was already a weak interest (ICIC, 2009).

One of my big escapes was reading. Ever since I can remember I would hide out in a book. In grade 5, I got thrown out of school for reading. I always brought a fat novel to school. If it got boring in school, I’d pull out my novel. The teacher got tired of it and threw me out. It probably would have been smarter to give me a book related to the material. I didn’t care what I read (ICIC, 2009).

I think for me, just general distrust for any system, anything that seems like an organized system of care or institution. I just got a sense of foreboding any time I went near it. It’d take quite a while for me to trust that system being beneficial to me. I still do (ICIC, 2009).

The participants with the highest levels of Western based education described memories such as supportive principals, foster home and school placement stability, keeping siblings together in placements and opportunities to experience other cultures.

My principal knew I was Aboriginal – I guess it’s in the file. I didn’t know anything about the band paying for your college or paying for university. My principal said, ‘I’ve been watching you and you’ve gone from F’s to the lowest grade being C’s. I’m proud of you. I believe in you. If you do go to college, I will pay for it out of my own pocket.’ I said, ‘Can I see your wings? Are they behind your back?’ Here I’ve got a Dad that calls me “Dumber”. The teachers and social workers have no belief in me and this guy is prepared to pay for my college. From that day on, nobody could stop me (ICIC, 2009).

Through the whole process we were able to maintain all of our social network, our counselors, stay in the same schools... It was important to stay in the same schools and that we had the same friends. I had always been in the same school. It was so important I still maintain friendships with the same friends I had gone to school with since kindergarten (ICIC, 2009).

At sixteen, I finally quit. I’d had enough...I had a social worker who finally tracked me down. She said, “You can’t do nothing. You have to find a job or come up with something,” I found a pamphlet on the ground outside her office. It was for working on a construction crew in the Amazon Basin. In defiance, I turned to her and said this is what I want to do. I had no idea what it was or what I was signing up for. She took me on and I ended up working for 4 months. It was like a Peace Corp. It was an American program. I was the only person from Canada. It was the hardest 4 months of my life. I shifted a lot of my attitudes. I had a really angry chip on my shoulder up to that point (ICIC, 2009).

The employment levels at the time of the 2009 study ranged from nine participants that were employed full time to one that was in receipt of social assistance benefits (see figure 8). Three of
the 15 (or 20%) research participants expressed clear plans to return to school and two (or 13.33%) were enrolled in an educational program. None of the 15 participants had completed a formal trades certification or a doctoral degree, although one (or 6.66%) of the participants had extensive certificates gained through specific job-related requirements.

Figure 8: ICIC Employment Levels and Educational Plans

Nine of the fifteen (or 60%) ICIC participant sample was employed fulltime at the time of the study while three (or 20%) was employed part time, two (or 13%) was employed fulltime or parttime and attending school and one (or 7%) was in receipt of social assistance payments. None of the participants was solely attending school. For many, their work lives focus on issues regarding youth advocacy, supporting current ICIC in schools, volunteering with at-risk or incarcerated youth and on Aboriginal community-based governance boards and organizations.

I do a lot of youth engagement work with the government. I am involved with the Vancouver Regional Youth Council and with the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks. They give us a lot of opportunities to talk. It’s better than just bitching. You’re kind of getting your foot in the door and talking on the other ends, where people realize you have life experience and you can speak to that, and you’re also smart and they take you seriously (ICIC, 2009).

As a First Nations support worker, it was definitely working and educating the teachers on First Nations knowledge, so they were more aware, more compassionate, more understanding, especially when kids are in care. They thought every student was the
same. Some kids came to school with no money in their pockets, maybe the same pair of clothes all the time. I think the teachers need to be more aware of those students and be able to have that compassion and reach out (ICIC, 2009).

Somebody told me there was a minimum security juvenile delinquent place across from BCIT that was struggling badly for volunteers to help tutor and whatever. I volunteered there for 2 summers and they always gave me the Native kids… I remember being in there and there was one really troubled white kid. He turns to me and says, “What are you in for?” I took that as the biggest compliment. He was so comfortable that he thought I was one of them (ICIC, 2009).

I started volunteering for the local Friendship Centre. A year after I started volunteering for the Provincial and National Friendship Centres on their boards. For the past 2 months I’m volunteering with the Vancouver Island Board Task Force. All of these pieces go right back to my education and support my education. I did a practicum at Surrounded by Cedar. I’ve been able to incorporate them into my projects. I’ve made presentations in my classes. The Aids Vancouver Island one is a much newer one and I’m still finding my feet in – totally new topic area that hasn’t come into my circle a whole lot. They give me a chance to learn about processes in organizations, about future employment possibilities, about creating my own jobs, and about being able to parallel my education (ICIC, 2009).

6.3 Reasons for Initial Child Removal from Families

It has to start at the community level. The land-based agencies have got to start acknowledging that there are a whole community of people that live in the Urban area and just because we left the reserve didn’t mean that we went away some place. We still need support from them (Indigenous agency representative, 2009).

How do you put your family together again after that; being separated for so long? I always treasure that, just having an occasion to meet my biological mother and start the healing process and realizing that it wasn’t of her own choosing to give us up. It’s really good to have that, to know that it’s not her fault (ICIC, 2009).

Of the fifteen ICIC participants, thirteen (or 86.6%) self-identified as being born in an Urban (or off-reserve) based community while only two (or 13.33%) were born on their land-based community. Thirteen of the fifteen (or 86.6%) self-identified as the child of a residential school survivor while two (or 13.3%) did not have access to this information. The intergenerational affects of residential school traumas and the residential school survivors resultant coping mechanisms are well documented (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, [TRC], 2010) and were acknowledged by leaders of all Canada’s major political parties during Canada’s 2008 historic apology to residential school
survivors. Therefore, it is critical to frame the former ICIC research participant’s child protection triggering experiences against the historical, legal, social and economic context arising from their parent’s residential school experiences. The data in this study demonstrates that a connection exists between Canada’s historical residential school policies and practices and the triggering events that brought this group of children of residential school survivors to the attention of BC’s child protection authorities. These historic policies continue to have profound effects on Indigenous peoples and in particular former residential school survivors that became mothers and partners.

According to Marie Wilson (2010), a Commissioner of TRC, the effects of the 130 year residential school era results in devastating ruptures in mother/child bonds, a widespread inability to teach language and transmit cultural teachings to their children. Residential school survivors reporting to the TRC also identify their lack of ability to build or engage in trusting relationships which appear to put women in particular at risk for becoming involved and financially dependent upon abusive partners, living in poverty, with low educational levels, addictions and a loss of parenting skills.

The fifteen Urban ICIC research participants self-identified that the six most prevalent reasons triggering their entry into the BC child protection system as (in descending order):

1. Substance misuse by parents
2. Violence against their mother by father or step father
3. Death of parent
4. Sexual, physical, emotional abuse or neglect by parent
5. Mental health issues of parent
6. Lack of, inaccessible or non-existent health supports on reserve for their health needs as children.

The traumatic, inter-generational (historical trauma) legacy of residential schools, child protection removal or apprehensions, misogyny, and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (difficulty concentrating, feeling detached from others and emotionally numb, feeling intense distress) are identified in the following participant quotes (Duran & Duran, 1997; Hart, 2002; Sotero, 2006). These examples constitute evidence about how genocidal practices perpetrated against
generations of Indigenous peoples by Canada have resulted in a lack of parenting skills, significant mental health or addictions issues, abuse, murder and violence against Aboriginal women (NWAC, 2010) and how this results in life and death safety concerns for their children. It is evident that if Indigenous women are not safe, their children are not safe. Quotes from seven of the former Urban ICIC demonstrate the complex intersectionality of Indigenous colonial history within Canada. The quotes speak to the enforced relocation of many Urban Indigenous peoples, and enforced constructions of Urban Indigenous children’s socio-cultural and political identities within Canada’s child protection and education systems, for example,

After the residential schools closed down, my Mom didn’t have the parenting skills to look after her children. Things got so bad in my family that someone had to step up. My Mom had 16 kids and of the 16, 9 were raised in the residential school and 7 were raised in foster care. Mom never had the opportunity to raise any of her children. I really believe it has to do with all the violence and drinking. Poverty was huge. There was no welfare at that time. The food was scarce. The living conditions were horrendous. So being put in foster care probably saved our lives (ICIC, 2009).

I have told my story many times but it is really my mom’s story as well. She had grown up in care as well... She was on welfare; we were poor. I looked up to my mom. My mom was my everything. All that hurt that was deep down inside of her, who would be able to cope with that while trying to raise two children, not getting any support from the government...The addiction got her and she had mental health issues. Nobody invested in my mom. Instead they took me away from her and it destroyed her (ICIC, 2009).

My Mom got in a relationship with a [non-Indigenous] man when I was about 10 and she became somewhat stable, but he had problems. He was a logger and an alcoholic and really violent. He always told my Mom if she ever left him, he would hurt one of her kids. She did finally leave him... My sister was home and he got a gun and killed her. My life really plummeted after that (ICIC, 2009).

I came into care when I was 3 going on 4. My mother is Cree and my father is Irish Canadian and he had a drinking issue and he was quite violent. There were concerns because there were very violent interactions between the two of them. My mother was getting hurt so the Ministry felt it was in the best interest of the kids to remove all of us. I had 3 older siblings who were 12, 11 and 10 and then myself. We were all taken...my mom never recovered (ICIC, 2009).

I was told I grew up in Children’s Hospital from 0 to about 8. So I went from Children’s Hospital into a foster home... Growing up in the foster care home, they were always told that I had a kidney condition and was severely anemic and had extremely low blood pressure... My mom was 14 when she had me and my dad was just barely out of his teens (ICIC, 2009).

I have been in care since just over a year after I was born. My aunties were 11 and 12 when they witnessed me being taken away from home. My mom was not around. Her
mom was around and she wanted to take care of me, but the social workers said that I was sick and I needed to go somewhere else. My aunties told me that when they did that, I was learning how to walk and I guess that scared my walking ability away when I was being taken (ICIC, 2009).

My mom had passed and my father was an alcoholic. I think he went through his own emotional journey because he was the reason my mom had passed in a car accident (ICIC, 2009).

Once removed from their parents and placed in the custody of the BC child protection system, ICIC experienced varying levels of ongoing trauma related to their removal. Additionally, all but one Urban ICIC participant indicated that they experienced new trauma related to physical, sexual and emotional abuse, witnessing violence between foster parents, exploitation, neglect and rejection by foster or adoptive parents, or other children placed in the foster homes. Only one participant was removed, as a toddler, from her abusive foster home, on the recommendation of a physician. For others, social workers knowingly placed them in poorly-screened and dangerous foster homes, infrequently visited them or inquired about the resultant school changes. For these participants, there were no offers of trauma support services while they were in foster care, to help them heal from historical, exploitive or current trauma experiences. Moreover, it appears that none of the legal guardians asked the children if they felt safe, were being abused, or meaningful included in the foster home placements. For example:

I was really unhappy and keeping the [sexual abuse by foster father] secret dominated everything I did. I couldn’t confide in anyone because I was just really angry and lashed out instead. I was chronic – stealing at school and that just made it worse because then my behavior was an issue. I couldn’t tell them why my behavior was the way it was, because I wasn’t allowed to. So they just saw the behavior, they didn’t know the cause (ICIC, 2009).

If I didn’t want to do anything they would punish me – hit me or pull my hair, put me in the closet because I was crying a lot (ICIC, 2009).

We sued the first foster home I was in. They called it vicarious abuse, because they had two older kids in the home and they were my abusers. They called it vicarious abuse because the foster father had been abusing the older kids. It came out in the trial that those foster parents had previously lived in Alberta and the Alberta government was so horrified by the way they had taken care of the kids that they sent a letter to BC saying, ‘Do not allow these people to be foster parents,’ which they ignored because they needed foster parents. The story was that the mom stabbed one of the foster kids and I think they
were giving them Valium as well. One of your questions was, ‘Did the social worker ever come and visit you?’ It wasn’t even the social worker that dropped us off [at the foster home], it was the receptionist… That came out in court (ICIC, 2009).

I used to say to my foster mother, ‘I can’t wait to grow up and have my own real family’. Cause I was always introduced as the ‘foster daughter’ (ICIC, 2009).

I was a baby when I came to foster care. My first home was where I was adopted into was a non-native home on the coast… I stayed there a number of years, but during those years, and I can remember from age 3, that I was to put myself in this snowsuit. I didn’t want to or something. From that point on, that’s when I can remember all the pain and stuff that happened in that home. I was taken from that home by a doctor. A doctor finally saw too much, what was going on for me (ICIC, 2009).

I think a lot of people in the old days had foster kids to make money and you worked and they pocketed the money. There wasn’t any accountability or anyone to check if you had school supplies or if you had lunch. I remember the school nurse sending me home because I had bruises down the backs of my legs from the strap. I couldn’t go home because I would get the strap for coming home. So I’d spend the day out in the woods or down by the river. The school nurse was aware that there was abuse happening, but if I went back to where I got them, I’d get more. If I got beat up at school, I knew if I had anything on my face to show that I’d been in a fight, guaranteed I’d get the strap when I got home (ICIC, 2009).

My mother was not married. She was a young girl. Her parents didn’t approve of her relationship. At that time, when girls were pregnant at the age of 16 and 17, that was not a very good thing. So I was put into foster care when I was born and stayed there for 2 years and then was adopted for about 2 ½ years. Then I was given up [by my adoptive parents] and put back in care until age 19. So basically, I was in care for my entire life (ICIC, 2009).

I saw something and I went into the cabin to say to my foster parents, ‘Hey, Mom and Dad, did you see . . .’ and he just hit her and her glasses were on the floor. I didn’t know what to do. I wanted to jump off the boat. I didn’t want to talk to either one of them. There was violence…It would make me go inwards. I became very silent, closed (ICIC, 2009).

Currently Canada is settling the largest class action lawsuit in Canadian history with residential school survivors (TRC, 2010), however, it is important to stress that the individual compensation amounts are minuscule compared to the enormity of loss and pain suffered by so many survivors and the intergenerational effects on their families. To date, the government has not acknowledged publicly or apologized for abuse or harm caused to Indigenous children in Canada’s child protection or education systems, however that day is coming. On May 30, 2011 Sharon Russell, a Gitxsan First Nations woman, filed a class action suit in the Supreme Court of BC against the Government of Canada on
behalf of Aboriginal British Columbians who were removed from their families as children by provincial welfare authorities.

The law suit alleges that between 1962 and 1996 the federal government negligently delegated Indian child welfare services to the Province of BC, ignored its obligations to Aboriginal children, took no steps to prevent the children from losing their Aboriginal identity and the opportunity to exercise their Aboriginal and treaty rights when they were placed in foster homes and adopted by non-Aboriginals (CNW Group, 2011).

This BC class action suit is similar to one filed by Marcia Martel in Ontario in 2010 that subsequently received court approval to proceed. In both cases, Indigenous women are taking leadership roles to hold Canada to account for its "failure to protect" Indigenous children in its child protection systems and signaling that their patience and wait for justice is over.

6.4 Truth Telling: Eight Key Findings and Analysis

Social work has a role in advocating in social policy matters. Policy practice is an activity that can bring about change in both what is done and the way it is done. Social work has an important role to provide a counterargument to those continuing colonising activities which represent a single universal knowledge. The policies which are currently used in relation to Indigenous people and their children are policies of surveillance and subjugation, while they are being claimed by their authors as policies of deliverance and civilization (Young, 2008, p. 117).

Regeneration and restoration is at the core of re-balancing relationships...restorative processes rely upon the abuser taking full responsibility for his/her actions in a collective setting, amongst the person s/he violated, and amongst the people both the perpetrator and the survivor hold responsibilities to – be that their extended family, clan or community. In the case of state-perpetuated [systems]...the survivors would have agency, decision-making power, and the power to decide restorative measures (Simpson, 2011, p. 23).

The next section of this chapter identifies the eight key findings and analysis that emerged from data gathered from participants that either grew up in, and/or currently live, in the urban communities of Vancouver and Victoria, BC. To structure this analysis, the eight key findings are identified as eight
individual “star points” represented within the Saulteaux star blanket educational organizational model (see Figure 9).

This Saulteaux star blanket educational organizational model moves research to action. It privileges Indigenous “voices of experience” by making significant space within this dissertation for them to be heard and speak in unequivocal terms about what must happen to address the trauma and violence perpetrated against them by Canadian child protection and education systems and to strengthen the education of Urban ICIC. The participants in this study not only guide us to a holistic vision; they tell us how to do it. In this model, the Saulteaux star blanket “star points” are described separately, however they are not meant to be mutually exclusive and there is recognition of overlap and flow between the star points to create a holistic Indigenous educational organizational framework. Indigenous worldviews, knowledges, values and beliefs, practices, policies and research voiced by the participants, frames the holistic central star structure.

For the purposes of explaining this Saulteaux educational organizational model, the eight individual star “points” will be framed as “eight teachings” gathered from the participants. Below each of the eight teachings is a number of alternating ICIC and Indigenous agency participant quotes and analysis. This alternating and integrating quotation format is purposeful. It reflects the alternating and integrated diamond-point colors (or pieces) in an actual star blanket which are purposefully arranged to create an orderly, holistic star blanket design. Therefore, each participant quotation is also individually, collectively and interdependently needed to create an orderly, holistic star blanket educational organizational model. Modeled after the star blanket design and teaching that begins in
the east with the first star of a new day, this star blanket educational organization model explanation begins in the east with the “star point” teaching that is envisioned as “advocacy and legislation”.

**Figure 9: Star Blanket Educational Organizational Model for Urban ICIC**

Eight Teachings of a Star Blanket Educational Organizational Model
6.5 **Urban Indigenous Educational Advocacy and Legislation**

Develop an Urban Indigenous Educational Advocacy Body and Specific Educational Legislation for Urban ICIC

The participants identified unique educational needs of Urban ICIC and ways needed to ground Indigenous educational advocacy, legislation and policy in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, worldviews and pedagogy. The data supports the development of an Urban Indigenous educational advocacy organization that includes Urban ICIC as decision makers. The organization must have a specific educational mandate to support the political, legal, legislative, policy and advocacy needs of Urban ICIC. The organization is envisioned to be at arm’s length from the educational and child welfare bureaucracies but have power (such as an Urban Aboriginal Educational Advocate) to compel the systems to develop protocols, politically collaborate and coordinate child protective, health and educational services for the benefit of Urban ICIC. The mandate, legislation, policies and funding of such an organization must be developed by and in collaboration with Urban ICIC, former ICIC’s, Indigenous and non-Indigenous child protection, education and health leadership. It must be informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, treaties between Indigenous Nations and the Crown, the Canadian Constitution (section 35) and support the inherent right to education for every Urban Indigenous person in Canada. Most importantly, such an Urban Indigenous Educational Advocacy organization must have the power to compel the "right to education" be included in every child protection piece of legislation in Canada. Educational policies, benchmark standards, targets and evaluation methods must be developed to support this Urban ICIC educational right in child protection legislation. Vastly increased levels of individualized and group tutoring support must be mandatory for Urban ICIC. In addition legal guardians, foster care providers, teachers and support people must access mandatory training and be monitored by the organization to determine if they are meeting the benchmark educational standards required for ICIC. If the ICIC does not meet the benchmark standards within a given timeframe, a restorative
justice type of review should occur with all involved parties to determine why the systemic supports and practices put in place to support the ICIC were unsuccessful, and determine the next steps.

Given the growing urbanization of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the ongoing reserve-centric educational perspective maintained by all levels of governments (Dickason & Newbigging, 2011; Frideres, 2011; Matthew, 2000), it will be important that dialogue and support is sought from political representatives of the Federal and Provincial governments, on and off-reserve (or urban) Aboriginal governments including the First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Participants commented that:

I would like to see an advocacy organization that has the authority to bring all the parties together, education and child welfare services to share information, provide early intervention with lots of coordinated, targeted support and tutoring for our youth. They should have a mandate, an Urban Aboriginal educational, advocacy group for Urban Aboriginal children-in-care (ICIC, 2009).

We also need to work the system from the outside as well. It’s two-fold. In the rights of children in foster care, there is nothing about their right to a good education, and appropriate education, inclusive of their cultures or anything like that (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

I told my Grade 6 teacher I wanted to become a social worker who worked in policy. That was me. I was really determined because I had been talking to other people in the foster care system saying, ‘These rules suck; they stink.’ I wanted to know who made the rules. My mother told me it was the social workers and they had to write this policy or follow the policy and I said, ‘I want to write just like that. I want to re-write the rules in that book.’ I was only in grade 6. My foster parents said, ‘This is not a child who is developmentally delayed, this is a child that has been oppressed by the system’ (ICIC, 2009).

What I hope will change is what we can do outside the school system, but still work with the system. There is a huge number of kids who have all these strikes against them that makes it more difficult to function in the educational system (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

There needs to be special programs for kids in care that are identified with problems. They need to be put into some kind of special program because all kids learn at a different speed. There are kids that have special needs and those needs need to be met. Eventually they are going to move on and achieve whatever it is that they want to do and without that schooling it’s tough. I consider myself lucky. Even though the education that I received in care was terrible, where I am today has got nothing to do with what they did. It’s what I strived to do (ICIC, 2009).

Encourage our young people to be their own advocates. I know I worked closely with youth in care network for example that I think we are doing a phenomenal job in assisting our young people being advocates for themselves. That’s where there is empowerment (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).
I think as guardians we have to be involved in their lives and be advocates. So many of our children are excluded because of their behavior. To be familiar with the Act, to be more involved at the political level. ...We need to continue to advocate for our young people who have delays or have special needs. We have to network with our aboriginal partners. Advocacy is really important (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

Finally, it is important to monitor the Federal government’s response to the 2010 recommendations of the Provincial Council of Child and Youth Advocates to create a statutory National Children’s Commissioner with a mandate to measure and report on child welfare, education and health outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth. Urban ICIC and Urban Aboriginal child populations could benefit from a relationship created between these two anticipated bodies; the Urban Aboriginal Educational Advocate and the National Children’s Commissioner. However, the development of a restorative justice type of model to interrogate the Canadian systemic lack of educational success for ICIC must be mandatory for such oversight bodies.

6.6 Urban Indigenous Governance, Management, Control and Staff

Provide Leadership by Indigenous Peoples to Indigenous Peoples for Indigenous Peoples (identified as “Urban Indigenous governance, management, control and staff” including culturally competent teachers, social workers, caregivers and counselors for Urban ICIC”)

Participants identified inherent Indigenous rights, self-government and self-determination issues in relation to their enforced Urban Indigenous socio-political location. These over-arching inherent rights must recognize and support Urban ICIC educational needs through transference of management and control of Western educational policy, funding and curriculum development from the Federal and Provincial governments to Indigenous peoples, political bodies and organizations. Canada must recognize its fiduciary responsibility, and be held to account for, the historical legacy of the failed residential school, child protection and adoption projects that negatively affects the educational levels of this Indigenous child population. Canada must provide adequate resourcing
for a sustained period of time to strengthen and support Urban ICIC to be as academically successful as either Indigenous or non-Indigenous children living outside child protection systems. This group of ICIC envisions a national response to this issue, attached to national Indigenous political or Urban Indigenous service organization. A portion of the $10 billion budget of the Federal bureaucracy, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), could fund such a national response through the Office of the Federal Interlocutor whose strategic responsibilities include improved socio-economic conditions of Métis, non-status Indians, and Urban Aboriginal peoples (Frideres, 2011, p. 191). For example,

I think that to secure a proper and better place for First Nations in this country, Indian Affairs should be ours, it's our foot in the door. And to have these foreigners that have only been in the country a short time running our lives? How do you point the finger any more when the decision-making and policy-making is from the ground up? It's all Aboriginal. There's never going to be a Department of Chinese and Italian. There's never going to be a department of Iranians. But there always will be Indian Affairs cause of the country – this is original Aboriginal lands and I think we will always be here. I know that INAC's policy is to have 50% Native employment. I say, 'No way, we'll take the whole department' (ICIC, 2009).

Self-government has to start with education. Whether it's an education of what our traditional systems were or how we merge what was once traditional governance to a more modern form of governance. We have to be educated in both. We've been so displaced because of residential school and foster homes. I felt like a fake Indian for 20 plus years (ICIC, 2009).

I thought, 'How dare people make out like we are savages. We are very strong, intelligent people that have every right to have control of our children, have control of our land, have control of our resources. We should be having supports after what you've done to us.' That's what I want to do. I want to use my power to give back to my community. That's why I am constantly going back to school. I don't believe so much in this Western educational system. I don't learn the way they teach. I'm a very visual learner. It's hard for me to sit in lectures for three hours and listen and take notes. I do it so I can conform to what I need to do in my own life, so that I can sit at the boardroom tables and talk with decision makers and hopefully make change (ICIC, 2009).

I have been so fortunate to have had Aboriginal counsellors and Aboriginal teachers. Those are the ones who have made the difference (ICIC, 2009).
I think as guardians we have to be involved in their lives and be advocates. So many of our children are excluded because of their behavior. [We need to] be familiar with the Act, to be more involved at the political level (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

She works for INAC [The Federal Government, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada]. She actually does all our financials. Yesterday she cried when we talked about the impact of the 60s scoops and the residential school stuff. I gave her some books and resources to look for and to become more aware of what’s going on. She was totally shocked that this assimilation process is still going on. They think that because they’ve closed down the residential schools, they think they’ve closed the assimilation process. But it’s still going on – it’s alive and well. We need to keep hammering away at keeping our Aboriginal rights – our language, our customs, our beliefs and our title. I mean our identity too. I was told the hardest thing we can do in the society of Canada is be an Indian, because our way or beliefs and our values are totally different from the mainstream of Canada. Teachers can help in that process by breaking down the myths that circulate out there. We don’t get education for free. We don’t get our gas, our tobacco for free (ICIC, 2009).

The data suggests that Urban Indigenous research participants experience frustration with AANDC or INAC, its non-Indigenous bureaucrats, lack of accountability and absence of Indigenous knowledge. They believe that Indigenous people should be “in charge” of the bureaucracy because of the difference that their lived experience, knowledge and understanding of Indigenous life in both Canadian and Indigenous systems will make as compared to that of non-Indigenous individuals who do not have the same knowledge, understanding or accountability to Indigenous communities. They acknowledge and identify that the notion of white power and supremacy is everywhere in Canadian political bureaucracies, educational and child protection systems and that it reinforces white privilege, but continues to ignore and suppress their realities of discrimination and power imbalances within those systems. They believe that change must begin somewhere, and one strategy that may offer promise or a place to start, is by Indigenous peoples taking responsibility for the entire AANDC or INAC bureaucracy. They believe that by putting Indigenous peoples in leadership roles in political, bureaucratic and educational or social work bodies is a necessary step forward on the road to holistic Indigenous self-governance. Finally, they do not believe this will be an easy task; however it is necessary.
6.7 **Indigenous Cultural Values, Policies, Practices, Languages and Beliefs**

Promote Indigenous Cultural Values, Policies, Practices, Languages and Beliefs in Urban-based Educational Curriculum and Social work Practice with Urban ICIC

The participants spoke about their negative and alienating elementary, secondary and post-secondary educational experiences due to the lack of Aboriginal content in Western based curriculum, poor implementation or lack of implementation despite Aboriginal courses being "on the books". This is not a “new complaint”, and for many, this “lack of all things Aboriginal”, or options to learn about traditional education, critically needed to support a positive Indigenous identity development, continues through racism experienced in their foster homes, schools and community experiences. Most importantly, they believe it is critical to mandate Indigenous knowledge to foster parents, support workers, teachers, social workers and other important people in ICIC lives. Their recommendations extend to infuse Indigenous teachings, pedagogy and history in all Canadian K-12 and post-secondary curriculum. In their vision, Indigenous "education", in this broader sense, must be offered respectfully, to assist in healing, and be inclusive of the teachings of land in the environment, spirit, Elders, language, cultural gatherings, talking circles, immersion camps and rite of passage celebrations.

The participants also recommend mandating Indigenous knowledge and racism training in the urban community context; particularly to identify the mandated ways in which Indigenous peoples experience long term displacement from family, community or their cultures. Urban ICIC must be repeatedly informed of their right to be involved in Indigenous programming available through Indigenous peoples, agencies and communities. Urban ICIC must have access to academic Indigenous educational programs (including instruction in Indigenous language/s, spiritual and ceremonial teachings, cultural emotional support, and opportunities for environmental immersion), social service agency support, Indigenous counsellors, teachers, support workers, foster parents, and social workers. Mandatory policy and practice must guide child protection agencies, school
boards, social workers and teachers to provide these options for each Urban ICIC that expresses an interest or choice to participate in, or receive Indigenous services.

Not all First Nations youth in care will choose to adopt a traditional, cultural or spiritual path but they deserve to have that choice. The sound of a running river or being up the mountains – all those things are nurturing to the spirit. Those are the things that will see you through hard times. Your physical body is going to let you down. Your mind is going to let you down. It’s your spirit that will see you through (ICIC, 2009).

In my adult education, what has been the strongest influence has been culture. I’ve gone to therapy for 7 years. I’ve gone to treatment, gone to AA and NA, but the thing that has given me a sense of peace inside is culture. It hasn’t necessarily been my [First Nations] culture because nobody in my family that I knew practiced our culture. Some of our distant relatives do practice the culture, but I didn’t have a bridge to them. I ended up going to Sundance. I think I started in 1993 or 94. I moved back to Vancouver and one friend of mine used to go to ceremony in Hope and they were connected to his Sundance in Montana. He invited me there. It was so healing when I went. I felt so loved and welcomed and will be always grateful to them for doing that for me. If that can be instilled in the kids, it would be so much better. Just a pride of who they are and where they come from and how valuable and how precious language and culture and dance and song are (ICIC, 2009).

What would be awesome is a coming of age ceremony. But how do you do that when you’re an Urban agency and you have so many different nations and cultural backgrounds? But we’ve always been inclusive and it can still have just as much meaning and impact. I’d really like to see stuff done with rites of passage and make it inclusive and help them before they are aging out. I’d like to start with healing circles younger and supporting them to use their voice to express themselves in a good way (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

The classroom environment and wherever you go in mainstream society is so dry and devoid of the cultural aspect of our being. Our culture unites people and helps people to see who they really are. I believe in bringing kids together and helping them to create that support network (Indigenous agency participant, 2009). We didn’t learn any language, didn’t learn any First Nations teaching, didn’t do any First Nations artwork. It was kind of a slack off class. It was kind of disappointing. At that age it would have been nice to be able to connect with my culture and be able to understand where my culture comes from (ICIC, 2009).

I think you would probably want to praise the kids a little more. Like have a potluck every week at the end of the week so they know how far they are or have a dinner every month and acknowledge them – how well they’re doing. Not all people like to be acknowledged though… [Let them know that] it’s OK to take their time and it’s not a race and they can go at their own pace or go as far as they want (ICIC, 2009).

In the summer time we had a cultural immersion camp for foster parents. We had about ten families with youth and teenagers. There were Elders from the ____ (First Nation) so they were introduced to various ceremonies and stories. That really made a difference to the youth. Just being around that energy was really important. It was part of where they came from. The setting was beautiful too, because it was in the bush away from the city (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).
It was a culture shock because I didn’t really understand – I’d never lived on a reserve before. They [Aboriginal foster parents] had two sons that are very much immersed in the culture in their family and extended family – and their traditions. I was so resentful because I didn’t want to be Native and didn’t want to be stuck in a place where I didn’t want to be. So I started lashing out, putting down their culture and their beliefs and their family. I started stealing from them and running away. It degenerated from there. There’s no chance of trying to fix that. It’s just too late. I’ve already been entrenched in that shame being told over and over again, ‘Indians are drunks and they’re lazy and not good for anything.’ I had a hard time coming to terms with that. I’m on a reserve and didn’t want to be (ICIC, 2009).

From the participant examples provided, we can deduce that patience and cultural sensitivity, doing things when the “time is right” and Urban ICIC are ready to receive the knowledge is key.

Screening and hiring Indigenous culturally competent and supportive people to assist Urban ICIC understand, express and heal from their anger, hurt, pain and trauma is critical. It is just as important as understanding that with this specific population of Urban Indigenous peoples, educative legislation, policy and curriculum must be developed as a holistic, life-long approach to reclaiming Indigenous identity and coming to terms with what it means to be an urban Indigenous, traditionally educated or balanced individual. Finally, it is critical to hire, employ or provide training to ensure that all people working with Urban ICIC are culturally competent individuals. If teachers, social workers or foster parents demonstrate no interest in availing themselves of culturally competent cross-cultural training, or demonstrating their proficiency in these areas, then they should not be employed by schools, child protection or fostering organizations or support service agencies. Demonstration of respect for Indigenous worldviews, including a valued role for Elders, using the environment for teaching and learning purposes, incorporating culture and Indigenous languages in the curriculum is fundamental to successful educational and child welfare programs. Inclusion of Indigenous community members in tutoring, mentoring or other supportive ways, and a range of skilled health supports for children differentially affected by maternal alcohol or drug misuse, is also mandatory. Finally, the deep educational abyss between ICIC and other student populations, that have never been mandated to provincial child protection systems in Canada, cannot be properly addressed without an intersectional approach that accounts for social
determinants such as violent, racist and colonized child protection and educational history, enforced relocation of many Urban Indigenous peoples, and enforced constructions of Urban Indigenous children’s socio-cultural and political identities.

6.8 Indigenous Mentoring Relationships between Current and Former Urban ICIC

Reflect Indigenous Perspectives about “all our relations” by Building Mentoring Relationships between Current and Former Urban ICIC in the BC Child Protection System

The participants spoke about the significant need for a range of mentoring relationships between current and former ICIC. Many of the Urban former ICIC participants spoke about their interest in mentoring current ICIC to help them know that “it isn’t always going to be this way”. They think it is important that they are the people to tell the current ICIC that one day, they will be discharged from the child protection and out of the education systems, able to make, and live with, their own choices. They spoke about their own healing journeys; being in leadership positions in organizations, institutions and ceremonial practices, that may be able to offer current ICIC hope, a “hand up” or transitional support. They believe that exposure to Western and traditional educational programs, employment and mentoring opportunities that could help ICIC leave the child protection system as a “whole human being” were helpful.

The ICIC and Indigenous agency representatives identify the importance that ICIC have access to supportive Indigenous people who share a lived experience in similar ways available to residential school survivors. There is a sense that “their time” is coming when Canadians will learn about their child welfare stories and abuses, and their need for support and healing. They believe that by “giving it time”, Canadian governments will be held to account for failing to educate, and adequately fund, the significant and unique Western and traditional educational needs of ICIC in Canada. In the meantime, they believe that former ICIC can be a tremendous support to current ICIC in ways that no other
group of people can. For example, ICIC identified issues of violence between foster parents, by older children placed in the foster care placement, and violence and neglect perpetrated against themselves by foster parents. Such mentors could potentially detect abuse earlier and provide a valuable level of oversight on behalf of current Urban ICIC.

I got to see how strong an individual he was and how proud he was to be First Nations leader in our region. Seeing things like that firsthand made me start to realize there was more to life than alcohol, drugs and violence. I started really working at wanting more in my life because I started having really good role models in my life and people that really supported me (ICIC, 2009).

I think it is really important to seek out role models for these children so they can actually see success. And to have the opportunity to go to conferences and career fairs where there are role models. If they see success they will be more likely to succeed. If they see the guy down the street succeed at selling drugs, that’s what they gravitate towards. And having someone who has a vested interest in them (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

If I can reach just one kid that was worth the hour and a half. If I can reach one kid and if it’s 3:00 in the morning, I’m quitting. I’ll be right there. Let’s talk about it. Because I know, that day I sat in ________’s office, that all it took – I had a goal, I had a dream. That was the point that it became written in stone that I will have my degree because somebody believed in me. If that’s all that somebody needs to hear is, ‘You’ve got what it takes. I believe in you because I’ve been there. I’m not talking to you like the social workers, I’m not just text-book talking to you. I’m telling you and if you want to see where I used to live, let’s go. You can make it kid. You’ve got what it takes’ (ICIC, 2009).

There is that whole sense of identity and acceptance. They are proud to be Aboriginal. It’s not a negative thing. Whereas previously our Aboriginal young people probably felt isolated. Maybe the expectation was that they are not going to succeed. Whereas now there are so many role models and the expectation is, ‘Of course you can.’ You can do all kinds of things because there are role models. There are supports and after they leave care there are supports within the community colleges and UBC (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

There were a lot of expectations around what an Aboriginal student looks like and what their experience should be. Everyone that I went to school [university] with came from their traditional territories with their culture and their traditional names. My experience was very foreign to them. There’s a lot of empathy and understanding for people who’ve been in residential school and there’s support around that. There’s very little understanding or support for people who have grown up in the foster care system and aren’t connected to any heritage (ICIC, 2009).

He was an honest man and worked hard. When I met ____, he was into sports, he was an educator, he was a really caring man, he never gave up on people. I wondered why he didn’t give up on me. He always kept saying that he saw the leader in me. Even to this day when we see each other, I give him a hug. I know he loves me and cares for me (ICIC, 2009).
Part of the legacy I didn’t want to pass on to him [son of ICIC who also was an ICIC] but it’s there, is the struggle for education. He said something really profound that education is his tool out of poverty, but it’s also the tool that’s keeping him in poverty because about a year ago he applied for student money and he was told he had to pay it back. He said, ‘How can you pay it back when you’ve got nothing?’ He just can’t do it. He’s so afraid of going into debt. It angers him that he has that status card that promises him an education (ICIC, 2009).

It’s important to let kids know it is coming. It does take time. Systems move so slowly. .. Our kids need to know that they are not the only ones struggling, that there is help in numbers and that we can help them. They need to know that we were there once too. We are not infallible. We struggle every day (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

One of the fellows that she worked with told me about Indian time and how that’s such a big misconception, especially amongst Aboriginal people. How they believe Indian time means somebody is extremely late or so far behind. He told me that that’s not what Indian time is. It means things will happen when they’re meant to happen. Since he told me that, I’ve always believed in that. I’m in school now because I’m meant to be in school. Younger people in care need to understand these things (ICIC, 2009).

The policy and practice issue of former ICIC mentorship to current ICIC must be explored, developed and implemented into both educational and child protection practices. The reasons for this are identified in participant quotes but it is also evident in the overwhelming sense of isolation and loneliness, grief and trauma that many of the participants also spoke about experiencing while they were ICIC. The majority did not feel they had any consistent family or friends that they could turn to throughout their time in either various foster homes or schools. Their unique situations, which were a result of adult decisions, were exacerbated by the belief that others thought they had done something “wrong” to be in foster care and their frequent foster parent or school moves left them without a strong, positive peer network or adult support system. The potential for mentoring, or framing it as a culturally Indigenous relationship with an older “uncle, aunt, cousin or grandparent”, could address this isolation in foster care, schools and community. It may be a critical and pragmatic way to help ICIC connect to a positive Indigenous role model. More than that, it could be an individual that continues to have their “best interests” at heart, and commitment to maintain a long-term relationship through what Urban ICIC participants identify as a series of violent, neglectful, or emotionally void, urban ICIC foster home placements. Although many of the participants spoke about the difference that just having one consistent person in their life could
have possibly made, and hope to be this person for current ICIC, the choice of the Urban ICIC to have such a mentor in their life must be voluntary and reviewed periodically. Both the provincial government social services offices and Urban Indigenous delegated agencies must immediately develop and implement such a mentorship program.

6.9 Support Services for Current and Historical Trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorders

Provide Culturally-Competent Educational and Support Services for Current and Historical Trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorders, Grief, Loss, Violence and Abuse Issues, Lack of Attachment, and Undiagnosed Health Issues for Urban ICIC, their Teachers, Social Workers, Counselors, and/or Caregivers

Participants spoke about what they believe are the increased and differential effects that placement instability, colonization, intergenerational trauma, grief, loss, violence, abuse, racism, post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and lack of attachment has on the educational experiences of ICIC, compared to children living outside the child protection system. They questioned if social workers and teachers considered, and how they responded, to the cumulative impact of these current and historical trauma factors. Some questioned if their academic or traditional educational success is even considered against this cumulative trauma. Further, if the trauma is acknowledged to be a factor impeding their educational success, and a goal is made to address it in their plan of care, or individualized education plan, what are the consequences if the agency or school does not meet this goal? Currently no social worker or teacher opens an investigation into the reasons why trauma supports are not provided, and no one loses their job, even if the Urban ICIC trauma support or educational goal is not reached for many years, or ever. This is another example that highlights the need for a restorative justice model process to interrogate systemic failure that negatively impacts the educational success of Urban ICIC.
From my own experience working as a teacher and working here and my experience working in the community in different capacities, what’s really needed is an acknowledgement of the pain that these kids carry with them in school (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

You need to educate the whole person. Recognize these severe attachment issues that are going on with these kids that are in foster care. Every child needs to be able to have somebody that they can attach to in schools, who will help them along the way around their education. We need to recognize the trauma, grief and loss. You can be good at school but still carry the trauma, the loss of identity, the responsibility of being successful and what that means in our families, especially in our families. I can see how I might not want to be successful either. Changing it from the inside, educating the educators is so important on attachment, on grief and loss, on FASD, to individualize and make it more appropriate to everybody (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

My brother and my sister had passed away a month and a half apart and I was in grade nine ... Most of the teachers in the school – they didn’t give me any grief but also didn’t assist me. They ignored it and they didn’t really help. I was pretty much left on my own (ICIC, 2009).

I was 13 ½ when she [my mom] died. That was really, really hard for me because my Mom and I were inseparable … When I lost her, my whole world just went black. My Dad and I were never close. He was so violent (ICIC, 2009).

Having aboriginal support workers in school is really, really important. It is important for identity (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

One of the things that has come up on a continual basis with my little girls that are 13 to 15 years old is serious depression. I can’t put my finger on it and I’ve phoned social workers to let them know that I can see signs of this. I remember my own when I see it. That’s the powerful part. I know why they are so sad or why they are acting out. Their Mom’s not coming back or their Dad didn’t come back. There’s always some issue there that something happened to them. You know what it is. It’s something that happened in their life at that moment. But I wonder how much depression in kids between ages of 12 and 15. You’re going through all the hormone stuff and that’s bad enough, but you’re in a foster home with strangers you don’t really know and you don’t want to talk. They only way sometimes is to act out – to misbehave or run away. I know it’s depression and it’s not something you can fix. Their life is horrible. They are in a quandary of who they are. They are having serious identity problems because they don’t know where they’re from or things have changed. Some are getting connected to their familial roots, but there are some that don’t have any. There are some unlucky ones that don’t have any family to grab onto or go visit. I sometimes wonder in the foster care system what the training is. If they are given tools to be able to recognize a seriously depressed child, who can’t cope with what’s going on in their brain. They’re just lost. They’re not fitting in at school, they’re not achieving in school because of their deficits. Sometimes the behavior just overrides their ability to study (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

Just having somebody to talk to through all of this. I didn’t have anybody to talk to. I was taught early on not to speak cause there’d be consequences if I spoke. It’s vital to have counseling services in place and keep it going for children to help them through that process. If they’re going through abuse, to recognize their strength. I sure wish I had that. I was too afraid to say anything. To have one person in your life to turn to would have been a huge difference (ICIC, 2009).
Participants identify that ICIC depression originating from a lack of regularly scheduled contact with safe family of origin members, community and culture puts their mental health at-risk. The general lack of knowledge in child protection and educational systems about historical trauma, the legacy of the residential school project, and ongoing attempts to assimilate (or alienate) ICIC through lack of access to culturally significant events, language or community-based ceremony, must be immediately addressed in mandatory social work and educational professional development training initiatives. Given the high rates of Indigenous youth suicide in BC (Morely & Kendall, 2006), access to Indigenous healing and trauma support as well as education focused at better understanding historical and current issues impacting ICIC must be immediately developed for Urban ICIC. Completion of mandatory yearly education and training of teachers, social workers, foster parents, and administrators about these issues is immediately required and should be connected to yearly salary or fostering payment increases.

Through exemptions, the BC College of Social Workers (College) (2011) currently has no jurisdiction under the provincial Social Workers Act (2008), to compel registration for social workers employed by public sector bodies like health authorities, First Nations, Metis or Inuit organizations, the government of British Columbia, post-secondary college or university faculty members in their role as educators. Therefore, there is no professional registration body in BC that can compel, or hold people with social work degrees (social workers) to account to provide culturally competent support services to Urban ICIC to help them address intergenerational trauma, alienation and daily societal or institutionalized racism. It is unacceptable for systems to replace these services with pharmaceutical options that simply medicate ICIC due to their “disrespectful or at-risk behavior” in schools, foster homes or community; while the root of the problem remains unaddressed, and the systemic response is non-existent, minimal or fragmentary. Many of the Urban ICIC view the “at-risk” behavior as important signals and a rational response to the pain, trauma, disenfranchisement and alienation they experienced in Canadian child protection and education systems. Politicians
and adults charged with guardianship and educational responsibilities have an obligation to receive
and act on these signals as long as is required by Urban ICIC.

6.10 **Targeted Educational Funding for Urban ICIC**

Secure Specific and Targeted Educational Funding for Urban Indigenous Youth that Grow up in BC’s
Child Protection System (elementary, secondary, and post-secondary)

Urban ICIC and Indigenous agency research participants, and I, are unanimous in our condemnation
of the bureaucratic maze that is the “process” that ICIC must follow to try to secure funding to support
their post-secondary educational plans, should they make it, by some miracle, through the K-12
educational and child protection systems. The minimal amount of funding directed at the significant
educational needs of Urban ICIC students in the K-12 system is shocking, and reflective of the
minimal amount of support they can expect to receive in pursuit of post-secondary plans, particularly
if they are non-status or Métis individuals who, legally, do not have access to the minimal post-
secondary funding available to status First Nations individuals. In addition, they may not have the
requisite academic skills, access to mentoring and tutoring support required to address their skills
shortfall.

Politicians must do more than expect foster parents to address all the educational needs of ICIC on
the minimal amounts of monthly educational funding they receive. Politicians must also expect that
some foster parents may be intimidated by the education system, or may not place a high value on
the education of Urban ICIC. The abysmal academic educational outcomes are proof enough that the
amounts and efforts are insufficient to improve the outcomes. The Federal and Provincial
governments cannot continue to off-load this responsibility onto already overwhelmed foster parents,
teachers or social workers with a shoulder shrug and a paternalistic “let’s see how you do” attitude.
The poor educational results are plain for everyone to see, and the need for an Educational Advocate
to work on behalf of Urban ICIC has never been more evident.
Dr. Nathan Matthew is the Jurisdiction Negotiator of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), which is a non-profit society established in BC in 1992 to “facilitate discussion about education matters affecting First Nations in BC by disseminating information and soliciting input from First Nations” (FNESC, 2011). Dr. Matthew notes that the K-12 educational support in BC is calculated at $1,000.00 per Indigenous student per school year (personal communication, June 17, 2011). Urban ICIC may not even have access to that minimal amount of funding if they are transferred between schools and foster homes within the school year. Aboriginal student funding is not allocated to specific individuals, but is rather a global budget managed by individual School Districts (and poorly understood by Urban ICIC and agencies) to be used as the Districts decide. There is no confirmation that the Indigenous support services provided in one School District will be the same in another School District or if the unionized services provided there will be culturally competent. It is evident that these two Urban Aboriginal child protection agencies try to provide some educational support funding to ICIC in terms of recognizing educational milestones such as graduation events. However, they are not in receipt of any significant amount of targeted provincial educational funding for ICIC’s in their care, be it for K-12 or post-secondary educational needs. If Urban Indigenous agencies do acquire educational funds on behalf of ICIC, those funds are typically managed as “one-time” amounts provided by foundations, fundraising events or inconsistent budgetary efficiencies. This is unacceptable and significant targeted educational funding must immediately be made available to Urban Indigenous agencies and ICIC to address this gap and obvious need.

The Urban ICIC and agency representatives repeatedly spoke about their frustrations and challenges to understand where and how to apply or access post-secondary educational supports or funding in a timely manner as well as the need for an advocacy organization to help them navigate the incoherent, incomprehensive and limited educational funding between various Federal, Provincial, child protection and Indigenous educational departments in post-secondary institutes. At this time, the level
of confusion, disconnect and miscommunication between these departments with respect to helping ICIC navigate these financial systems required to access educational supports, is staggering and the confusing maze seems deliberate to discourage educational advancement.

My own attempts (as a mature person who has worked in the provincial child welfare and post-secondary bureaucracies, Indigenous provincial and local agencies, holder of three post-secondary degrees and doctoral candidate) to access and detail comprehensive educational information from the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, band governments, the BC Youth in Care Network, the Federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, post-secondary institutions and foundations was perhaps the most frustrating and confusing part of this entire doctoral process. The lack of communication, coordination and understanding between departments, the programs differential guidelines, time frames, funding levels and differing levels of bureaucratic knowledge and familiarization in providing these services to Urban ICIC (who may or may not be status Indian people as determined by the Federal government's Indian Act) is astounding. The process is compounded by uncoordinated, contradictory and changing policies, regulations, staff turnover and an insufficient level of clear and timely direction or integrated assistance. It is in this area that the work of an Educational Advocate is most urgently needed.

A better post-secondary educational planning and support process must be developed and implemented to support urban ICIC, and training must be provided to assist social workers, teachers, counselors to guide students through this process. This development must occur immediately to ensure adequate, timely and comprehensive post-secondary and K-12 supports for the most marginalized population of children and youth in Canada.
Urban Indigenous agency budgetary constraints may mean that at this point they may only be able to provide ICIC proceeding onto post-secondary with laptops and printers or one-time financial bursary support, however comprehensive Urban ICIC planning with governments and foundations with respect to other options such as registered educational savings plans must begin immediately. Research participants point to the fact that an Indian status card does not automatically mean that post-secondary education is secured (whether or not it is a Treaty or inherent right) nor that funding is available to support tutoring, school sports involvement, specialized Urban ICIC health needs or possible educational learning disorder assessments. The research participants in this study have a plan to address this jurisdictional and funding abyss and it includes the following:

The schools get specific funding for Aboriginal students, but there are lots of loop holes and the funding doesn’t follow the student if they are moved in foster care. It has to be changed to that it stays and support Aboriginal children in foster care, wherever they attend (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

When I took the Aboriginal Sports Management program I didn’t know that there was a deadline. I didn’t know anything about my band. When I decided to take the program, I had a couple of months to get into the program and get funding. I had contacted my band to see if I could get funding for school. They flat out said no to me because I was a couple of weeks late (ICIC, 2009).

It would be lovely if you had government on your side and have government money. We don’t and there is such a need for it. There is a need for society in general to see it as a social benefit and to invest in the education of our children and especially our children in care (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

OK, I’m going to school – I did that for the first 2 years here. Afterwards, the funding ran out and the band said, ‘You’re off reserve and we’re only sponsoring people who live on reserve.’ I thought, ‘Well that’s not fair. There is no place for me on reserve. I don’t fit in your world, you don’t fit in mine. Somewhere along the way we have to come to an understanding. Just because I don’t live on reserve doesn’t mean that I’m not an Indian and I don’t have needs. I do have a little card that says I belong to this band.’ That cancellation of funding played a huge factor for me (ICIC, 2009).

I was in foster care since I was 3 going on 4. I learned that Aboriginal people were stupid and they didn’t graduate and they were drunks and I would never amount to anything because I had aboriginal heritage… After I left care, I wouldn’t go near social workers, they’re the devil. So I had a really hard time to finish my degree. I got student loans and have $80,000 worth of student loan debt (ICIC, 2009).
I was the only one who won a ribbon in all four events that they were registered in. I found out later that all the people that beat me were new Canadians, East Indians, and they were 2 years older than me. Because they couldn't speak English at the time, they were held back a couple of grades. I remember lining up on the track. I ran in bare feet. I didn't have the money for runners (ICIC, 2009).

I know that if you are full status you are eligible for some financial remuneration or funding by your band and there's limitations to that. But if you've been taken and raised in care you don't have connections to your band anymore and to try to unravel all of that legal stuff . . . My legal name has been changed. I'm not the same person as when I was born. I would need to get a lawyer to unravel and track all that down. As a result I've just taken out student loans. When I first started the NDP had put in that single parents were eligible, if they finished their program, to have half their debt forgiven. The Liberal government took that out. Not only did they take that out, but the 2nd time I left [son's] father, I had to go on welfare because he seized everything as a way to get me to come home. I had to apply for an emergency loan and when the Liberal government came back in they required everyone to pay that back. So the entire time I was a student I paid $20 dollars a month to the provincial government to pay back my welfare. So welfare isn't free either. I just finally finished paying that back. I did that on student loans. If people who are in care finally make it to a point where they actually made it through university, there should be some debt forgiveness because they maybe don't have a band funding them, or have parents that are going to bless them with debt forgiveness or help them buy their first home (ICIC, 2009).

They [Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks] offer a grant for school, the Dream Fund, they offer $2500 but it's only for one person a year. If we could get more funding for that program, we can offer it to more people. We get so many applications and it's so tough because the applicants have to submit a bit of their story. It's so tough for the selection committee to have to pick just one individual when so many of them have gone through so many situations in their life and now they're trying to make their lives better. It's tough to say no to so many of them when throughout their lives they've probably heard that word one too many times and having to hear it again and be disappointed even more. It's just heartbreaking (ICIC, 2009).

Two weeks before I was scheduled to graduate I get this letter from the government saying, 'Congratulations on reaching your 19th birthday. We wish you luck.' That was it. I thought, 'I'm free as a bird. I'm gone.' ... It was another 4 years before I returned back to school (ICIC, 2009).

My niece grew up in care, connected with her band, was able to get funding, and went on to get her BSW and now is getting her Masters. I don't think she would be able to do that without the support of her Indian band. In saying that, I think the connection to home communities is really important for just this reason, because some of these kids have relied on the government, or whoever could take care of them, all their lives. They still need that safety net after they leave care (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

Eventually, before I retire, I want to have my social work degree. That hope of a better education is still there for me. That hope for change for the education system, I'm living it now. Through my actions 20 years ago, my son is still going to school and so are many other Aboriginal children. I'd like to see [educational] funding stay secure for Aboriginal children growing up in care (ICIC, 2009).
The extra supports, whether it’s tutors or going to a special school or getting into programs. Another key thing that has supported my education was getting to do the extra-curricular stuff (ICIC, 2009).

The educational funding abyss and jurisdictional wrangling experienced by Urban ICIC must be addressed by an intergovernmental and Aboriginal leadership process and led by Provincial and/or Federal Educational Advocates in collaboration with Urban ICIC self-advocates and mentors. The National Youth in Care Network or BC Youth in Care Network are appropriate charitable tax status organizations with a proven track record of educational granting history to children in care, and could be the “catchment agency” for information and access to K-12 and post-secondary educational funding support, guidance and distribution of funds to Urban ICIC. Governments (and other funding bodies such as the Irving K. Barber Scholarship at the Victoria Foundation and private individuals) could make substantial educational funding investments to this organization for access by Urban ICIC, whether status, non-status or treaty or non-status. When politicians, bureaucrats, administrators, social workers, teachers or foster parents demonstrate a lack of commitment, financial support or convey disbelief that Urban ICIC can attend or succeed in post-secondary education (whether it be academic, trades oriented or otherwise), those attitudes and expectation for failure or hopelessness are transmitted to Urban ICIC. Unconscionable low levels of educational expectations or expectations that Urban ICIC’s will fail academically can no longer be tolerated. In fact, there should be sanctions and reprimands brought against those with mandated responsibilities to Urban ICIC when poor case planning results in high rates of foster home or school placements, expectations for failure are transmitted to and received by Urban ICIC, or educational goals are continuously not met due to lack of provision of desperately required trauma support services, upgrading or post-secondary funding. Urban ICIC must be able to access sufficient Federal or Provincial post-secondary funding, or debt forgiveness, that that enables them to be economically self-sufficient and includes tuition, housing, food, transportation, health and, if required child care expenses up until they reach the age thirty years of age. This is necessary given their chaotic and abusive experiences in the child protection and education systems which
may mean that pursuing upgrading, a post-secondary degree or trades certification must wait until they are able to process loss, grief and anger or achieve resolution to these issues.

6.11 Early Educational Interventions, Cultural Options, Assessments, Reviews, and Plans

Develop and Implement Early Educational Interventions and Cultural Options in Traditional and Western Educational Assessments, Reviews, and Plans for Urban ICIC

Both Urban ICIC and Indigenous agency research participants discussed the disproportionate amount of blame assigned to Urban ICIC that “fell through the cracks” because of the disconnect between Federal/Provincial, on and off-reserve policies and practice, identified and non-identified learning challenges, lack of targeted funding, educational plan development, review, monitoring and follow up by legal guardians and educators. Their frustration results from the fact that no one is held accountable for undiagnosed or unmet health or mental health needs, placement and school instability, incomplete cognitive or behavioral assessments or unfulfilled educational needs that negatively impact the ICIC. This is unacceptable given that this study demonstrates that “government” has been the parent of more than sixty-six percent (66%) of this sample since infancy or toddlerhood which is prior to their entry into the school system and reasonably must have known of these unmet needs. The exception, of course, is that Urban ICIC’s are held accountable for their own systemic “failure” both currently and in the future when the mandated terms of responsibility will end for child protection social workers and K-12 educators when Urban ICIC “age out” of their systems at nineteen years of age or earlier.

A comprehensive plan of care (CPOC) is developed for Urban ICIC by their legal guardian under the policies and practice standards flowing from CFCSA or Aboriginal Operational Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) used by delegated child protection agencies. The CPOC is to be developed within 30 days of a child entering the child protection system and reviewed and updated every six
months (or more often if required) while the child remains in “care”. The educational domain is one of the seven domains in the CPOC and is intended to provide the social worker’s and other support or evaluative professional’s assessment of the current status of the Urban ICIC. This CPOC assessment includes comment on the Urban ICIC’s health, education, identity, family and social relationships, social presentation, emotional and behavioral development and self care skills. For each of the seven domains, the child’s current functioning, work required, desired outcomes, person(s) responsible, target date, completed date and comments are included.

An individualized education plan (IEP) may also be developed by the Urban ICIC’s educators in collaboration with the legal guardian and others; however myriad of variables such as available funding or human resources to implement the plans (if they are current), social worker, foster parent or teacher turnover, placement instability by the child or youth or systemic or individual ICIC disengagement (to name a few potential issues) render them ineffective planning documents. Certainly, there is no legal or financial implication in the CFCSA or School Act for the legal guardian or educator if the plans are ineffective or if Urban ICIC do not graduate from secondary school while in care of the provincial government. The Urban ICIC and agency participants envision an Indigenous educational organization with powers and financial resources to ensure holistic coordination, advocacy, early intervention, meaningful assessments, reviews and effective planning occurs to enable each Urban ICIC to comprehensively meet their educational objectives and plans. Annualized, public educational reporting of each school and district goals, and delegated agency goals, and their progress towards meeting those educational goals for Urban ICIC must be written in plain language that can be objectively measured. If their educational plans and targets cannot be met, or barriers removed, then the reasons for the plan’s systemic failure (not the failure of the Urban ICIC) should be made public and policy-makers, politicians and funders must be held accountable to remedy these systemic failures.
You know how children have a plan in their home, a CPOC? They should have EPOC [an educational plan of care]… If they have an education mentor, maybe they could help [put it together] (ICIC, 2009).

There was this one kid who had multiple diagnoses and just being so afraid for this young kid — my God, when they turn 19 and they age out what are we going to do because there’s nothing there for this child. And fighting with the ______School Board because they were going to exclude this child because she’s borderline with her IQ but had multiple issues that they could have supported in helpful ways. I had to go to a Board meeting. I was pissed off. She has multiple issues including FASD and ODD etc. These pompous white people saying we don’t have space for one child. I didn’t believe them. This child is under 16 and they had a responsibility to this child under the law to provide education. Let’s get creative. It took weeks of fighting with the school board and my agency didn’t support me. I was the only one at the table having a voice this child. The foster parent didn’t know what to do. The education system was going to fail this child (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

I don’t what around the privacy issues what all that entails, but I think [bringing the parties together] needs to happen, the earlier the better, whether they like it or not. To improve the child’s success, to come through school, to be a positive thing. And do they know if there is a learning disability, a mental health issue, FAS? Who knows all that. That’s what, if anything, would come through this review. The social networks are more outside the school. Everyone is isolated from each other. It’s not coordinated around success (ICIC, 2009).

These children are [Fetal Alcohol] affected and they are also emotionally traumatized because they’re affected – trying to fit them into this society, this world. Can we not make a place for them to be safe? Bring in the medicine wheel; bring in the elders; bring in our families, our foster family, our children and people in the community (ICIC, 2009).

They [foster parents] were hippies. They went through university in the 60s and believed in education, smoked weed with their neighbours on the weekend, went hiking, had naked hot tub parties. They were really granola hippie kind of people. I lived with them and I graduated from ____ Secondary. Then I got a letter saying I was off the system and they stopped being paid to have me and I was given my notice and I was back on east Hastings at the Balmoral [hotel on the lower east side of Vancouver] with my sister (ICIC, 2009).

Definitely more support. If more of our young people are supported. The term that’s used around here all the time — the youth of today are our leaders of tomorrow. I don’t think tomorrow is tomorrow. It’s today. So help our youth now to go to school and accessing whatever they need to access is probably my biggest reason. There isn’t enough support for our young people. So many of our young aboriginal people fall through the cracks and get lost in the school system and eventually don’t graduate and end up taking minimum wage jobs and don’t do much. It’s tough to see that (ICIC, 2009).

Certainly there is more than enough systemic proof to correctly identify the source of “Indigenous failure”. One only needs to consider a few systemic sources such as the Canadian Prime Minister’s
historic 2008 apology to residential school survivors and their families for generations of
government and religious systemic abuse and violence, any of the recent Auditor General of
Canada’s (2006) reports into INAC’s abysmal management of programs on behalf of First Nations
people, systemic academic educational outcomes of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the
appearance of Indigenous peoples in Canada at the bottom of every socio-economic well-being
indicator in the past fifty years.

6.12 Effective, Collaborative, Coordinated, Culturally-Competent Education

Indigenous and non-Indigenous People, Politicians, and Systems to Promote Effective, Collaborative,
Coordinated, Culturally-Competent Education, and Child Protection Practices with Urban ICIC

Both ICIC and Indigenous agency research participants spoke about the unacceptably high rates of
turnover experienced by ICIC in terms of foster home placement, schools, teachers, social workers
and communities as negatively effecting their academic and traditional educational success and
transition through and out of care. This is not “new” news and is found throughout the literature
review and despite signed educational protocols between Indigenous agencies and school districts
which are not always understood, known or practiced by either educational or child protection
personnel. This must change. Urban ICIC and Indigenous agency participants in this study identify
that the poor attitudes toward ICIC education, placement practices and lack of transitioning
practices of child protection workers, foster parents and educators as the most significant barriers
in their attempts to be academically successful.

I probably moved 40-50 times in foster care. School was horrible, just trying to fit in. You
can’t when you’re always the new kid, so I kind of gravitated to who ever would let me
join in with them. It was never the most positive group of people, but they would accept
me when others wouldn’t. Most of the time I just felt lost and lonely (ICIC, 2009).

When kids are in Grade 10, 11 and 12, when they realize that they are aging out, there’s
a lot of stress on them because they don’t know where they are going to go. They think,
‘I’m not allowed to live in my foster home anymore. What am I going to do? Can I go
back to my family? Is my family going to accept me? How am I going to fit in?’ It’s a
really stressful time and if there isn’t a really good support system set up to help in that transition. That’s when things can go really sideways with the drugs, with the alcohol, with the gangs. A lot of gangs are recruiting foster kids now. A lot of foster children are in trouble with the law. Sometimes when that transition is coming, education can be one of the last things on that student’s mind. They are just busy trying to survive. That is a very real concern for me. As a person working in the school system, working as a band leader, working on so many boards – I see that struggle. As a society we are really missing that area. I think kids should start getting support at 15 to really start transition, so that when they are 19 they have 3 years of skills behind them. I think that would make a huge difference (ICIC, 2009).

I think while Aboriginal children are in care, consistency in placement is one of the major factors. Where they are in a home, they have a sense of belonging. They don’t have to change schools all the time. When they are moving from home to home they are often having to move from different jurisdictions and it’s really difficult for them to adjust. From my perspective that is one of the major components that will help them have success and that carries on when they leave foster care… Almost all of them were in a consistent placement. They had not only their social workers but also their caregivers advocating for them (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

I think it was more the support at home. Even though it wasn’t through the educational support to sit down one-on-one and discuss homework or anything. My [foster] mother & I never did that. It was more knowing that if I was having any problems at school then she would come and stand beside me. Whether I was right or whether I was wrong, she would still stand beside me and still fight up against the system if anything was going on. Because a lot of racism would go on. Looking back a lot of racism did go on. Knowing that support was there and then seeing that as well that vice principal to take the time. He never punished me. He always pulled out some strengths there and said, ‘What are you doing?’ Here’s what I see in you’ (ICIC, 2009).

There’s so little opportunities focused on Aboriginal people letting us know it’s OK to pursue post-secondary education and you can be supported to get to your goals whatever they are. It’s incumbent upon the community to drive that (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

Because growing up in care it seemed like it put a strong mark on my forehead that I would grow up in care with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and the population there. It caused a big rip of balance, of trying to figure out who I was because I didn’t fit with Aboriginal students and I didn’t fit with the non-Aboriginal students. Consistently, it was either one or the other or a mix here or there. But it was never consistent – where I fit or where I belonged. The one thing I had was – I need to get out of here and the way to do that, as my mother said, was to get an education (ICIC, 2009).

It is tempting to place the entire blame for the failure of both Canada’s child protection and education systems on the shoulders of the people that work in it. However, racism, systemic oppression, White supremacy and privilege exist in all Canadian societal institutions, and divides Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and politicians. Each issue must be addressed with an intersectional approach that considers the impact of the racist and oppressive Canadian historical and contemporary

Indigenous governments, communities and advocates must continually lobby both the Federal and Provincial governments to implement a coordinated and measurable approach to address the educational issues of Urban ICIC. Indigenous peoples and allies must insist that both Western and Traditional Indigenous educational goal achievement and accountability become the standard against which academic, Indigenous agencies and community based support services are assessed. Further Indigenous governments and peoples must insist that mere claims that “graduation rates of Indigenous students will increase by 2020” is not sufficient or acceptable. These types of claims are too vague to be of any practical or theoretical use. Rather, the educational attainment of all Indigenous student groups must be visible, including that of Urban ICIC. Further the date by which the graduation rate of all Urban ICIC will be equal to that of either Indigenous or non-Indigenous students that have never been in care, must be explicitly stated by politicians and in educational and child protection annual reports. Urban ICIC and their support people must be able to identify the incremental steps to meeting those target goals and able to access the necessary supports required to meet those goals. According to Frideres (2011), “until concrete benchmarks are presented, no policy or program can be evaluated in terms of its impact”, (p. 192).

In terms of Traditional Indigenous knowledge, Urban ICIC must be supported to learn from Elders, cultural support people and extended families, preferably from their own nation and by choice, to meet their own Traditional learning goals. Funding is required to support Urban ICIC choices to access Indigenous language classes, cultural or spiritual teachings, rediscovery camps and other ceremonial aspects needed to “put the Indian back in the child”.

6.13 Conclusion: Helping Ourselves, Helping Our Little Relations
There’s always two sides to everything. I don’t think our Creator puts us through those life experiences – we go through those experiences meaningfully and we can turn those into positives, as hard and as ugly as they are at the time, to help other people who are going through them (ICIC, 2009).

Canadians have told and retold themselves a particular story; hearing our stories disrupts their understanding of themselves and as such requires a process of “learning from” (Dion, 2004, p. 5).

Again, it’s that sense of belonging and consistency. I think for some of our children who are impacted by FASD or who have some learning disabilities, I think it is very difficult because often they are delayed and by the time the leave our care there is not as much support in terms of where they are going to live. I think they get discouraged. Sometimes that discouragement comes at an earlier age where they don’t have a sense of accomplishment. At times there are programs that do support youth but often those are the programs that seem to get cut when there are problems with the economy (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

This findings and analysis chapter identified and discussed the statistical data and the eight key findings (or “star points”) that emerged from the SBTF, SBMF and participant data. The authority and legitimacy with which Urban ICIC and Indigenous agency participants speak about the need, now, to make significant changes to legislative, policy, practice, funding, research is unequivocal. More than that, they have provided Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian citizens, members of society, politicians, lawmakers, educators, funders, teachers and social workers with an Indigenous Saulteaux star blanket organizational educational model. Further, they have focused attention on the flexibility of this educative model, made contributions of Indigenous knowledge, and provided guidance to address the gaps in Urban ICIC traditional and academic Western society. All signals point to the fact that Urban ICIC must be educated in both systems (two-eyed seeing) and experience respect for their inherent Indigenous right to grow up with a “drum in one hand and a computer in the other”. It is critical that we consider this Urban Indigenous knowledge and immediately begin the discussions, planning and actions needed to address and stem the cyclical entry of the next generation of Indigenous children into the child protection systems. An education of both an academic and traditional Indigenous kind, offered through a Saulteaux star blanket Urban educational model holds some of the promise to help us do this. It is evident that Urban
ICIC believe this educational model holds promise for real change, and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, do we not owe it to them to try?

The participants acknowledge that systems move slowly to change, however it is unacceptable to expect that inter-generationally traumatized and violated Urban Indigenous children can be successful in achieving an education, traditionally or Western-based, on par with either Indigenous or non-Indigenous children living outside the child protection system through their own individual efforts. No, their success must be a collaborative inherently rights-based effort, purposefully and systemically targeted with substantive financial and political investment, support, advocacy, Indigenous leadership and coordination from across a broad spectrum of Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments, educational and child welfare institutions, agencies and communities. There is a need for those in positions of power to learn about and consider the enforced relocation of this group of Urban ICIC and the socio-legal political realities this causes for which they have no authority to remedy. The Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates (2010) and the national leadership of the CAP (2011) are at the table; the question is, who else will come to the table?

Children in child protection systems in BC continue to have the lowest graduation rates of any population of children in BC (Ministry of Education 2008) and significant investments must be made, for as long as it takes, to close this human rights educational gap. Frideres (2011) argues that the educational graduation rate, or “gap between First Nations and non-First Nations students has increased over the past twenty-year period” (p. 193), therefore systems must change now so as not to the same increase in the next twenty-year period. There is evidence to suggest that the piecemeal attempts at tinkering with the systems is not working (Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007) nor is there evidence to suggest (yet) that the three year plan (2007-10) conceived, funded and implemented by the Ontario government to raise educational success of Ontario Crown Wards has achieved its goals. Unfortunately, choosing to discontinue or abandon pilot project funding is a
common practice with Federal and Provincial governments, even when programs demonstrate some success (Frideres, 2011).

As the stories of the Urban ICIC and agency participants demonstrate, it is not just what happens in school that has an impact on the educational success of students. Other important elements include foster parent and school stability, freedom from violence and witnessing domestic violence, community and mentoring support as well as support to pursue traditional Indigenous educational and recreational opportunities. Urban ICIC have to know about educational options, what different academic streams can lead to in terms of future employment choices and well-being and they must know that the government (as their parent) will support their academic decisions and plans to age thirty.

A first step is to identify the date upon which the Western academic success of Urban ICIC will be equal to that of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in western academic schools and institutions that have not been raised in the Canadian child protection system. A second step is to identify the date upon which each Urban ICIC will be assessed by Indigenous Elders, cultural support people and their communities as possessing an acceptable amount of Indigenous knowledge comparable to youngsters from their nations that have not been raised in Canadian child protection systems. Untangling and dealing with all these issues is part of a significant journey that requires the work, support, and funding of many initiatives, and it will not happen overnight in much the same way that the process of colonization has taken many years to accomplish. However given all that the Urban ICIC and Indigenous agency participants have taught us; no longer can these academic and traditional educational issues be viewed in isolation, they must be visualized as holistic, interconnected, and intersectional, much in the same way that a star blanket design is viewed. A helpful reminder may be that the SBTF envisions all of the Indigenist, historical trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, critical and feminist theories that shaped this study as holistic, interconnected and intersectional in the same way that the SBMF envisions the
methodological influences. The next chapter provides an analysis and integration of the research, discusses the conclusions, and identifies its strengths and limitations as well as potential application of the findings.
Chapter 7: Towards a Star Blanket Educational Organizational Model (SBEOM)

The word that is in there, is hope. If we can give our young people a sense of hope there is a connection to their own community. They feel proud that they are Aboriginal, that they are valued and precious. By demonstrating those values we do give hope (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

Your identity is constantly being challenged. If kids actually survive their identity crisis...if they manage to rise above that and get themselves to a point where they’re participating in society by having a job and by getting educated to get that job, there should be some kind of allowance for that, because I will be paying for that student loan for the rest of my life (ICIC, 2009).

Imagine government officials, church officials, nuns, priests, teachers...in a circle with the people that had survived their sexual, physical, emotional and spiritual abuse. This is a fundamentally different power relationship between perpetrators of violence and survivors of that violence, where the abusers must face the full impact of their actions...The interrogation is focused on the perpetrator of the violence, not on the survivors...The authority to hold the state accountable then rests with Indigenous nations, not the liberal state (Simpson, 2011, p. 24).

7.1 Interrogation of the Perpetrator of the Violence

A review of the literature, informed by the star blanket theoretical framework (SBTF) and star blanket methodological framework (SBMF), together with the personal stories and experiences of the Urban ICIC and Indigenous agency participants guides the creation of the Saulteaux Star Blanket Educational Organizational Model (SBEOM). This model is one effort to balance and support the Indigenous traditional and Western academic educational needs of Urban ICIC. This Indigenist study (Rigney, 1997) ensures that the voices of Urban Indigenous participants is explicit, and holds the Canadian state accountable to reduce barriers to Urban ICIC educational success. The Urban Indigenous participants demonstrate resistance-in-action and "talking back" to Canada; putting the Canadian state on notice that that they intend to do their part to ensure Indigenous control of Indigenous education. Their previously silenced "voices of experience" from within Canadian systems of surveillance, control and dependency, are now powerfully and convincingly putting the Neo-Liberal Canadian ideology, educational and child protection systems, under interrogation. Their Indigenous struggle against oppression is visible to all that read this study, as is
their determination for Indigenous peoples to gain power and control, and not simply management, over the educational aspects in the lives of Urban ICIC.

This Indigenous interrogation may be threatening to the Canadian state and bureaucrats who may well respond in a variety of neutralizing ways including dismissal, anger, attack, avoidance, blame, silence, and even perhaps an offer to “pilot” a three year educational project (as was done in Ontario with the Crown Wards Championship teams). All of these Canadian responses have so far, done nothing to collectively improve the educational success of Urban ICIC. Further, it is unacceptable for Canada’s Neo-Liberal ideologies to point to the few “Indigenous educational successes” that have managed, by some miracle, to propel themselves through such alienating, isolating, abusive and oppressive child protection and education systems to graduate from Canada’s educational secondary school or post-secondary school systems. It is unacceptable to ignore the vast majority that are not academically successful or leave the child protection system with no or little connection to their Indigenous identity. For these Indigenous participants, the minute amount of Indigenous CIC secondary or post-secondary graduates is only the beginning of the battle. The rest of the battle is beginning to be fought through the courts by activists (Blackstock, 2010; CNW Group, 2011), by advocates (Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007) and in research studies. For these participants, an intergovernmental response must include an intersectional approach, be long-term and comprehensively funded, to ensure Indigenous control of Indigenous education. Acceptance of ineffective Canadian government offerings will only maintain the Canadian status quo, and ensure that the next generation of Indigenous children will grow up largely uneducated within alienating and isolating Canadian child protection and education systems.

These participants advocate for educational transformation identified within the SBEOM because they want to end Canadian domination, control and dependency of Urban ICIC lives and futures. Further, they intend to hold Canadian systems and government to account for poor academic
outcomes of ICIC, intergenerational violence, racism, trauma and abuse suffered in approved Canadian foster care resources, and for its deliberate decision not to educate them in ways that will strengthen their Indigenous identity, and provide them with skills to eliminate dependency. It is a withering interrogation and condemnation of Canada's brutal and shameful assimilation, integration and isolationist "educational and child protection" goals enacted against this population of traumatized Indigenous peoples.

"Poverty" gained through the lack of provision of academic success, is an excellent strategy to keep Indigenous attention focused away from natural resource extraction from unceded territories or non-implementation of treaty rights. Indigenous child welfare and incarceration over-representation, lack of education, racism, and gendered violence are also excellent Canadian strategies to keep Indigenous attention away from the same issues. This group of Indigenous participants is practicing what Friere (2001) terms “conscientization” or critical consciousness; learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive, traumatic elements of reality. Activism, such as the participants have undertaken in this study, is an important act to free themselves from oppression and they have acted on their Indigenous inherent right to do so; they have not asked permission of the Canadian state.

An analysis of the literature reveals a comprehensive laundry list of significant educational needs experienced by children in global child protection systems (Snow, 2009) and Indigenous children in BC education systems (Ministry of Education, 2008). However, there is a dearth of literature about what is required specifically to educationally support Urban ICIC in Canadian provincial educational and child protection institutions. What does exist is primarily statistical reporting by both the Office of the BC Representative for Children and Youth, provincial child protection and education bodies detailing that ICIC lag far behind the Western-based educational success rates of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who are not in the child protection system. What is lacking from these reporting bodies are specific target dates that identify when this gap will be closed, and the orderly progression of steps that will indicate when, and how well, progress is being achieved. Further,
what is missing is educational model examples that focus on improving the educational success of Urban ICIC, and an explicit statement that Urban ICIC are a valuable resource and that as Indigenous peoples, are capable of making a significant contribution to Canadian society. Instead, what exists is continued interconnected policies of intergovernmental control, surveillance and oppression aimed at “blaming the victim” while doing nothing of a substantive nature to make the issue visible or addressed.

Fortunately, there are a few Urban Indigenous educational models in Canada to which Indigenous educators (and others) can look to for guidance. For example, Williams (2000) work to incorporate Israeli educator Reuven Feuerstein’s problem solving techniques into Vancouver school programming for Urban Aboriginal students, the Urban Aboriginal Joe Duquette School in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (Haig-Brown et al, 1997), and Donovan’s (2011) study of the Urban Indigenous Wiingashk Alternative School in London, Ontario are three examples to draw upon for ideas to support Urban ICIC. All three studies acknowledge that change requires cooperation and collaboration among inter-governmental departments and systems outside the school walls and cautions us to consider the impact of racism, Canadian surveillance and control at the teaching, board and community levels. These issues impact Urban ICIC, who are caught in a jurisdictional nightmare of bickering, attempts to deflect accountability and responsibility between the Federal and Provincial governments. Each level of government identifies the other as having educational jurisdictional responsibility for off-reserve First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples which conveniently results in limited or no progress in addressing the educational issues of Urban ICIC. Further, the blame for poor educational success is placed on vulnerable, marginalized and individual Urban ICIC. This “blaming the victim” strategy deflects attention from neo-liberal capitalist structural societal issues of power and inequity, poverty, racism, gendered violence and other social divisions which are well documented as having differential impacts on Indigenous peoples in Canada (Neu & Therrien, 2003). At the same time, this strategy roadblocks Indigenous attempts to reclaim control

It is unacceptable to these Indigenous participants that the educative needs of Urban ICIC remain financially, politically and culturally unaddressed while these substantive jurisdictional and political issues are resolved at some vague future date. They are determined to advocate for an intersectional approach to address the Federal, Provincial, Indigenous governmental jurisdictional wrangling, invisibility in the literature, lack of urban Indigenous policy and practices, services and targeted funding (Envionics, 2010; Helin, 2006).

Anecdotal information shared by Kathy Michel of the Secwepemcsin Language Immersion Chief Ahtam School in Chase, BC provides hope for healing and education through Indigenous culture, language revitalization and programming (K. Michel, personal communication, July 19, 2006) in that she reports the Secwepemc graduates of the program appear to be stronger students in mainstream post-secondary institutions, when they are grounded in their Indigenous identity, culture and language. It is a struggle for Urban Indigenous children, and particularly Urban ICIC, to feel the same grounding when they may have limited access to their specific Indigenous nation’s cultural supports, culturally competent educational programming, Elders and community members within the limited Urban Indigenous agency service capacity. However, this is a fabricated jurisdictional barrier that can be overcome with intergovernmental political will, Indigenous advocacy and adequate funding.

Long term placement stability in educationally supportive foster homes with good communication between child protection and education systems seems to yield better, but not stellar results as evidenced in one British study (Martin & Jackson, 2002) of thirty-eight non-Indigenous former youth in care identified as high educational achievers. Their findings indicate that these youth believed that supportive attitudes of social workers and teachers, ongoing financial support, and a “guardian
angel” to support and encourage them in post-secondary education were key factors in achieving success. While this may be true for non-Indigenous European (British) CIC’s, Urban ICIC in Canada, with multi-generational experiences as colonized peoples, myriad of cultural sanctions legally enforced by Canadian apartheid legislation, military and police forces and the ongoing denial of Aboriginal title and rights, requires additional consideration which must be based in Indigenous experience and leadership. It is in this gap that mentoring contributions and support by former ICIC can assist to reduce barriers and develop strategies to assist Urban ICIC to be more educationally successful. To operationalize this type of program, Indigenous and non-Indigenous political bodies, educational and child protection institutions, advocates and allies must collaborate, coordinate and work together toward the goal of improved Urban ICIC western and traditional Indigenous educational success and independence.

Perhaps a place to start this transformative process is to discuss this Saulteaux star blanket educational organizational model and research study with Urban-based educational bodies and Urban Indigenous child welfare organizations in the Urban Aboriginal communities of Victoria and/or Vancouver, since it was in these Urban communities that this organizational model was conceived and developed. While this SBEOM was developed on traditional Coast Salish territories, in no way does it represent an educational model for Coast Salish communities who already have, or will develop, their own educational models. However, Coast Salish communities are welcome to use anything in this SBEOM that may be of use.

Another important place to begin transforming the academic reality of Urban ICIC, is by creating a “how-to” workbook or booklet, written in plain language, that identifies the processes required to access different types of K-12 or post-secondary funding supports, timeframes, required documentation and available amounts. These workbooks, and an Indigenous educational support person to explain and walk through the process with Urban ICIC, foster parents, social workers and teachers, must be developed and implemented immediately. Once this is completed with the child
or youth, Canada must be held to account if the systemic response is inadequate to meet the child’s educational needs.

7.2 Connecting the Star Blanket Theoretical Framework to the Star Blanket Educational Organizational Model

The Coast Salish communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous political bodies, institutions, advocates and allies could benefit by understanding how the SBTF connects to the SBEOM and helps to analyze the participants’ perspectives. The holistic SBTF acknowledges Urban Indigenous children and youth’s educational experience as colonized, traumatic, violent, gendered and racist within the child protection and Canadian colonial and patriarchal history, and contemporary reality. It also recognizes the enforced relocation of many Urban Indigenous peoples, and enforced constructions of Urban Indigenous children’s socio-cultural and political identities through myriad of Canada’s child protection and educational policies and practices. Indigenist, critical, feminist, historical trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder theories assist us to better understand the intersectional impacts of trauma, gendered violence, patriarchy, domination, historical trauma, traumatic stress disorders, racism, grief, loss and displacement on Urban ICIC populations and how difficult it is to isolate each impact from the other or manage them in isolation from each other.

In the SBTF, the theories are all connected, flow in and between each other in the same way that the SBEOM is intersectionally connected. No one “star point” is separate from the other; rather they all interact and intersect, relying on each other to provide and strengthen holistic support and healing to Urban ICIC from trauma, racism, grief, loss and displacement.

Critical theoretical concepts inform the way that participant responses are analyzed through an interrogation of critical consciousness; that is, learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive, traumatic elements of reality. Indigenist and feminist theoretical concepts of interrogating patriarchy, racism and domination, in personal and public matters, help to analyze participant responses and explain why the over-representation
of Indigenous children in Canadian child protection systems continues, as does the low educational success of Urban ICIC. Simply put, Indigenist and feminist theory exposes that these situations continue because it is in the best interests of the Canadian neo-liberal capitalist society and ideology.

Historical trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder theories help to analyze participant responses and illuminate why the Canadian state continues to sanction the "quick, easy and cheap" medicated responses to Urban ICIC racialized violence, distress and trauma. Rather than providing comprehensive, holistic and long-term educational supports, Canada provides these "band-aid, numbing and muzzling" solutions for a number of self-preserving and self-serving reasons. These include attempts to deflect attention away from the precipitating stressors of Euro-Canadian colonization, domination, assimilation and lack of accountability to vulnerable Indigenous populations and to discourage discussion and debate as to what makes Indigenous populations “vulnerable”. These “solutions” allow Canada to take no responsibility for perpetuating intergenerational racialized trauma, violence and abuse against vulnerable Indigenous children, pass them onto welfare dependency as they age out of the child-protection system, onto the criminal justice or mental health systems, or marginalized existence on the streets. This unconscionable response silences and “blames the victim”, and maintains Canada’s power and control over Indigenous populations and resources. It does nothing to address the historical or contemporary oppressions, inequities, racism, significant jurisdictional gaps, or solve the squabbling and stalling tactics, enacted for generations between the differing levels of government.

All of these theories guide us to analyze the participant responses, experiences and stories in ways different than “Canada’s story” or the “government story” would prefer that it is analyzed, such as in governmental reports and initiatives. Government reports to focus on individual Urban ICIC “risk-taking” behaviors, “shortcomings” or “blame” individuals while entreating them to “do better” on their own. This is problematic and simplistic, and, as Canada is aware, will ultimately result in minimal
academic or traditional Indigenous educational progress while doing nothing to address their stress, historical or current trauma arising from their continued exposure to non-Indigenous child protection and education systems that are alienating, isolating and traumatizing. Further the SBTF helps to unmask the structural, racist, gendered and violent forces in the context of Canadian society and Canadian child protection and educational institutions and bureaucracies; and points to Canadian systems that are determined to maintain control over Indigenous peoples, children, resources and the status quo.

7.3 Indigenous Stories of Resurgence, Resistance, and Determination

Instead, analyzing the participant responses within the context of the SBTF reveals Indigenous stories of astonishing survival, resurgence, resistance, and determination to hold Canadian systems to account. It is clear that Canada never intended to educate Urban ICIC in Canada’s child protection system, or to have them leave it with their Indigenous identity intact. The participants struggle and fight to continue a resurgence of Indigenous control over Indigenous education for all, including the most traumatized, marginalized and vulnerable population of Indigenous peoples in Canada, Urban ICIC. For that, Indigenous society owes them recognition for this contribution to our collective healing and survival.

The participants suggest that a holistic, long-term star blanket educational organizational model response is required, not one that is piecemeal, tinkering, or lasts for only a pilot three year period. Such a model must be led by Indigenous peoples and Educational Advocates (governance), include an intergovernmental educational funding and coordination strategy, specific targeted Urban ICIC educational funding to age thirty, mentoring support by former ICIC, specific legislation, support for grief, loss on multiple levels, Urban ICIC specific education and support to reclaim Indigenous languages, culture, ceremonies and traditions. Together, we demand this as an Indigenous inherent right, as Indigenous rights-holders in the urban context.
7.4 Significance and Contribution of the Dissertation Research

There were two goals in this Indigenist doctoral study. The first overarching goal was to learn from Urban Indigenous peoples (specifically Urban ICIC) about their Canadian child welfare and educational experiences within the urban community contexts of Victoria and Vancouver. The second goal was to privilege Urban Indigenous “voices of experience” and link this research to the political struggles of Urban Indigenous peoples for self-determination in the Canadian context. This study addresses these two goals and adheres to the three inter-related and fundamental Indigenist research principles identified by Rigney (1997) which are resistance, political integrity and privileging Indigenous voices in research (p. 118).

This research study is significant for eight reasons. First, it offers a unique contribution to the growing body of Indigenist research in Canada. Second, it is the first time that the voices of Urban ICIC and agency representatives are explicit and reveal their urban Indigenous educative and child protection knowledge. Until this study, the voices of Indigenous former youth in care were silenced, ignored, suppressed or were subsumed into scholarly or statistical analysis (Manser, 2001; Mitic & Reimer, 2002; Turpel-Lafond & Kendall, 2007) that included “youth in care” as a largely homogenous population, did not identify their nations or connections to Urban space/place.

Third, this study offers a unique Indigenous Saulteaux SBEOM, developed with Urban ICIC and agency participants, to identify gaps in urban ICIC educational needs and strategies to address those gaps. Fourth, the star blanket educational model offers flexibility to address the diversity in urban Indigenous communities and cultures. It makes explicit the need for an inter-governmental strategy (or strategies) to address the jurisdictional challenges of providing meaningful educative legislation, policy, funding, services and practices to the Urban ICIC population. Fifth, this research provides compelling evidence to substantiate the call by the Provincial Council of Child and Youth Advocates (2010) that national attention and a consistent approach to improvement of educational outcomes, particularly for vulnerable Urban Indigenous students, must occur. This study is a wake-
up call to the Federal, Provincial and Indigenous governments, including the AFN, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and Métis organizations that times and residential choices for Indigenous peoples in Canada have changed, and specifically through no fault of Urban ICIC. Collectively, the Urban Indigenous study participants are speaking from a previously silent place, commenting on the “official” governmental reports and recording a new story in voices that were previously absent and unacknowledged in the literature. Sixth, this Indigenist study is at the forefront with other Urban Indigenous studies, policy and practice advocacy efforts that are needed to strategically address Urban Indigenous population shifts in Canada (Howard & Proulx, 2011, Silver, 2006). Seventh, it identifies political and legislative collaborating opportunities with national or provincial youth in care networks and political Indigenous organizations to support the educational needs of ICIC. Finally, it provides guidance about the types of trauma counseling, educational information and planning development that is immediately required to help ICIC, teachers, social workers and foster parents to foreground ICIC educational preparation and success.

7.5 Strengths and Limitations

There are many strengths and limitations (or considerations) in this dissertation research, and they will be discussed together; conceptualized as the light and dark colors (and gradations of each) that are required by the placement of fabric pieces within a star blanket in order to create the holistic Indigenous design. The major strength of this Indigenist study is that it is the first in Canada to focus on the educational experiences of ICIC in the custody of the BC child protection system. While some research with respect to Aboriginal children in care exists in Canada, specifically with respect to funding inequities to First Nations reserve-based child welfare agencies (Blackstock, 2010), and some research has been conducted with respect to the education of Urban Aboriginal children (Donovan, 2011; Haig-Brown, Hodgson-Smith, Regnier & Archibald, 1997; Williams, 2000) this is the first study (Indigenist or otherwise) to bring both topics together in one project. This focus on the education of Urban ICIC makes this study both original and relevant and has the potential to have an impact on how child welfare and education can be vastly improved to meet the needs of
Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities (C. Baskin, personal communication, October 7, 2011). Secondly, it privileges the voices and experiences of Indigenous Urban former CIC, current Urban Indigenous child welfare agency personnel and an Urban Indigenous social work academic researcher. It offers a beginning place from which to provide clear, coherent, collective and strategic Indigenous voice to counterbalance the Urban Indigenous silence and deficit focus in the child welfare and education literature.

A third strength of this study is that it offers more than a deficit restatement of the issues related to the low Indigenous traditional and Western based educational outcomes currently experienced by ICIC. It offers a practical, strategic, holistic Indigenist Saulteaux educational organizational model based in Indigenist theory and experiences to address current Urban ICIC educational realities. Further, this Indigenist Star Blanket theoretical framework considers the myriad influences of critical and feminist theoretical perspectives as well as historical trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder theories. When these theories are viewed as integral parts of a holistic intersectional approach, they become stronger in their interdependency. This study demonstrates the holistic strength and creativity of Indigenous nations in this collective struggle to articulate race, class, gender and cultural influences in our experiences in the Canadian context and to free ourselves from oppressive Canadian educational and child protection systems. It demonstrates a collaborative and non-exploitive relationship between an Indigenous researcher and participants, positions the Indigenous researcher within the research process, interrogates patriarchal and colonial power structures and practices, and focuses on a transformative model of Urban ICIC education. The differential social, economic, political and historical impacts on Urban ICIC versus those on other educational student populations are discussed which helps readers to view Urban ICIC are more than “remnants of nations” and as peoples that are healing from cumulative and collective psychological and emotional injuries or traumas sustained over a lifetime and across generations (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004; Duran & Duran, 1995; Sotero, 2006; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003; Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).
A fourth strength of this study is its transferability and potential applicability of findings to other Urban ICIC, Indigenous and non Indigenous governments, advocates and Indigenous agencies, schools and communities that may discover helpful aspects within it. A fifth strength of this study is that this sample of Urban ICIC and agency representatives is collectively speaking “back” or “to” Canadian government power in a way that makes space for the inclusion of other Urban ICIC’s that may not be able to speak on their own behalf, at this time. Prospective participants were contacted by Urban Indigenous agency representatives, through “word of mouth”, posters, emails or newspapers; and the opportunity to contribute to this study resonated with Urban ICIC who believe that they have valuable knowledge to address the unique educational needs of Urban ICIC. In their action to contribute to this study, the participants may also help themselves and others to counteract the psychological (depression, anxiety, grief, loss); social (substance misuse, domestic violence, suicide); and physical (nutritional stress, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension) aspects of post traumatic stress disorders (Sotero, 2006).

In terms of study limitations, these are differential and based in subjective perspectives. As stated at the beginning of this study, there is acknowledged Indigenous researcher perspective in this study and a rejection of positivism or positivist research paradigm, in that I am an Urban Indigenous person who formerly worked as the CEO of one of the Urban Indigenous child protection agencies and has an intergenerational familial relationship with Canada’s child protection and educational institutions. However, I also have a long-standing interest to address the unique educational opportunities of Urban ICIC and am open about the subjective and advocacy components to my work. While I view subjectivity as a strength, and reflective of much needed Indigenous voice and position within the literature and research, others may consider this as a positivist construct of research “bias” which is most often associated with quantitative research. I take the position that the Indigenist perspective of this qualitative study brings important inter-personal and human dimensions to the literature in ways that positivist (or quantitative) studies cannot.
A second limitation, or consideration, is that because Urban Indigenous peoples do not own, or have much financial power or authority in the Canadian or First Nations governance bodies such as the AFN, provincial child protection and education systems, implementation of this Urban ICIC educative model rests with largely non-Indigenous peoples, governments, Urban First Nations, Métis or Inuit political representatives, school boards and child protection agencies. There is no way to compel the long-term adequate funding required and implementation of specific educational services or programs for Urban ICIC except through discussion and advocacy about Urban Indigenous realities, population explosion, and by asking “who” or “what” benefits if this SBEOM is enacted, and “who” or “what” does not.

At the political level, this work is well underway. On February 23, 2011 Betty Lavallee, National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP), representing the rights and interests of status and non-status Indians and Métis peoples living off reserve in Canada, addressed the Canadian Ministers of Education in Toronto regarding the issue of Urban Indigenous education. A status Mi’kmaq woman who has lived all her life off reserve, National Chief Lavallee told the Canadian Education Ministers that,

We are fully supportive of a more coordinated approach between the provinces and territories, and the national Aboriginal organizations. Education involves many complex jurisdictional issues, which can only be addressed through intergovernmental meetings…I do not pretend that the questions we are dealing with are simple. The questions are challenging and will require long-term commitment and political will. Greater investment will be required from all governments. We cannot shy away from the fact that stable, long-term financial resources will be essential for success. You cannot hope to raise student outcomes without increasing the resources required for this initiative (Betty Lavallee, 2011, p. 2, 5).

There is much work to do, and much of it is political work. The issues identified by the Indian Control of Indian Education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) and First Nations Control of First Nations Education (AFN, 2010) policy documents are primarily reserve-centric, focus on the relationship between status First Nations people and the Federal government, and foreground issues of “control” and “jurisdiction”. The Urban Indigenous demographic in this study includes many status and non
status, treaty and non treaty, and Métis peoples who were displaced, deterritorialized and experienced enforced socio-political identities as a result of growing up in Canadian child protection systems. When their realities are set against the reserve-centric perspective of Indigenous governments, it may cause some to question if this study is useful; can it do anything to help Urban ICIC in their educational journeys or will their needs continue to be subsumed by a reserve-centric gaze? Perhaps the greatest potential for change lies in the shifting and burgeoning Urban Indigenous population. It is not 1901 anymore when only 5.1 percent of Aboriginal peoples lived in urban areas (Donovan, 2011, p. 125). It is 2011, and estimates by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples are that “80% of the ancestry Aboriginal population live off-reserve and 60% live in urban areas. This is the most significant demographic factor for policy makers, yet it is the one where the least action takes place” (Lavallee, 2011, p. 5). Changes in Urban Indigenous population demographics must eventually force a shift in Canada’s policy, funding and service delivery for Urban Indigenous populations, must they not? In addition, educational reform for on-reserve status First Nations students is also required as evidenced in Michael Mendelson’s (2009) article posted on the AFN website when he argues that there is no doubt that reform is desperately needed…According to Census data, the proportion of young people on-reserve who have completed high school has not increased in the last ten years, and the high school completion gap between youth on-reserve and those in the general population is getting larger, not smaller…On-reserve education is failing First Nations students, parents and society as a whole (p.2).

A third limitation or consideration of this study may be its reception and use by other Urban Indigenous, First Nations, Métis or Inuit jurisdictions, child protection agencies, schools and school boards. This Urban Indigenous study regarding the unique educational needs and aspirations of Urban ICIC is specifically centered in two Urban cities on traditional Coast Salish territory. A key consideration might be how this Urban Indigenous knowledge may be utilized by other child protection and education spaces/places. It rejects the notion of “cognitive imperialism” and any type of enforced or imposed educational models on other Indigenous peoples and populations, Indigenous schools and agencies. This study is offered as a star blanket made with words, meant to wrap around, protect and support the unique educational needs, and build on the strengths, of
Urban ICIC. The choice for use, or not, rests with the receivers of this Star Blanket Educational Organizational Model or star blanket made with words.

The Urban ICIC experience and location is a contested site, and the intersectionality of their violent and racist child protection and educational experiences, enforced relocation, and enforced constructions of Urban Indigenous socio-cultural and political identities means detangling all the issues will not be fast, easy or cheap. It is here that the long-term vision and teachings of Indigenous leaders like Coast Salish hereditary Chief Andy Thomas, Dr. Nathan Matthew, Betty Lavallee and the advocacy work of many others, is important to remember.

7.6 Potential Applications of the Research Findings

The Indigenous research participants remain the owners of their knowledge and contributions to this study. Ethically respecting Indigenous protocol means that their agreement is required in order to share this knowledge, and as such requires an individual and collective decision. I understand that the primary reason the participants contributed to this Indigenist research is to improve academic and traditional Indigenous educational knowledge and learning for Urban ICIC. Through their contributions, they have become our teachers. In the past two years, they have given permission to share this information with the executive directors of BC’s twenty-two delegated First Nations and child protection agencies and those in development, BC and Federal government representatives and National Youth In Care organizations. Additionally, they gave permission to share some of the preliminary findings in a chapter in a child welfare text released in May 2011 by Sir Wilfred Laurier University Press.

The educative and child protection stories of Urban ICIC and agency representatives in this study will add insight to the Urban Indigenous discourse in Canada, and is written in plain language to be accessible to Urban ICIC, Indigenous community members, Elders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous politicians, policy-makers, advocates, funders, social workers, administrators and
teachers. It is meant to be disseminated through conferences, books, articles, community-based newsletters, websites and gatherings in Indigenous communities, organizations, schools, youth organizations and advocacy coalitions that may find it useful.

One application of these research findings may be immediately useful to Urban Indigenous child welfare agencies in that they can use it to lobby government for increased educational funding to meet the unique and overwhelming academic educational needs of Urban ICIC in the K-12 and post secondary systems. This funding is immediately required to purchase significant tutoring, educational assessments, Indigenous resources and resource people, laptops, printers, related academic school supplies, extra-curricular fees and supplies. It is required to ensure that post-majority Urban ICIC up to the age of thirty, with an approved plan to attend post secondary programs or degree-granting institutions, is provided with adequate tuition, books, rent, food, computers and printers, as well as other required living expenses such as daycare and transportation. Support to the age of thirty is required for every Urban ICIC that was a CCO in the BC child protection system for whom government bureaucrats stood in the place of “parent” due to the significant amount of trauma experiences identified in this participant sample and the healing that is required prior to re-entering educational institutions. Of the sample participants in this study, few were emotionally, psychologically, socially or financially ready to continue their education directly upon emancipation from the child protection system. The majority needed time and support to heal from their abusive and traumatic child protection and education experiences. In at least five instances, research participants provided evidence that violence against them was done despite warnings from other child protection and medical authorities, and/or with the knowledge of BC child protection authorities. Therefore, once former Urban ICIC are ready to pursue their educational choices, Canadian governments must bear their educational costs and responsibilities as a moral, legal and Indigenous inherent right, not a privilege. Furthermore, the educational disruption of Urban ICIC’s occurred in ways that were beyond the control of vulnerable Urban ICIC and due to, or caused by, negligence on the part of the Canadian and provincial government representatives.
The Urban agencies and school boards may also use this study to advocate for an increased or equivalent level of educative funding to support the Traditional Indigenous education of Urban ICIC in school curriculum or community-based settings. This education must be provided upon request of Urban ICIC, by culturally competent Indigenous cultural people, inclusive of Elder and former ICIC mentoring support. This traditional form of education cannot be viewed as a privilege for this population of vulnerable Indigenous children; rather it is based on the inherent rights as Indigenous peoples and supported by Canada’s 2010 signature to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), specifically Article 14 which states:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take effective measures in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

Support from Indigenous and non Indigenous governments, advocacy bodies, school boards and child protection agencies must support their inherent right to learn their Indigenous languages, cultural teachings and traditions because it is desperately needed to counter balance the overwhelming amount of non Indigenous, Euro-Western, hegemonic curriculum, violence, racism and cognitive Imperialism that ICIC encounter daily. Healing support in the form of counseling, treatment for addictions and abuse endured in foster care placements must also continue until Urban ICIC reach the age of thirty, and longer, if necessary; cessation is dependent on the extent to which the Urban ICIC finds the healing support to be effective. Both of these funding streams must “follow the child” to whichever home they reside, and the school or educational program that they attend.

Finally, ICIC require services, supports, funding, cultural education and healing provided by culturally competent individuals, programs, schools, organizations and institutions. The National Aboriginal
Health Organization (NAHO) defines cultural competency as “a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and polices that come together in a system, agency or among professionals that enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (2009, p. 1). Within the context of this Indigenist study, cultural competence is defined more broadly to emphasize and acknowledge Indigenous diversity and self-determination in the choice of individuals, programs, services, agencies or institutions, inclusive of Elders and former ICIC mentors that current ICIC may access for cultural support and Traditional education. Furthermore, culturally competent education, services and programs must be respectful and reflective of Indigenous worldviews, values and beliefs. These culturally competent programs, services, education or individuals must be able to demonstrate the inclusion of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual teachings of the specific Indigenous Nations in which Urban ICIC claim ancestry.

Finally, any other potential application of the findings, in terms of future research, must be sought at the direction of Urban ICIC, Urban Indigenous child well-being agencies and communities or reserve-based ICIC, agencies and communities.
Chapter 8: The “Give Away”

I think it is important for us to allow our children who are living in care to know this stuff and to hold their hands, help dry their tears, but be able to have a dialogue. Have it part of emotional health. That’s the most significant piece – the emotional health of our children. Then they will be able to feel that they can do anything. They will be comfortable walking around in their own skin and their own shoes. They will be who they will be, and that is such a gift (Indigenous agency participant, 2009).

Indian people do not judge each other by how much money they make or by the amount of things they own, but rather by how much a person gives away. Kindness, thoughtfulness, and sincerity by a person towards others is shown when prized possessions are given away freely. Unlike the potlatch, receivers of gifts are not expected to give something of greater value in return. The practice of giving away of gifts demonstrates appreciation towards people that have travelled so far to take part in festivities. It is hoped that those receiving gifts will always remember those that gave them, in prayers (Saskatchewan Indian, 1975, p. 14).

8.1 The Political Journey of “Trauma Spirits”

In 2000, I took four Urban ICIC from Northern BC to a three-day provincial Indigenous Youth Conference in Naniamo. All were living with non-Indigenous foster parents, had non-Indigenous teachers and except for me, had never been assigned to an Indigenous social worker. For the first time in their lives, they were surrounded by approximately 1,200 Indigenous youth and adults. It was a twelve-hour drive each way and three days that I will never forget. One of the evening sessions was open to both youth and adults, and was facilitated by Cree comedian Don Burnstick.

We laughed throughout his hilarious routine so much and for so long, that our stomachs hurt, tears streamed from our eyes, we rocked back and forth in our chairs, and could barely breathe. Towards the end of his routine he performed a one-person skit about an “alcohol spirit” that enters people, families and communities, brings fear and pain. The skit taught us a new way to reframe alcohol addictions, in the form of a wandering “spirit” and ways to guard against its entry into our lives. It was profoundly effective, and the audience was so quiet that we could hear his breathing from thirty rows back. That skit struck at a common experience in the lives of the four Indigenous youth and they spoke about the ways that “alcohol spirits” affects them on the drive back to Prince George.

Still today, that skit encourages me to reflect and reframe the different kinds of “trauma spirits” in
the lives of many ICIC; including poverty, violence, abuse, addictions, racism and injustice. For some, the “trauma spirit” lives within them or circles around them on their exhausting, painful and lonely journey through violent, hostile and alienating Canadian child protection and education systems. For many, this “trauma spirit” was passed down to them from the painful residential school journey that their ancestors began generations ago. It is a dangerous “trauma spirit” that takes many ICIC lives through loss of hope and suicide (Morely & Kendall, 2006). For the living Urban ICIC, this “trauma spirit” takes almost everything from them, tortures them and ensures they are too exhausted to learn effective skills and ceremonies that will rid the “trauma spirit” from their lives.

Despite the overwhelming power of “trauma spirits”, the Urban ICIC and agency participants in this study continue to battle against it. An important part of their healing is learning about Indigenous cultural ways and people that can help them evict or cleanse these trauma spirits. These are the same individuals that recognize that more must be done to protect Indigenous babies, toddlers, children and youth from entry by trauma spirits, and what must be done to heal and protect those in which it has already entered or is circling around. Through their stories and experiences, they point us to a “star blanket educational organizational model” and this “star blanket made with words” that embraces both academic and traditional knowledge as two ways to heal and become safer from poverty, violence and injustice.

Now that this advocacy journey is begun, the task before Canada and Indigenous leadership is to walk with us on this healing journey. Governments, (both Indigenous and non Indigenous), professional social workers and educators, K-12 and post-secondary institutions, must accept that our attitudes, expectations of failure, policies and practices contribute to trauma spirit development. It is those attitudes, expectations, policies and practices that Urban ICIC identify as their greatest barriers to academic and Indigenous knowledge learning. The Indigenous voices of experience show us the potential in every single Urban ICIC, and as people that can be much more
educationally successful, once the barriers to their success, these “trauma spirits”, are removed.

One participant did not let her experience in over fifty foster placements, or the trauma spirit that still circles around her, dissuade her from making an educational choice to become a social worker. Her example provides a glimpse into the resilience, strength and potential that is in each ICIC.

We had a different school every year because we were always moving. We were always in special education. I don’t think I was able to sit in a regular classroom because I was bouncing off the walls. I don’t know if that was because of ADD or because of the change – probably a combination. We were often in the library or I was often in the principal’s office. I was in lots of fights and I was always defending my sister. She seemed to get picked on a lot.[Years later a college] did another test and I scored a 35 out of 35 to become a social worker. I thought, “There is no way on God’s green earth I’m going to become a social worker. I hate social workers”. But here I am – a social worker (ICIC, 2009).

8.2 The Political Journey of Indigenous Spirits

Shortly after a June 2011 meeting with my doctoral committee, I struggled to complete this final chapter, to properly prepare this “star blanket made with words” for the give-away ceremony; the final step in a star blanket making pedagogy. Draft after draft was written, reviewed and discarded. On June 6, 2011, I awoke and went outside to begin my day with a smudge and prayer. I asked the Creator to show me a way to demonstrate the resilience, resurgence, strength and promise in the contributions of all the people that gave so generously of their time and knowledge, shared their Canadian child protection and educational experiences, and hope for a new learning journey.

As I smudged my laptop computer and the binders of documents holding the words of all the participants, I told the Creator that “I am afraid, I do not know how to do it, how to breathe life and the urgent need for advocacy into this final chapter in a way that would make people care and never forget what we are all working towards”. I asked the Creator to help me to write it in a respectful way and then I thanked the Creator for listening to me.
Still, the words for the final chapter remained elusive. After some time spent staring at my blank computer screen, I opened my email and found a note from one of the Indigenous research study participants. She is one of the thousands of Indigenous people that grew up as a “ward” in the Canadian child welfare system, and is now working in one of the Indigenous child welfare agencies. She is a spiritual woman, an Elder now, and the eldest research participant in this study. She sent the story/prayer/poem to me just a few hours after I prayed to the Creator for help. It was the first communication from her in over five months, and what she wrote profoundly affected me because it could have been something that one of my grandmothers may have written. Once we spoke about the ways that she might like to see her work educate other people, she gave permission to share her name, and her story/prayer/poem, in this final chapter. It is our Elder’s contribution to the forthcoming “give away”.

Reflection and action (social work praxis) encouraged me to spend time thinking about this guidance that came through prayer. The first time I read the Elder’s words, I knew that the title of this dissertation must change to reflect one line that leapt off the page, resonated to the core of my being, and brought me to tears. She wrote “I screamed internally for a long time”. Perhaps no other statement more profoundly reflects the “trauma spirit” that circles around the twenty-nine Urban Indigenous research participants. These words are familiar because they reflect the “trauma spirit” that I have witnessed in so many Indigenous Elders, adults, youth and children over the years of my social work practice. The Elder, writing about her own experience, named the ways she identifies this “trauma spirit” in seven words. The knowledge that this “trauma spirit” lives in hostile, abusive and violent Canadian child protection and education systems must compel every single adult in this country to take political action to do what can be done to prevent it from circling and affecting the lives of the next generation of Indigenous children.

These seven words also convey my own personal emotions, once I came to understand the purposeful jurisdictional, legal, social, historic and funding barriers, enforced by Canada, that Urban
ICIC and agencies encounter on a daily basis. These “trauma spirits” exist, and they stand in the way of Indigenous peoples gaining academic and traditional knowledge. These are the same “trauma spirits” that I recall from the stories of both my grandmothers. One grandmother was raised in Canada’s residential school system at the turn of the last century and the “trauma spirit” that hunted her is still visible in the lives of some of her children and grandchildren. My other grandmother was raised in the Canadian child protection system after she and her sisters were orphaned upon both their parent’s death, in the Spanish flu epidemic that swept the world in 1919. The “trauma spirit” that chased her, entered the lives of three of my first cousins who were taken from my aunt into the child protection system of the 1970s. Their “trauma spirits” were in control of their lives when they emerged from Canada’s child protection and education systems, and led them toward addictions to cope with the pain, grief and loss the “trauma spirit” caused. It led them to incarceration, and an early death. This study is about the ways that we can protect future generations through academic and traditional Indigenous knowledge development, and help them to heal from these “trauma spirits”. Rather than writing an ending, this final chapter is about beginning a new journey.

The Elders written communication to me is below and demonstrates why this study, this “star blanket made with words”, was dreamed and created by Urban Indigenous peoples for Urban ICIC. For so many Indigenous peoples involved in this study, the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental healing time is happening now.
Life: An Elders’ Prayer/Poem/Story by April Bennett

It feels so good to have someone to talk about these things, they are difficult. I remember beginning to talk about the abuses, sexual, physical and emotional. But everyone turned away or didn’t believe that could happen to a person. I wasn’t listened to until later in my life and I needed to take responsibility, For my actions, and for others, it seemed.

I got one apology from one of my foster parents. That was all.
I never received any apology for my broken finger, (foster parent slammed it in the car door intentionally),
Big scar on my back, (from a kick from the same foster parent),
For a broomstick shoved up my vagina and needed a couple of operations, (by the same foster parent),
The only one who apologized was a foster dad in my last home.

I screamed internally for a long time.
Primal screams in healing sessions with other Aboriginal people. Every place in my body hurt again, from where I was hurt a long time ago. My hands, my head, my eyes, my stomach, my feet, She (foster parent) must’ve hated herself, in general, girls. Whatever happened for her? Well the psychiatrist said she either was a person who gave pain, Or was given pain, probably in the Holocaust. I am so fortunate to be here and have the big capability to love and be kind. I know there’s another side to people, It takes constant work to see and feel positive, To keep my mind going forward, instead of backwards.

I am so fortunate to see my daughter, clear of these horrible things. She loves her beautiful children, another on the way. How I love them up, love my special needs son (many people do). My little one I adopted, Carlina, from my personal family. She is now 11 years old and a beautiful soul.

I am writing a lot about my life.
The twists and turns, and the magic. I have my guides and Creator that I am in touch with everyday. I know they didn’t want this to happen to me either. I am in a privileged place now and am so thankful. Just know you are very respected and cared about.

This Elder’s story/prayer/poem demonstrates how healing and love create a vision of a just future for those that will come after us. It is offered here, with no expectation of anything in return, except perhaps, that we remember this unique population of urban Indigenous peoples in prayer, which is an important action. Perhaps it will be through our collective prayers and advocacy of so many
people in this study, that the internal screaming and “trauma spirits” that circle so many Urban ICIC will finally be heard across Canada (CNW Group, 2011). Then, the trauma and burden that they have carried for too long may finally begin to be healed or cleansed, and the responsibility to make reparations and reconcile this contemporary Canadian shame is placed elsewhere. While the decision for reconciliation is an individual one, Indigenous and non-Indigenous political leaders, Canadian judiciary and society have responsibilities to this population to ask where they may begin the restorative and cleansing process. The Urban ICIC in this study are at the “table” and ready to talk about their academic and Indigenous knowledge learning needs, and educational needs of Indigenous children that will come after them.

8.4 Conclusion: Resurgence, A Youth’s Artistic Vision, and Challenge

There are many teachings that arise from the information shared by Urban ICIC, agency participants, Chief Andy Thomas, Elder Mike Arnouse and the literature. The first teaching that arises is a reflection that while some things have changed, others stay the same, and the recognition that Canada never intended to educate, or protect, Indigenous children in residential schools. It takes us on a circular journey that leads to the same conclusion with respect to the education and protection of the vast majority of the Urban ICIC in this study. Certainly, from their perspective, Canada did not intend to substantially educate Indigenous children in its child protection systems, academically or traditionally, however Indigenous peoples continue to work toward the day that Canada will. The second teaching is that Urban ICIC that claim abuse, violence and exploitation in some foster placements and schools, poor practice by some social workers and teachers, and a lack of meaningful educational advocacy on their behalf must be believed. Sharon Russell (CNW Group, 2011) is taking legal action in the courts to hold Canada to account for its treatment of Indigenous children in BC’s child protection system, legal action is happening in Ontario, changes are being made in Indigenous social work practice, and in research. Closer oversight and scrutiny is required to ensure the safety of Indigenous children in Canada’s child protection systems and much more focus is required in terms of their academic and Indigenous
knowledge development. This requires a substantial resource investment by Canada, and it must also include the provision of preventive services and educational supports that keep Indigenous children out of child protection systems. Poverty in Indigenous communities, and the legacy of residential school and child protection trauma, must be addressed through substantive healing initiatives. Without this investment, the flow of Indigenous children into child protection systems will continue.

Historical Canadian policies of assimilation and contemporary policies of integration remain entrenched in powerful Neo-Liberal ideologies, systems of surveillance and control in the lives of Urban ICIC. The structural evidence is compelling and includes all the enforced systemic mobility between various foster homes and schools, lack of comprehensive allocation of Canadian educational funding supports by politicians, lack of focused educational success legislation, practice or policy expectations, non-existent target dates for educational success by legal guardians and teachers, widespread racism, unresolved trauma, foster home violence, exploitation and abuse; the systemic barriers are overwhelming. If Canada intended to educate and protect Indigenous children in its child protection systems, these barriers would be removed by now, and all Indigenous children and youth, as rights-holders, would have access and support to Western academic and Traditional Indigenous educational knowledge opportunities and be safe. Today, they do not, and are not. Without question, for the vast majority of Urban ICIC, the “opportunities” that exist, are too minimal, convoluted and difficult to access, to be of either practical or theoretical help. Much more needs to be done by Canada to demonstrate that it intends to educate and protect Urban ICIC, and it must be interconnected to a body of strategies designed to protect and educate all Indigenous peoples in Canada. The first step for Indigenous peoples is to understand, at a cellular level, that Canada’s first duty is to maintain itself; therefore Indigenous peoples must act to heal ourselves with the same type of determination and perseverance. What we can do for ourselves must be a primary focus, rather than continually responding to Canada’s “politics of
distraction” (Graham Smith, personal communication, July 20, 2006) that keep our attention focused elsewhere, and lead us nowhere.

While some may continue to stare at the wall of systemic barriers, the participants in this study show us how to look past them and focus discussions on our collaborative work which results in the re-discovery of a way forward that scales, or goes around, the wall. The creation of this “star blanket made with words” finds spaces and cracks in the wall, exposes them and protects Urban ICIC by collectively speaking back to power, giving guidance, advocating and promoting Indigenous restorative educational oversight. The Urban ICIC and agency participants make a massive research and political action contribution from their formerly non-existent place in the literature, and provide evidence that it is just the beginning of transformative change.

The dissertation defense provided another opportunity for collaboration and contribution to transformative political action. In a discussion to determine what that “give away” ceremony might include, two more ideas were born and cultural protocol was followed. On the dissertation defense date, when the people were gathered together for the “give away”, our collective thoughts, prayers and songs for the safety, well-being and educational success of Urban ICIC began the ceremony that is the defense. Prior to the defense, the youngest study participant created a painting entitled “Star Blanket Dreamers” that depicts a female and male youth dreaming toward the future wrapped in a star blanket design, the symbol of a new day and new learning journey for Urban ICIC. That painting was combined with the Elder’s story/prayer/healing poem on a poster, was printed and gifted to each dissertation defense ceremony observer and participant as one way to encourage action to support the learning and teaching spirits of Urban ICIC.

A second concrete outcome was a letter, dated October 7, 2011, addressed to both the BC Minister of Education, the Honourable George Abbott and the BC Minister of Children and Family Development, the Honourable Mary McNeil. This letter was read aloud observers present at the
defense ceremony and they were invited to support and sign it. The letter identifies the educational, funding and support gaps between CIC and other student populations, and critical actions that are required on behalf of Urban ICIC to close those gaps. It encourages these political individuals to implement the Star Blanket Organizational Educational Model for Urban ICIC. I hope that one day because of this small research contribution, advocacy efforts and the contributions of many more peoples, Canada will be forced to provide a political response, resources and actions, that will help to create another “blanket” of oversight, education, healing and protection for Indigenous children in Canada.

It is appropriate that a youth from this study has the final word because it will be the responsibility of today's Indigenous youth to continue this advocacy work until no more Indigenous children live in Canadian child protection systems or are only educated in Neo-Liberal ideologies or Euro-Western ways. This is just one example of Indigenous youth speaking back to power, and gives hope that this work will continue until the day when all Indigenous children in Canada are educated in “two-eyed seeing” ways that honour Indigenous experiences, ancestral knowledge, and worldviews.

I would say we need to go and ask them [Urban Indigenous children in BC’s child protection and education system] what they need. Everybody should start listening. Over 50% of young people in care are Aboriginal and that's huge. We need to listen to them and we need to give them power. If I'm Premier and I have all this power but I'm making decisions on behalf of them and it doesn't seem to be working, why aren't we giving them some of the power so they can make some of the decisions? (ICIC, 2009).

All my relations.
References


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Appendix A: BC Ministry of Children and Family Development Child, Aboriginal Children in Care Report)

Aboriginal Children in Care Report (Summary) – April 2011

Ministry of Children and Family Development
Aboriginal Children in Care
April 2011 Report
Prepared by Research, Analysis and Evaluation Branch

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I. Summary

The Aboriginal Children in Care Report is produced by the Research, Analysis and Evaluation Branch and it presents statistics and analysis of Aboriginal children in care and the steps being taken by the Ministry of Children and Family Development to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care (CIC).

- In April 2011, there were 4,608 Aboriginal children in care, a decrease of 0.2 per cent from April 2010. (Chart 1) Aboriginal children represented 55.3 per cent of the children in care caseload.

- It was 13.9 times more likely for an Aboriginal child to be in care than a non-Aboriginal child in fiscal 2010/11, compared to 13.4 times in 2009/10. (Chart 10)

- On average, Aboriginal children discharged from care in April 2011 had spent more time in care (32.6 months) than non-Aboriginal children (25.5 months). (Chart 11)

- As of April 2011, 1,999 Aboriginal children in care were served by delegated Aboriginal agencies, representing 43.4 per cent of the total Aboriginal children in care caseload.

- The proportion of Aboriginal children placed in Aboriginal adoptive homes, including First Nations homes, Métis homes and mixed Aboriginal homes, increased over the 2008/09 and 2009/10 fiscal years and continued to increase in 2010/11. (Chart 21)

II. Aboriginal Children in Care

As of April 2011, there were 8,330 children in care (CIC), of which 4,608 (55.3%) were Aboriginal and 3,722 (44.7%) were non-Aboriginal. (Chart 1)

The total CIC caseload decreased by 166 (-2.0%) from April 2010. The Aboriginal CIC caseload decreased by 9 (-0.2%), while the non-Aboriginal CIC caseload decreased by 157 (-4.0%). (Table 1)
1. Rights of children in care

70 (1) Children in care have the following rights:

(a) to be fed, clothed and nurtured according to community standards and to be given the same quality of care as other children in the placement;

(b) to be informed about their plans of care;

(c) to be consulted and to express their views, according to their abilities, about significant decisions affecting them;

(d) to reasonable privacy and to possession of their personal belongings;

(e) to be free from corporal punishment;

(f) to be informed of the standard of behaviour expected by their caregivers and of the consequences of not meeting their caregivers' expectations;

(g) to receive medical and dental care when required;

(h) to participate in social and recreational activities if available and appropriate and according to their abilities and interests;

(i) to receive the religious instruction and to participate in the religious activities of their choice;

(j) to receive guidance and encouragement to maintain their cultural heritage;

(k) to be provided with an interpreter if language or disability is a barrier to consulting with them on decisions affecting their custody or care;

(l) to privacy during discussions with members of their families, subject to subsection (2);

(m) to privacy during discussions with a lawyer, the representative or a person employed or retained by the representative under the Representative for Children and Youth Act, the Ombudsperson, a member of the Legislative Assembly or a member of Parliament;

(n) to be informed about and to be assisted in contacting the representative under the Representative for Children and Youth Act, or the Ombudsperson;

(o) to be informed of their rights, and the procedures available for enforcing their rights, under

(i) this Act, or

(ii) the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

(2) A child who is removed under Part 3 is entitled to exercise the right in subsection (1) (l), subject to any court order made after the court has had an opportunity to consider the question of access to the child.

(3) This section, except with respect to the Representative for Children and Youth as set out in subsection (1) (m) and (n), does not apply to a child who is in a place of confinement.
Are you an Aboriginal person that grew up in the BC foster care system?

If you are 24 years old or older, then you are one of the 25 people I am searching for.

Your educational experiences are important.

This doctoral research study seeks to address the question, “From the perspectives of urban Indigenous former youth-in-care, what can be done to improve the educational outcomes of urban Indigenous youth-in-care in British Columbia?”

The urban Indigenous former youth-in-care live, and have lived, the experience I am interested in better understanding. This study will primarily focus on the lived experience and perspectives of 15 urban Indigenous former youth-in-care, both men and women, living in the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples in Victoria and Vancouver BC. To add context to the issue, this study will also include the perspectives of 10 current staff members, board members and foster parents of two urban Indigenous delegated child welfare agencies in BC (5 from each agency).

I am currently searching for 5 Aboriginal men, living in the Vancouver area, that are willing to talk about their educational experiences while they were in foster care and after they left foster care. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete.

For more information about this Aboriginal research project, please contact:
Appendix D: Contact Letter to Potential Study Participants

University of British Columbia
Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z4

Date
Participant
Address
City, Province
Postal Code

Dear ____________________,


Anin sikwa? (How are you?). I am writing to invite your participation in my doctoral research project at the University of BC. I am an Indigenous Saulteaux woman student in the UBC Doctorate in Education: Leadership and Policy program in the Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Studies.

My research project is focused on the educational experiences of urban Indigenous former youth-in-care in British Columbia. My hope is that what is learned will help to improve the educational outcomes of current urban Indigenous youth-in-care in BC. This research proposal is supported by both Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services (in Vancouver) and Surrounded By Cedar Child and Family Services (in Victoria). Please see their enclosed letters of agreement.

In this research project, I hope to speak with a total of twenty-five (25) urban Indigenous men and women over the age of 24 years living in the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples of Vancouver and Victoria, BC. Of these, fifteen (15) will be urban Indigenous former youth-in-care (comprised of 7 or 8 in Victoria and 7 or 8 in Vancouver) and ten (10) urban Indigenous staff members, board members and/or contracted foster parents from two urban Indigenous child welfare agencies (5 from each agency). If you agree to be a participant in this study, I will provide you with a copy of the consent form and research questions at least one week prior to our interview.

To conduct the 1.5 hour interview, I will come to a place that is convenient for you and our conversation will be audio-taped. Once it is transcribed, I will send you a copy and ask that you approve it or make any changes you think should be made. All information will be kept confidential. I have enclosed some general questions about your experience and perspective that I would like to understand better.
This research is completely voluntary and you can discontinue at any time, without repercussions or reprisals.

If you agree to participate in this study, I ask you contact me (by phone you may call me collect at _____________ to discuss confidentiality and your participation. Then we will set a time to meet in a place that is convenient to you. Enclosed are copies of the consent form and the research study questions.

If you want to see a copy of my full thesis proposal, or if you have any questions, please call me at _____________. You may also contact my Academic Supervisor, Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald at ___________.

Me’gwech (Thank you).

Shelly Johnson
UBC Doctoral student

Encl.

- Consent form
- Research questions
- Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services letter July 8, 2009
- Surrounded By Cedar Child and Family Services letter January 21, 2009
Appendix E: Informed Consent Letter to Urban ICIC Participants

University of British Columbia
Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z4

“Consent Form”
Educational experiences of urban Indigenous former youth-in-care in British Columbia

Principal Investigator: Jo-ann Archibald, PhD  Associate Dean for Indigenous Education, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia  Phone: __________

Co-Investigator(s): Shelly Johnson, UBC doctoral student. UBC Doctorate in Education, Leadership and Policy, UBC department of Educational Studies.  Phone: __________

The research information will be used to partially fulfill the graduate requirements for the Doctorate in Education degree sought by Shelly Johnson. Principal Investigator Jo-Ann Archibald and Co-Investigator Shelly Johnson are the only people that will have access to the data which will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at UBC.

Purpose:
This study asks urban Indigenous adults that were formerly youth-in-care in the BC foster care system, staff and board members of two urban Indigenous child welfare agencies in BC, what can be done to improve the educational outcomes of urban Indigenous youth-in-care?

A total of twenty-five (25) urban Indigenous participants living in Vancouver and Victoria, BC will be asked to contribute their knowledge based in their personal experiences in one-to-one interviews or in “talking circle” focus groups. Of the twenty-five participants, (15) fifteen will be both male and female urban Indigenous former youth-in-care and (10) ten will be both male and female Indigenous board members, staff members or contracted foster parents comprised of 5 from each of the two urban Indigenous child welfare agencies in BC.

Study Procedures:
If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to share your information in either a one-to-one interview or a “talking circle” focus group. The total amount of interview time you will be asked to contribute is one to one and one half hours and the interview or focus group will be audio-taped. You will be asked to review the transcript of the interview for accuracy and this may take up to one additional hour to complete. The tapes and transcripts will be kept in a secure locked filing cabinet at UBC.

Potential Risks:
Participants may experience emotional discomfort when they talk about negative experiences in foster care or in school. If you feel that you could benefit from counseling support or a counseling referral at any time through this research and interviewing process, I can provide you with the names and phone numbers of counseling supports available to you in either Victoria or Vancouver.

Potential Benefits:
A potential benefit to you is an increased sense of empowerment in giving voice to your educational experiences while you were in foster care. As well, you may increase your sense of empowerment in possibly benefiting other current urban Indigenous children and youth in the BC foster care system.

You will be invited to be present at UBC when I defend the findings of this study. Upon completion of the study, a copy can be made available to you. If you want a copy, please provide your mailing address on the consent form and I will mail you a copy of the findings.

Confidentiality:
Please be assured that your identity will be kept strictly confidential. All documents and audio tapes will be digitized onto a computer disc that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the PI’s office at UBC. All computer files will be password protected. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet at UBC. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. The data will be kept on a computer hard disk and a copy will be kept on a data traveler. The data traveler and computer hard disk will be kept at all times in my locked office. The data traveler and transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet at UBC. No one else will have a key to my locked filing cabinet.

I will encourage all participants to refrain from disclosing the contents of the discussion outside of the focus group or talking circle; however, I cannot control what other participants do with the information discussed.

Remuneration/Compensation:
In order to defray the costs of participant’s transportation and inconvenience; meals and parking reimbursement will be offered as well as a small, cultural token of appreciation.

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald at 604-822-5286.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy or repercussions. Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study. If you want a copy of the completed study findings, please provide your mailing address and a copy of the findings will be mailed to you.

Subject Signature Date

Printed Name of the Subject signing above

Mailing Address that a Copy of the Study Findings should be mailed to
Appendix F: Questions for Urban ICIC Participants

Below are questions that are intended to help prepare you for our interview / conversation. I look forward to meeting with you.

A). Interview research questions for urban Indigenous former youth-in-care in BC

This study seeks to address the question, “From the perspectives of urban Indigenous former youth-in-care, what can be done to improve the educational outcomes of urban Indigenous youth-in-care in British Columbia?” The specific research questions include:

2. How old were you when you came into foster care? How old were you when you left foster care? Do you know why you came into foster care?

3. How many foster placements did you have on and off reserve? How many social workers did you have? Were any of your social workers Aboriginal?

4. How many schools did you attend? Were any of your teachers Aboriginal?

5. What facilitated your educational success while you were in foster care? After you left foster care?

6. What hindered your educational success while you were in foster care? After you left foster care?

7. What educational supports did you access when you were in foster care? After you left foster care?

8. What does your education enable you to do today?

9. By participating in this study, what do you hope will change to support and improve the educational outcomes for urban Indigenous youth-in-care?

10. Is there anything else that you think will help to improve the educational outcomes of urban Indigenous youth-in-care?

Me’gweench (thank you)
Shelly Johnson
EdD candidate
Appendix G: Questions for Talking Circle Participants

Below are talking circle questions that are intended to help prepare you for our talking/circle focus group interview / conversation. I look forward to meeting with you.

B). Talking circle research questions for urban Indigenous staff members, board members and contracted foster parents of Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services and Surrounded By Cedar Child and Family Services.

1. How long have you been a social worker/foster parent / board member? Why did you become a social worker/foster parent/board member in this Aboriginal delegated child welfare agency?

2. From your perspective, what facilitates/facilitated the educational success of urban Indigenous former youth-in-care while they were in foster care? After they left foster care?

3. From your perspective, what hinders/ hindered the educational success of urban Indigenous former youth-in-care while they were in foster care? After they left foster care?

4. What educational supports do urban Indigenous former youth-in-care access when they were in foster care? After they left foster care?

5. What does the educational success of urban Indigenous former youth-in-care enable them to do today?

6. By participating in this study, what do you hope will change to support and improve the educational outcomes for urban Indigenous youth-in-care?

7. Is there anything else that you think will help to improve the educational outcomes of Urban Indigenous youth-in-care that I did not ask?

Me’gweench (thank you).

Shelly Johnson
EdD candidate