Ê-NITONAHK MIYO-PIMÂTISIWIN (SEEKING THE GOOD LIFE)

THROUGH INDIGENOUS DANCE

A Thesis Submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Arts and Science

TRENT UNIVERSITY

Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

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January 2022

ABSTRACT

Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin (Seeking the Good Life) Through Indigenous Dance

Sandra Lamouche

This thesis is about the ways in which Indigenous dance serves as a social determinant of Indigenous health and well-being. Utilizing both contemporary and traditional versions of the Medicine Wheel for the framework, analysis and organization of the thesis allows for a holistic perspective which includes the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental aspects. The importance of Indigenous dance for Indigenous health and well-being is confirmed through: existing literature; interviews with Indigenous choreographers, dancers, theatre artists, and performers; Indigenous exponents of the forms; and Indigenous Elders. In order to contextualize current practices of Indigenous dance, the history of Indigenous dance in relation to colonization is presented. The research and experiences of co-researchers show the need for Indigenous dance and culture to be supported as a social determinant of health and well-being.

Keywords: Indigenous Dance, Indigenous Social Determinants of Health and Well-Being, First Nations, Culture, Medicine Wheel, Decolonization, Performance, Healing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Marrie Mumford for her support and guidance in the completion of this thesis; my family for their ongoing support; and all the dancers and artists who shared their life-long journey of learning, growing and being which continue to inspire my work today.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

To dance is to pray,
to pray is to heal,
to heal is to give,
to give is to live,
to live is to dance.
~ MariJo Moore

Tansi, Sandra Lamouche nitsikasoon. I am a member of the Bigstone Cree Nation, located in Wabasca, Alberta. I was born in High Prairie and lived in Grouard and Slave Lake in northern Alberta where I started school. I have spent the majority of my life as a dancer and a student which led to my decision to do this research on Indigenous dance. When I was ten years old, my mother put me in dance classes because I was 'pigeon-toed'; I always say this was my first experience with the healing power of dance. After high school, I moved to Lethbridge, Alberta where I obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Native American Studies from the University of Lethbridge. This is where I met my Hoop Dance teacher Jerry First Charger. For those who have not had the privilege of witnessing the whirlwind that is the Hoop Dance it is eloquently put into words here:

> The Hoop Dance, a "show dance" of many tribes is one of the most individual—it features a dancer's manipulation of a dozen or more hoops over and around his torso, legs, and arms to form a variety of geometric shapes . . . The dance is often conceived in terms of circles, with the dancers moving either clockwise or counter-clockwise, as determined by their cosmology and worldview. (Heth 12)

I began learning the Hoop Dance in the fall of 2005 while my teacher, Jerry First Charger, was in the process of creating a performance as part of an independent study with Amethyst First Rider in the Department of Native American Studies at the University of Lethbridge. His performance was based on his own story of the Hoop Dance and how it helped him through the struggles in his own life. I was cast as one of the 'manitous' (spriit beings) in this performance and was also given a solo as the main Hoop Dancer, which allowed me to learn more of the dance. Jerry later shared in his interview that as you continue to practice the Hoop Dance your own story will emerge in how it fits with the dance—a process that enabled him to create a unique interpretation of the dance. When I was taught the Hoop Dance I was taught an Anishnaabek story and teachings related to the dance. I was taught that each hoop represents a challenge in life, and the more hoops you can handle reflects how well you handle the challenges in your life. The dance becomes a constant reminder to improve yourself and your life, and to constantly strive, not for perfection but for improvement. This teaching started a snowball effect on the individual level that led me to strive to improve all aspects of my life: spiritual, physical, emotional and mental. The profound effect of the Hoop Dance initiated my interest in the holistic teachings of the Medicine Wheel, which has provided the framework for this research.

a) Why Indigenous dance?

This thesis aims to address the complex impacts of colonization evident in the lower levels of well-being in different areas for Native[1] peoples today. Through Indigenous dance and the sacred circle concept (also known as the Medicine Wheel), we can focus on preventive, impactful and proven positive effects on the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental qualities of well-being. This framework is embodied in the Hoop Dance with the hoops themselves representing a holistic perspective: equality and interconnectedness. The use of the sacred circle is not only culturally relevant to Native dance, it is also a framework embodied in the Hoop Dance. The Hoop Dance and the different shapes a Hoop Dancer makes show how everything in Creation is connected. The hoops themselves represent the sacred hoop of life and therefore represent all aspects of life. My hypothesis was that practicing the Hoop Dance in particular can help increase the well-being of Native peoples in terms of these various qualities of well-being. Native dance and culture are often viewed from a stereotypical and tokenizing viewpoint with little attention paid to the more complex identity of such dancers and the practical aspects of learning Native dance.

Coming into my Master's thesis, my initial research question was: Does Native dance contribute to the overall well-being of those who practice it in terms of spiritual, physical,

[1] Whenever possible throughout this paper, I will use the specific term for each person's nation. When speaking about the collective experience, however, I will use terms such as Indigenous, Native or Aboriginal. These terms will always be capitalized, even if they are in a quotation, as they are referencing a race of people, comparable to Caucasian, Asian and African. This includes names of people, characters and nations in Indigenous languages, and specific concepts.

emotional and mental well-being? After completing and conducting an analysis of the 15 co-researcher interviews on the topic of Indigenous dance and well-being, this research question transformed into: *How* does Indigenous dance create Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin for those who practice it, in terms of spiritual, physical, emotional and mental well-being? Through the interviews it became evident that Indigenous dance did contribute to health and well-being but there were many contingencies as to how this was realized. It was no longer a question of *if* Indigenous dance contributes to well-being, but *how*. Using the term Indigenous rather than more accurately reflects the reality of Indigenous dance as an intertribal and international movement. Initially, I was only interested in the Hoop Dance as a means of well-being but as I continued to work with dancers and choreographers in both contemporary and powwow styles, as well as theatre artists, I began to see how the broader scope of Indigenous dance and performance contributes to well-being for Indigenous peoples, families, communities and nations. This work respects the sacredness of Indigenous ceremonies and ceremonial dance and seeks to respect the form in which that knowledge is meant to be shared, experienced and lived by not theorizing ceremony or discussing it directly.

b) Indigenous Dance Interviews

For my thesis, I interviewed 15 dancers from different Indigenous nations including Nehiyawak (Cree), Nitsi'tapi (Blackfoot), Anishinaabek (Ojibway), Pembina Chippewa, Métis, Kuna/ Rappahannock, Māori and Taino. I have chosen to use the term 'Indigenous dance' because of the diverse nations of Indigenous dancers that participated in the interviews, although the majority were of First Nations and Métis ancestry. This diversity of Indigenous dancers reflects the reality of Indigenous contemporary dance and the intertribal powwow—

both of which have become global movements. The dancers that I interviewed each have more than ten years of experience in a range of roles, including choreography, contemporary and/or traditional dance, drumming, singing and theatre arts. Many are founding artistic directors of their own Indigenous dance companies, cultural groups and/or performance collectives who have travelled and performed nationally and internationally.

Don Kavanaugh, an Anishinaabe language and performance specialist from the Lake of the Woods, inspired me to explore the concept of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin. He shared that in his research of Anishinaabemowin (the Ojibway language) there is no word for art or artist; the closest description is “seeking life, living a good life,” which is part of the Anishinaabek philosophy of Mino-Bimaadiziwin: living in a good way. I asked my mother to translate this into Cree as we also have a similar word with the same meaning: Pimâtisiwin. She translated this as Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin—seeking the good life. The Cree translation of this term means to live a life of “learning, growing and being-in-becoming”, as explained by Dr. Michael Hart, Cree scholar (52).

c) Theoretical Approach

The research methodology used in this paper combines decolonizing methodologies and Indigenous methodologies. Using the Medicine Wheel as a framework for organization and analysis, I examine the Nehiyawak Medicine Wheel and the ‘original teachings’ of the Anishinaabek Medicine Wheel as referenced by Dr. Nicole Bell, to analyze the journey of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin through stories of individual dancers interviewed. This includes the

use of oral stories of co-researchers[2] to share the lived experience of Indigenous dance in relation to holistic well-being. In her PhD dissertation, *Just Do It: Providing Anishinaabe Culture-Based Education*, Dr. Nicole Bell (Anishinaabekwe from Kitigan Zibi First Nation) states: "In traditional Anishinaabek teachings it is often said that people must know who they are, which includes knowing where they have come from in order to know where they are going" (43). This approach honours the intergenerational interconnectedness and the values, beliefs and practices that are supported through this way of life.

[2] The term co-researchers comes from Phenomenology to highlight the co-operative and voluntary nature of the research: "Participants are usually fully informed of the nature of the research. An atmosphere of respectful concern for participants, a shared interest in illuminating the phenomenon, and good rapport, are essential for the dialogical relationship between researcher and co-researchers" (Osborne 82).

Chapter 2: Source Review

This thesis aims to contribute to the scholarly literature regarding Indigenous social determinants of health and well-being as well as literature related to Indigenous dance and performance. I have explored research that focuses on Indigenous health and well-being; Indigenous history, culture and dance; and stories and biographies that detail the lived experiences of Indigenous dancers throughout history. This source review also includes oral traditions; histories of ceremonial and cultural practices and stories and lived experience of Indigenous dancers. My goal is to create an understanding of the influence of Indigenous dance on the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities and, therefore, nations. This goal served as a guide to determine how we can and have been moving forward towards a new emergence through processes of decolonization. The Seventh Generation Institute (located in the northwestern part of Anishinaabek territory) has an Anishinaabek process for their M.A. program. Students start with *Biskaabiiyang*—a verb meaning to look back (Simpson, *Dancing* 49-50)—evaluating how they have been impacted by colonialism, and then returning to their own teachings. This is similar to what Indigenous scholars have been calling 'decolonizing.'

My thesis uses storytelling as well as histories—written and published—and personal interviews that demonstrate first-hand accounts and experiences of Indigenous dance creating healing. The thesis includes interviews with fifteen Indigenous artists; published oral accounts of historical figures such as Heȟáka Sápa (Black Elk) and Tatan'ka Iyota'ka (Sitting Bull); and published work of Basil Johnston. I also include Indigenous research and writing by Dr. Nicole Bell and Dr. Leanne Simpson who were mentored by Anishnaabekwe Elder Edna Manitowabi, as well as literature on the histories and meanings of Indigenous dance by authors such as Dr.

Jacqueline Shea Murphy and Charlotte Heth. Literature on the topic of Indigenous health presented by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, and authors Dr. Michael Hart, Michael Chandler, and Christopher Lalonde is useful for understanding the relationship between culture and holistic health. Scholarly articles by senior artists Daystar/ Rosalie Jones, Monique Mojica, and Floyd Favel provide insights into the purpose and intentions of contemporary Indigenous dance and performance, as do personal interviews with senior artists Edna Manitowabi, Muriel Miguel, Marrie Mumford and Rulan Tangen. Powwow dancers and storytellers such as Don Kavanaugh and Karen Pheasant also shared experiences of the evolution of powwow over the years, and the contribution of powwow dance to Indigenous well-being. Most of these stories and traditions are from Nehiyawak, Anishinaabek, Blackfoot, Lakota and other Plains cultures, these nations are represented by several of the co-researchers.

In this chapter, I examine the main sources used to establish the intellectual framework for this thesis, pertaining to my topic: *Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin (Seeking a Good Life) Through Indigenous Dance*. These sources are organized using the cycle described in Dr. Leanne Simpson's analysis of the Creation Story of the Anishnaabek people, which describes a great flood, as told in the Seven Fires Prophecy:

> There is a mirroring of the cycle of creation–destruction–re-creation within Nishnaabeg thought. This cycle sets the stage for interpretation of re-creation as a new emergence or resurgence. This theme is also echoed to current generations through our Re-creation Stories. Within Indigenous thought, there is no singular vision of resurgence, but many . . . we all carry responsibilities in terms of resurgence; and that we are also responsible

> for re-creating the good life in whatever forms we imagine, vision and live in contemporary times. (Dancing 68)

This cycle of *creation – destruction – re-creation* provides the framework to organize this source review.

1.1 The cycle of creation is understood through oral traditions, passed down since time immemorial from Indigenous knowledge holders. These traditions encompass: Indigenous languages, Creation stories, stories of origin, migration stories, and teachings (including stories about music and dance). These sources are presented in this chapter, setting the backdrop for Indigenous dance as a social determinant of health and well-being. This section is organized into two categories: Indigenous Knowledge and Storytelling.

1.2 The cycle of destruction is understood by examining the effects of colonization on the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples today. This includes the influence of European views towards Indigenous dance and the resulting suppression of Indigenous dance and cultures, through residential schools and Indian Act legislation that outlawed Indigenous ceremonies and dance, while approving participation in the Wild West Shows.

1.3 The cycle of re-creation explores how Indigenous performance and dance has been adapted to contemporary times to create healing for Indigenous peoples, families, communities, and nations. Utilizing Decolonization Theory, Resurgence Theory, and Co-Researcher Stories, we see the role that Indigenous dance has played in supporting the

movement towards healing for Indigenous people. This also includes the role of supporting traditional values and practices.

Creation

i. Indigenous Knowledge

This thesis uses Indigenous Knowledge as a basis for understanding Indigenous dance and its affects today. Dr. David Newhouse has defined Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in the following way:

> IK is the knowledge that we have developed over generations: the theories of the universe and how it works; the nature of human beings and others; the nature of society and political order; the nature of the world and how to live in it; and human motivation among many other aspects of life. This knowledge has been transmitted from generation to generation, thought about, discussed, refined, discarded, reinforced, and subjected to continual analysis and testing. It has not been static. IK shows how to live in a world of continual change for it is based on a foundational philosophical tenet: the world is constantly in process of transformation and movement. (187)

This suggests that the natural development of Indigenous Knowledge involves constant revision and expansion of understandings and is itself is in a process of re-creation. Newhouse further notes that Indigenous Knowledge is not merely academic or intellectual. He explains: “The good mind is the consciousness ideal postulated by Haudenosaunee philosophical thought,” and is a balance between reason and passion. He writes, further: “Reason—the ability to think logically,

rationally, and to express oneself well in words and passion—that is, the feelings are related and mutually influential. Both are deemed necessary for the good life."

Indigenous Knowledges have been passed down through the generations and carry ancient wisdom that illuminate the original intent, purpose and meaning of Indigenous dance. Some of this knowledge has been maintained and interpreted in written form by Basil Johnson, Tara Browner, Cheryl Rides-at-the Door, and orally through interviews of co-researchers, including Rosa John, Lowell Yellowhorn, and Jerry First Charger. Anishnaabekwe scholars, teachers and authors, Dr. Leanne Simpson and Dr. Nicole Bell, also use Indigenous Knowledge and theories in their writing, which is based on the teachings of Elder Edna Manitowabi among others. This work has helped to guide the methodology and analysis of my thesis.

Indigenous dance itself is a form of embodied Indigenous Knowledge possessing both reason and passion, having developed across generations, changing and adapting with each new inheritance. Floyd Favel (Nehiyaw), a published writer and playwright, and a nationally and internationally recognized director of theatre and dance, states:

> If you were to ask a Cree person, 'what is life?', they may very well answer you with this statement: Life is Movement. We believe that all life on earth is in constant movement, the Sun, the Earth, the Moon, the Wind, the Trees, our Cells, our Blood, our Heart. One of our words for Death is 'Poni Waskawewin', meaning 'Cessation of Movement'. This is how much the idea of movement informs our perception of Life. (113)

If life is movement and dance is movement, we can say that dance is also life, or that dance promotes life, and therefore well-being. Throughout history, Indigenous dance has

served as a means of healing as is evident through traditional practices continued today. The Hoop Dance is one such dance recognized as a healing dance in traditional societies; our ancestors understood the importance of dance as an act of healing and self-determination. My Hoop Dance teacher, Jerry First Charger, taught me that the Hoop Dance was a healing dance, and shared:

> As a performing artist of the hoop dance . . . for me additional lessons are to come [when I am dancing], then it came to a point as a dancer, I realized it wasn't about me . . . because if you look at the dance, the dance in its original form was a spiritual healing dance. I have no right to name a design [of the hoops], because to me, those are those spiritual beings. They are [going to] come out and manifest themselves to the audience the way the audience needs to see [the design of the hoops] for themselves.

This suggests that the act of dancing creates new opportunities to learn and grow. It also suggests that the experience of the audience can be an important message to aid in their growth and learning.

In re-telling the Anishinaabek spiritual history through his book, *The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway,* Basil Johnston (Anishinaabe) shares the story of Pukawiss, whose name means the disowned one, and who created the hoop dance in the tradition of the Anishnaabek:

> In the Hoop Dance, Pukawiss dramatized the trauma that people often go through, their disorientation, and finally their recourse to a counselor for guidance. But instead of giving answers, directions, and encouragement to enable a person to get out of his or

> her predicament, the dancer who portrays the counselor presents the distressed person with wooden hoops made of willow. The act represents the perception that troubles cannot be transferred to or resolved by another and that the advice dispensed is actually a return of the troubles to the distressed person for sorting out . . . And like the distressed person who seeks refuge or solutions outside himself, even in spiritualism and religion, the dancer who portrays Pukawiss forms figures of spiritual patrons and manitous. The manitous are unmoved; they offer no help. Desperate, Pukawiss twists and turns and, commencing with the last turn, presses himself through the hoops until he works his way through all of them, reminiscent of the person who must live and work his own way through his adversities from last to first until he has them all hand in hand, under control. (31-32)

Johnston writes that today, people often see only the beauty in the dance. In failing to see the struggle, they do not understand the full meaning. As a result, the Hoop Dance, like many Indigenous dances, is misunderstood and undervalued in today's world. In the teachings and practice of the Hoop Dance, we see that in order to heal, we must take control of our lives; self-determination and sovereignty are vital to the well-being of the individual, community, and nation. Also, as Jerry First Charger shares, we need to view dance as an experience that can teach us new insights, both as the dancer and as the audience; this often serves as a guide towards healing.

The Hoop Dance creates new understandings the more it is performed and viewed thus becoming a symbol of infinite wisdom. This is symbolized in the shape of the hoop itself, a

circle, with no beginning and no end. The Hoop Dance, also referred to as the Sacred Hoop, is a symbol of the cycle of life and is embodied in many aspects of Native cultures. The circle "is seen in the sweat lodge, the bowl of the sacred pipe, the sacred hoop and the medicine wheel" (Milne 9). Indigenous dance serves as a powerful expression and embodiment of the sacred circle. During the powwow, the drum is a circle; the singers sit around the drum in a circle; we dance around the arena in a circle; and the spectators sit around the arena in a circle. This is both culturally and spiritually significant, as Tara Browner writes:

> The spatial layout of the dance arena and its surroundings are also significant. They can be viewed as physical arrangement of people and objects, as cultural metaphors, and as a nexus between spiritual and physical worlds inhabited by beings unseen and unknowable. (88)

Encompassed within the sacred circle are the four directions of the Medicine Wheel as taught in Anishnaabek and Nehiyawak cultures. The Medicine Wheel is used to organize many teachings, such as the four directions, four elements, and four stages of life. Many Hoop Dancers acknowledge the four directions when they begin their dance, and their hoops are often marked in the four directions. Jerry First Charger sets his hoops to honour the four directions when he begins a performance. I continue this practice when I perform. These teachings guide this thesis in terms of organization and analysis. The concepts that 'life is movement' and 'dance is healing' are demonstrated through the many sources of Indigenous Knowledge throughout this thesis, from both primary and secondary research. The Medicine Wheel serves as the framework that helps organize this thesis and research.

ii. Storytelling

Anishnaabek ways of being have resulted in a rich history of oral storytelling that includes both *aadizookan* (traditional legends, ceremonies), and *dibaajimowin* (teachings, ordinary stories, personal stories, histories) (*Dancing* 50). Dr. Neal McLeod refers to "âtayôhkêwina – sacred stories, or spiritual history, as one elder has described it," explaining that these stories are a key aspect of Cree narrative memory and are central to Cree culture (97-98). They include stories of Elder brother (wîsahkêcâhk)[5] and other spiritual beings, spirit helpers, spiritual grandfathers and grandmothers (17). Traditional stories serve as a guide for Indigenous peoples today:

> Old voices echo; the ancient poetic memory of our ancestors finds home in our individual lives and allows us to reshape our experiences so that we can interpret the world we find ourselves in. (11)

Traditional storytelling that is grounded in Indigenous languages, oral histories, and traditions guides us as we examine where we came from. Oral artistic traditions demonstrate how Indigenous dance has been used for healing, which encompasses the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental. As Jeanette Armstrong says:

> . . . Aboriginal literatures are not 'emergent' Canadian literary voices arising as a result of Aboriginal peoples' literacy in an official language and their introduction to Canadian

[5] Nehiyawak and Anishnaabe people belong to the Algonquin language family, and have overlapping beliefs and traditons, often reflected through language and story. 'Elder brother' in the Nehiyaw culture refers to the sacred being, often referred to as the trickster, who is considered an elder brother to the people.

> literature. Aboriginal literatures must be read as an authentic older, complex, Aboriginal spoken art form. As with other Aboriginal art disciplines, their distinctive features are rooted deep in a past practice of culture, and shaped by past conventions and precepts. It is these features of oral artistic tradition that are carried forward into the present by intergenerational transmission in Aboriginal community populations, and that continue regardless of the mother tongue of the people speak their literacy level. (180)

Traditional storytelling is important not only for understanding Indigenous dance, but also as a framework for interpreting and analyzing Indigenous dance. As Dr. Leanne Simpson explains:

> Our Elders and Knowledge Holders have always put great emphasis into how things are done. This reinforces the idea that it is our own tools, strategies, values, processes and intellect that are going to build our new house . . . For me this discussion begins with our Creation Stories, because these stories set the “theoretical framework,” or gives us the ontological context from within which we can interpret other stories, teachings and experiences . . . Our Elders tell us that everything we need to know is encoded in the structure, content and context of these stories and the relationships, ethics and responsibilities required to be our own Creation Story. (32-33)

Traditional stories inform our personal stories, history and experience. In terms of Indigenous performance, there is no singular story or history because of the hundreds of Indigenous nations across the Americas, each containing numerous culturally specific stories of music and dance. The diversity of histories in Indigenous performance is evident in the different

stories of origin of the Hoop dance, which include Lakota, Anishnaabek, Apache, and Navajo. The co-existence and acceptance of different versions of stories and histories within and among Indigenous nations serves to uphold the values of respect, diversity, and autonomy. Dr. Nicole Bell explains that not accepting the stories and perspectives of others is antagonistic: "Cultural groups view their world from their own cultural lens and may even disclaim that multiple lenses exist; this denial serves to maintain a privileged worldview. Oppressive thought exists because other lenses are not considered valid and the privilege exists to say there are no other lenses" (16).

This is an important aspect of Indigenous dance and well-being; equality, diverse perspectives, and inclusiveness are basic and widespread values of Indigenous Knowledges represented and symbolized through the circle and Medicine Wheel. Although there are many variations in Indigenous dance histories, there are similar underlying values which attest to the continued importance of dance that is embedded in many aspects of Indigenous ceremonies, beliefs, values, and ways of life. This thesis uses traditional and personal storytelling in order to be inclusive of a diversity of interpretations and experiences of Indigenous dances in relation to well-being.

1.1 Destruction

The cycle of destruction, through colonial practices, which has impacted Indigenous dance, has been the most detrimental to Indigenous health and well-being. As Dr. Michael Hart notes, "Of all the events that have occurred, the process and effects of colonization have influenced all facets of Aboriginal peoples' lives on various levels, including the national, communal, familial and individual" (49-50). He also says that it is suggested that the spiritual aspect, which includes

culture and identity, has suffered the most. As I share later in my writing, this is perhaps one of the most destructive pieces; the spiritual is the spark that inspires us to action and is an important catalyst for life changing learning and growing, leading to well-being. Dance as a central part of Indigenous spirituality, ceremony, culture, and identity was one aspect that was directly targeted by colonization.

In Chapter 4, I examine the phase of Destruction, starting with the isolation of dance in Europe; Sangita Shresthova provides a detailed look at how practices and perspectives in Europe have shaped the treatment and developments of Indigenous dance in North America. I examine the conditions specific to North America that led to colonial and assimilatory operations that forced new avenues, adaptations, and practices for Indigenous dancers. This history also includes how Indigenous people used dance as a way to survive within this destructive phase. Jacqueline Shea Murphy's *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing* is an important book as it provides an in-depth history of Native dance in relation to Western history and colonialism in the United States. In Canada, *Chinook Winds: Aboriginal Dance Project* is an essential book about contemporary Indigenous dance in Canada. Participants in this project were interviewed for this thesis, including Marrie Mumford, Rosa John, and Karen Pheasant. Important writings on residential schools are highlighted. Residential schools represent a legacy of hostility and brutality, in which Indigenous children and families lost their language and culture, including dance and music. This chapter also includes writings by scholars such as Hugh Dempsey, Pat Dieter-McArthur, as well as national organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, show the connection between healing and dance and culture.

Chapter 4 will also examine the role that government played in outlawing Indigenous dance through the Indian Act. Wendy Moss and Elaine Garner-O'Toole's article on the Government of Canada website, *Aboriginal People: History of Discriminatory Laws,* provides a comprehensive overview of this oppression. Organizations such as the U'Mista Cultural Centre provide a thorough history of the outlawing of potlatch. Stories told by artists such as Geraldine Manossa, Lianna Tootoosis, Don Kavanaugh, and author Pat Dieter-McArthur construct our understanding of the effect that these prohibitions had on First Nations culture, peoples, individuals, families, communities, and nations.

Lastly, Chapter 4 outlines the differences between Western and Indigenous perspectives of health. Aboriginal and arts-based approaches to health and well-being are becoming increasingly recognized and validated in today's society:

> The growing acceptance of the healing power of the arts among Western-trained medical and mental health professionals situates traditional Aboriginal approaches to health and well-being on the leading edge of therapeutic healing. For Aboriginal people, traditional arts, culture, spirituality, and healing were, and are, interconnected. While there are many similarities between Western and Indigenous approaches to the creative arts and healing, this is one of the most significant differences. Indigenous approaches include arts and culture in a holistic model of healing that encompasses the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual world. (Archibald 7)

I apply Indian and Northern Affairs Canada studies and documents to show the Western influence on the definition of Aboriginal health. I rely mostly on Dr. Michael Hart's (Nehiyaw), *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping*, for its extensive description of

the good life. Dr. Hart's definition is based on the foundational concepts of the Medicine Wheel and includes the principles of wholeness, balance, harmony, and growth (39-43). The Medicine Wheel is a symbol of balance of the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental aspects of the individual.

1.2 Re-creation

The cycle of re-creation is examined utilizing co-researcher interviews, literature, and personal stories, showing how Indigenous dance has been used in the re-creation of Indigenous identity and well-being. Dr. Neal McLeod states that:

> The survival of the Cree people depends on the creative powers found within the collective narrative imagination. It is through drawing on the best of our past traditions and the embodiment of contemporary experiences that we can move toward a dynamic future. This has organically happened in the past—the horse, syllabics, Christianity, farming—but the adaptation of new elements has always been in relation to older ones. Cree narrative memory can be best articulated by the Cree term mamâhtâwisiwin, which could perhaps best be translated as "tapping into the Great Mystery," or "tapping into the Life Force." (100)

i. Decolonization Theory

Re-creation and resurgence require that we undo the detrimental effects of colonization; therefore, I use decolonization theory to retrace the history of Indigenous dance from destruction to healing. The phase of destruction was seen in the efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples and attempts at completely destroying Indigenous cultures, identities, and

languages. This included destroying connections to family, community, nations, language, and land. Decolonization theory highlights how Indigenous peoples have survived colonial institutions and assimilatory policies; many are now in the process of moving beyond oppression towards healing and self-determination.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* explains that the theoretical approach of decolonization requires using Indigenous perspectives and self-determination to benefit Indigenous peoples and communities themselves. As one of the most recognized scholars on decolonization theory, Smith writes:

> Any consideration of the ways our origins have been examined, our histories recounted, our arts analysed, our cultures dissected, measured, torn apart and distorted back to us will suggest that theories have not looked sympathetically or ethically at us. (38)

As a result, both historic and contemporary writings about Indigenous peoples are mostly Eurocentric, attempting to eradicate 'the Indigenous problem':

> Both 'friends of the [N]atives' and those hostile to [I]ndigenous peoples conceptualized the issues of colonization and European encroachment on Indigenous territories in terms of a problem of the Natives. The Natives were, according to this view, to blame for not accepting the terms of their colonization . . . Problematizing the Indigenous is a Western obsession. (91)

Many people continue to view Indigenous peoples and cultures as problematic rather than as a solution. Instead of looking at the destruction, caused by colonization and assimilation policies that targeted Indigenous cultures and knowledges. As more Indigenous peoples enter

academia, they develop new ways of doing research. "[These] new ways of theorizing by Indigenous scholars are grounded in a real sense of, and sensitivity towards, what it means to be an Indigenous person." According to Smith, Indigenous methodologies consist of, ". . . being able to determine priorities, to bring to the centre those issues of our own choosing, and to discuss them amongst ourselves" (38). As Elder Arthur Solomon writes:

> It is through the total breakup of family life and having lost our original instructions that our people have become victims of a vicious system . . . The way back to restored dignity and pride for Native people in our own humanity is through the door we came out of. We have become a spiritually deformed people and only by returning to the sacred ceremonies that were given to us by the Creator can we again find the meaning and purpose for our lives. (113)

Following this important guideline of decolonization theory, this thesis focuses on Indigenous peoples and cultures as the solution rather than the problem.

i. Resurgence Theory

Resurgence theory involves the process of adapting Indigenous languages and cultures to contemporary times, making our stories, teachings, music, and dance relevant and beneficial to Indigenous well-being, and ensuring these traditions continue into the future. As Dr. Leanne Simpson states, "For Nishnaabeg thinkers, resistance and resurgence are not only our response to colonialism, they are our only responsibility in the face of colonialism" (*Dancing* 66). Re-creation through adaptation helps us to create solutions to the problems Indigenous peoples face. Simpson states:

> . . . We as theorists and intellectuals cannot just get stuck in the diagnosis or the revelation of the problem. Nishnaabeg thought propels us to be responsible within our individual selves, to vision and dream our way out of the cognitive of imperialism. (81)

When I first began learning the Hoop Dance, I decided to do a presentation on the Hoop Dance for an Anthropology course, so I asked Jerry Frist Charger if I could interview him. This is when he shared the Anishinaabek story and teachings related to the Hoop Dance. The first lesson I learned was responsibility. Jerry shared his understanding of one of the meanings of the story behind the dance:

> [Pukawiss] was trying to depict that he was being responsible for his actions in life. He said because it was such a great responsibility to portray this dance—to represent the people and to be a counsellor—there was also a great responsibility for the dancer for themselves, to portray this message, they must always remember the constant burden and responsibility of trying to portray this message. And that [it] is the hoop that reminds [each dancer] of what goes around comes around; so your actions will go out and the consequences will come back. Whether you did good, good will come back; whether you did bad, bad will come back . . . The way Basil Johnston explained in his book, he said it was a haunting message for each dancer to be reminded of the responsibilities that they had. (6)

Jerry also shared that as a hoop dancer, people started to recognize him in public; if he was at a bar, people would say to him, “Aren’t you a hoop dancer?” which made him realize that if he was going to hoop dance, he should also live a sober life. My family told me that I

would be a role model and representative of Indigenous culture as a dancer and that this meant being respectful of the traditions. Listening to these different teachings, I began transitioning into living a sober lifestyle, and I am now over thirteen years sober. Through the teachings and practice of the Hoop Dance, I was able to envision and live a healthier lifestyle by interpreting the message to fit contemporary times.

Re-creation is not a new concept in Indigenous thought, as Simpson explains in *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back,* as she retells the Creation Story, 'Waynabozhoo and the Great Flood.' Waynabozhoo/ Nana'b'oozoo was the youngest son of Winonah, which means 'to nourish,' who was the "daughter of a woman known only as N'okomiss, grandmother"[6] (247). Winonah died shortly after the birth of Nana'b'oozoo. He was raised by N'okomiss, his grandmother, "the only person to understand his character. He always returned to her for comfort, guidance and love" (243). The second great flood was produced because the people were not living in balance. "As a restorative measure, Gzhwe Mnidoo brought a large flood to the lands, not as a punitive act, but as purification designed to re-align the Nishnaabeg with mino bimaadiziwin" (68). Waynabozhoo along with many animals were stranded in the ocean of floodwater. Finally, Waynabozhoo remembered the story of the first flood told to him by his grandmother, and he tried to dive down and grab some earth. He failed, and the other animals tried and failed as well.

[6] Basil Johnston refers to her as Gizhigokwe.

> Finally, Zhaashkoonh (muskrat) tried. Zhaashkoonh was gone forever, and eventually floated to the surface, dead. Waynabozhoo picked the muskrat out of the water and found a handful of mud in Zhaashkoonh's paw. Mikinaag (turtle) volunteered to bear the weight of the earth on her back and Waynabozhoo placed the earth there. Waynabozhoo began to sing. The animals danced in a clockwise circular fashion and the winds blew, creating a huge and widening circle" (69)

Eventually, this grew to be as big as Turtle Island, or North America. Simpson continues: "In Nishnaabeg thought, resurgence is dancing on our turtle's back; it is visioning and dancing new realities and worlds into existence" (70). This story teaches us that dancing for the Anishnaabek is an important part of re-creation, an essential part of survival, and therefore an essential part of living a good life. Simpson, through the guidance of Elder Edna Manitowabi, interprets this story as saying that each of us must struggle in order to achieve re-creation; we must find our own piece of earth; we must each bring this to the community, and with the help of the community, we can realize our vision; we need collective action (69). Stories of a great flood are present in other Indigenous nations, such as the Blackfoot and Cree Creation stories, demonstrating a similar concept of re-creation or resurgence.

The Creation stories and resurgence theories are a vital aspect of living a good life and serve as a counter to the oppression and destruction. As Dr. Leanne Simpson explains, ". . . living in a good way is an incredible disruption of the colonial meta-narrative in and of itself" (41). As a result, Simpson's work, rooted in Indigenous thought, is not only intellectual; it is holistic: " . . .[I]t is rooted in [Leanne's] spiritual and emotional life, as well as [her] body" (19). In visioning a healthy, new reality for Indigenous peoples, I use the concept of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-

Pimâtisiwin as a guide for what Indigenous health and well-being means. Dr. Michael Hart defines Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin as the process of seeking balance through learning, growing, and *being-in-becoming*, the act of seeking of one's purpose in which "balance lies in flux, transition and change" (52). He further explains that healing is a journey, an everyday practice that is also interconnected with community healing. Healing is about self-determination; the individual is the one that must initiate their own healing: "It is through the taking of responsibility for their own personal healing and growth that individuals will be able to attain *mino-pimatisiwin"* (43-44). By reclaiming our dances, teachings and culture, and applying them to our contemporary and everyday lives we can create a balanced and healthier life.

Chapter 3: Indigenous and Decolonizing Methodologies and the Four Medicine Wheels

Using several circle of life or sacred circle models, based on Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies, helps to organize and describe the research on Indigenous dance and Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin. The story of *creation—destruction—re-creation* in relation to Indigenous dance and Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin emerges from various written and oral sources, my own lived experience, and interviews on oral traditions, well-being, and Indigenous dance. This thesis makes a significant contribution to existing literature by showing how Indigenous dance and performance serve as an Indigenous social determinant of health and well-being for individuals today, and by exploring how this is reflected through the history of Indigenous peoples before and since contact.

In deeper reflection on the cycle of creation—destruction—re-creation within the Anishnaabek Creation Story (as described by Dr. Leanne Simpson in her analysis of the Seven Fires Prophecy, and explored in the previous chapter), I am choosing to integrate four versions of Medicine Wheels to create an analytical framework to explore Indigenous and decolonization methodologies. Each of the different, but related, Medicine Wheels provide understandings that are both culturally relevant and holistic. They provide traditional and contemporary interpretations to examine the past, present and future possibilities for Indigenous dance and performance in relation to Indigenous understandings of well-being:

- Nehiyawak (Cree) Medicine Wheel is chosen for its focus on the four parts that make up a whole and well-balanced human being—spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental—and includes four concentric circles, showing the connection between the

individual in the centre, followed by the family, the community, and the nation (See Figure 1).

- The Anishnaabek Medicine Wheel is used for its four directional teachings that relate to living a good life as an individual, using the four R's of Indigenous Knowledge beginning with respect and kindness. This Medicine Wheel also reflects Hoop Dance teachings about responsibility and interconnectedness (See Figure 2).

- The Indigenous Research Agenda, as described in *Decolonization Methodologies*, by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (117), is chosen for its focus on healing Indigenous nations from a Maori perspective (See Figure 5).

- The Aboriginal Performance Research Medicine Wheel is used for its focus on Aboriginal arts. It is used by regional arts communities from coast to coast to coast to create a national movement within the concept of Self-Government in the Arts with a focus on self-determination and healing (See Figure 6).

Each of these four Medicine Wheels is described in greater detail in this chapter. When the Nehiyawak and Anishinaabek Medicine Wheels were applied to the journey of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin, it was observed that they moved through the Medicine Wheel in the form of an outward spiral (See Figure 3). When I looked at the experience of my Hoop Dance teacher and myself, I noticed that contemporary adaptations of the Medicine Wheel were also applicable. With the modern wheels, the opposite pattern emerged, and an inward spiral movement was highlighted. These spiral patterns were created by applying the story of Jerry

First Charger and myself to the Indigenous Research Agenda, also known as the Māori Four Directions version of the Medicine Wheel, and the Aboriginal Performance Research Medicine Wheel. I chose to integrate all four different but correlated Medicine Wheels, which led to the creation of a unique methodology and analytical tool: examining the co-researchers' interviews in relation to the Integrated Medicine Wheel (see Figure 3).

1.1 The Concept of the Sacred Circle

The Sacred Circle is the unifying, balancing, inclusive symbol that brings together all aspects of the Medicine Wheel; or, said in another way, the Sacred Circle is the circumference of the Medicine Wheel, and encompasses the four directions. The adaptability of the Medicine Wheel is emphasized by Dr. Nicole Bell: "I understand that the Medicine Wheel metaphor contains all of the traditional teachings and that it can be used as a guide on any journey" (26). Dr. Michael Hart explains:

> The medicine wheel is an ancient symbol of the universe used to help people understand things or ideas which often cannot be seen physically. It reflects the cosmic order and the unity of all things in the universe. Indeed, it can be expressed in many ways as there is no absolute version of the wheel. On one level, many Aboriginal peoples, for example the Anishinaabe, [Nehiyaw] and Dakota, have utilized the medicine wheel and give it their interpretations. On another level, individuals utilize the medicine wheel to reflect their understanding of themselves. (39)

This reinforces the perspective that the Medicine Wheel as a tool is useful and can be adapted for a variety of uses. The circle itself is a symbol found throughout Creation and the universe.

The great Oglala Sioux medicine man, Black Elk, had a vision about the Sacred Hoop. In the summer of 1930, he shared this story with John Neidhardt, who wrote:

> You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round . . . Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our tepees were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children. (Chapter 17)

Just as colonization intended to disconnect families, communities, languages, and cultures, it has also served to disconnect us internally, our minds and bodies, hearts and spirits often treated as separate from one another. The Medicine Wheel is a culturally relevant and holistic model for well-being; a tool to look at our interconnectedness.

1.2 The Medicine Wheel and Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin

An essential aspect of the Medicine Wheel is the Sacred Hoop or the Sacred Circle, which represents many qualities of the natural world. In her description of the Medicine Wheel, Dr. Nicole Bell explains that there is no word for 'wheel' in the Anishinaabe language, and "Medicine Wheel would be called 'pimaatisiwin waawiiyaa,' which translates as 'circle of good

life.'" (33) Bell notes that for Aboriginal people the term 'medicine' means "power, the vital energy force that is within all forms of nature that could be drawn upon and directed towards wholeness." In addition, the Medicine Wheel is not meant to be a stationary and dichotomized representation; it is more accurately described as a "spiral or vortex of energy in motion" (33). This is not the linear and organized view evident in Western knowledge; it is based on chaos theory—the idea that we can find patterns, repetition, and similarities in things. Change and transformation are the only constant, as noted in the tenets of Native philosophy listed by Gregory Cajete (16).

Since the Indian Control of Education movement in the early 1970s, "Medicine Wheels have emerged as a framework for educational development" (Bell 34). They have since been adapted as a tool to address issues around racism and residential schools on survivors and their descendants, as well as for the purposes of healing and research (Bell 34-38. Intergenerational impacts and the continuation of racist ideas and attitudes continue to impact Indigenous peoples today in terms of health and wellness (Gunn 1). Although not used in all First Nations cultures, the Medicine Wheel is used in many Algonquin and Plains cultures, and " . . . has assumed a broad appeal in the process of cultural revitalization" (Bell 34).

1.3 Traditional Concepts of the Medicine Wheel

In determining which Medicine Wheel would be best suited to my research, I first examined the Nehiyawak and Anishinaabek Medicine Wheels. Both of these Medicine Wheels are based on traditional teachings utilized on an individual's healing journey of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin. The Nehiyawak Medicine Wheel has many teachings associated with the four directions, the four seasons, the four elements, and different plants and animals that may vary from region to

region. In my thesis I focus on how the Medicine Wheel relates to the four qualities that make up the individual, the different stages of life, and how the individual influences those around them, their family, community, and nation. The Anishinaabek Medicine Wheel includes teachings of our relationship to the natural world, kinship teachings, and our relationships to non-humans including plants, animals, the earth, and water. This circle contains layers of teachings that "exist with significant meaning independently but are all the more powerful when understood as a collective of interdependent knowledges, teachings and practices (34-35).

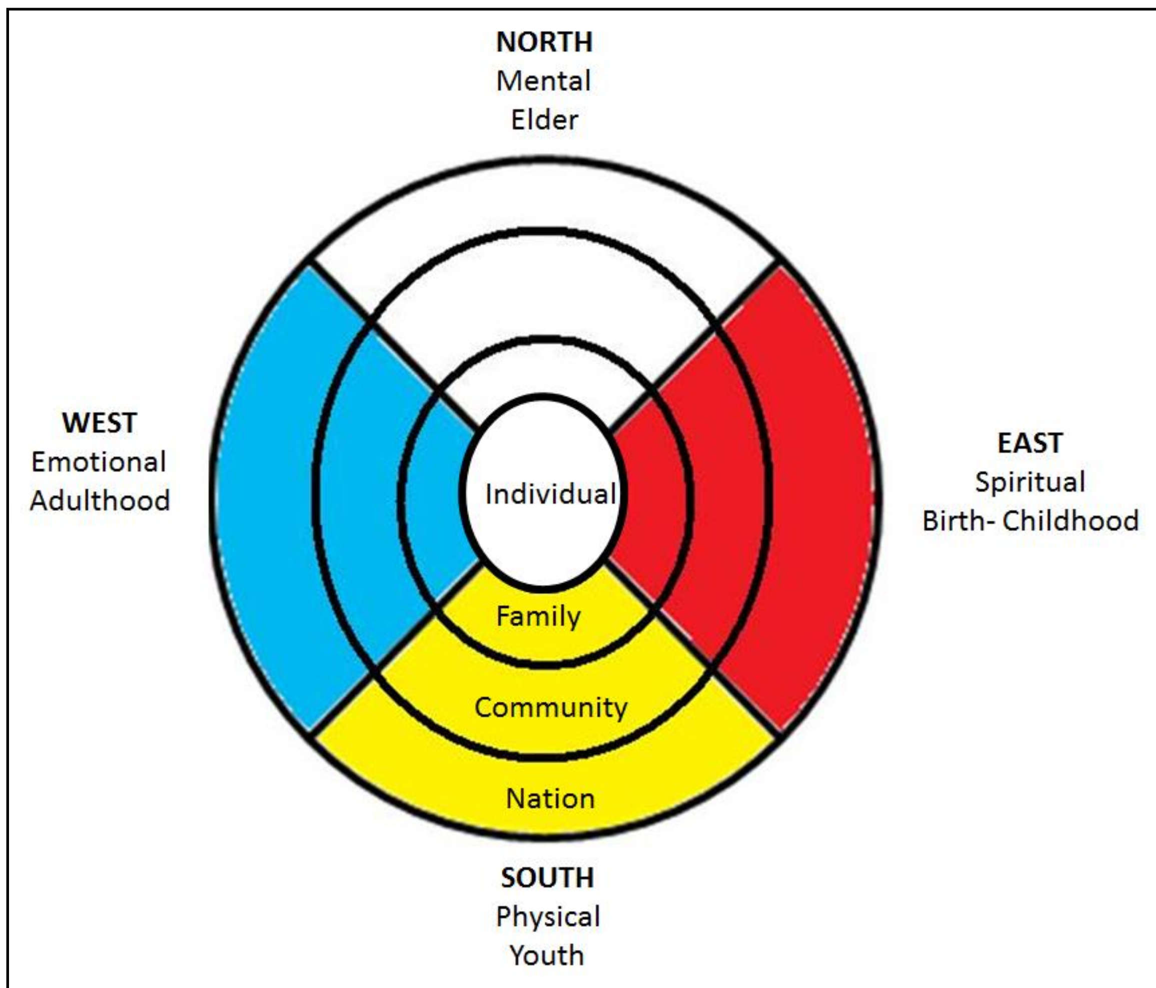

Figure 1: Nehiyawak Medicine Wheel

i. Nehiyawak Medicine Wheel

When I began my research, I was first drawn to the Nehiyawak[8] Medicine Wheel because of my own experience with Indigenous dance. Learning and performing the hoop dance led to a transformation in all aspects of my life—spiritual, physical, emotional and mental. On the *Four Directions Teachings* website, Mary Lee, Nehiyaw (Cree) Elder from Pelican Lake in northern Saskatchewan, explains one interpretation of the term 'Nehiyaw' as having a holistic meaning:

> As Cree people, we were given the gift of being named for the four parts of human beings. Nehiyawak, we were called. It means being balanced in the four parts that are found in the four directions of the Medicine Wheel. These four parts for human beings are the spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental aspects of the self. We need to try and balance these four parts that were given to us, to function as people.

This is consistent with the version of the Nehiyawak Medicine Wheel I was taught by Jacqueline Short (Nehiyaw), Saddle Lake First Nation, which she refers to as the *Sacred Circle*. These four aspects of self are always changing and evolving and need to be in balance in order to create a purposeful, focused. and efficient human being. This version contains four concentric circles with the individual at the centre of the circle. The circles are described as the

[8] Nehiyaw is singular, Nehiyawak is plural.

image of a stone when it is thrown into a lake; everything the individual does creates ripples outwards, affecting their friends and family, their community and their nation.

The Nehiyawak Medicine Wheel begins with the individual in the centre and moves towards the east, which is represented by the child. East is the spiritual direction, which includes prayer and ceremony, and is the essence of who we are as human beings. The spiritual involves participation in ceremony that connects us to our self, which is our culture and identity.

In the south, the child becomes a youth. This direction is represented by the physical, which includes our environment and how we listen to and honour our bodies. Putting cultural teachings and traditions into practice, we are transformed as we utilize and learn from the knowledge of our ancestors, while living in a contemporary world. This influences how we relate to each other, behaviours that directly influence our friends and family.

In the west, the youth matures into an adult. This direction is represented by the emotional, which includes our heart, our feelings and our awareness of them, as well as how we maintain balance between the positive and negative to achieve inner peace, utilizing the teachings through our life experiences and unique understanding of our culture.

The fourth quadrant on the Nehiyawak Medicine Wheel is the north, the elder phase of life. This direction represents the mental aspect of the self—the mind, intellect, learning, questioning, inquiry and open-mindedness. It is about giving back, sharing teachings and traditions. Once we have gained experiences living through the different stages of our lives, we gain wisdom through the knowledge we have gathered. When Elders and language and

performance specialists pass on their teachings and stories to the next generation, the cycle continues.

ii. Anishinaabek Medicine Wheel and the Four R's of Indigenous Knowledge

As I continued to explore how the Medicine Wheel could be employed as a theoretical and analytical framework to investigate the impact of Indigenous dance and performance on well-being, I began to look at other versions of the Medicine Wheel. I chose the Anishinaabek Medicine Wheel that contains original teachings, as described by Dr. Nicole Bell (26), and also includes the *Four R's of Indigenous Knowledge* as taught by Elder Edna Manitowabi, a Midewiwin grandmother. The following diagram was shared by Marrie Mumford, the result of years of learning from Anishinaabek Elders and Midewiwin grandmothers, including Edna Manitowabi, and informing decades of her work in the field of Aboriginal performance.

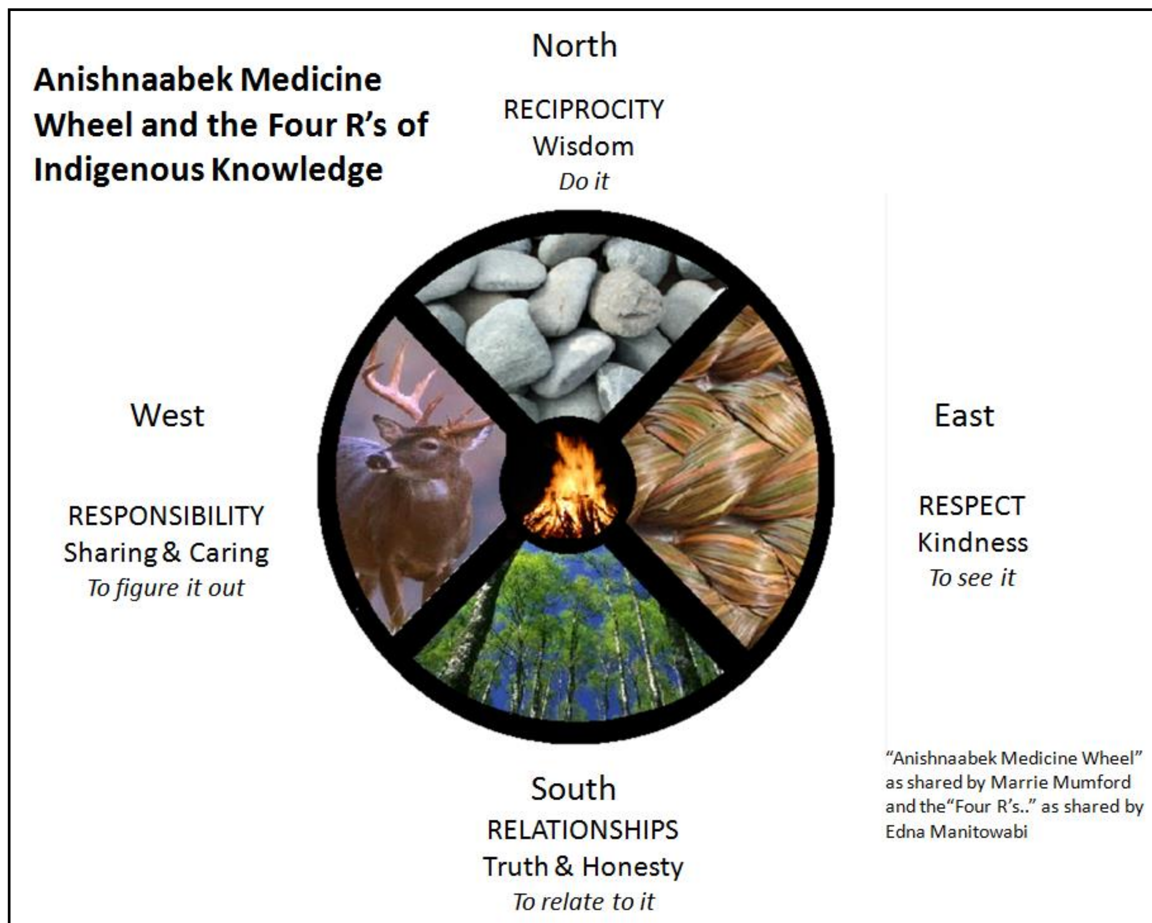

Figure 2: Anishinaabek Medicine Wheel and the Four R's of Indigenous Knowledge

As shown in the diagram, the eastern direction of the Anishinaabek Medicine Wheel is related to respect, which is demonstrated through kindness, and symbolized by sweetgrass and the eagle. This is echoed in the teaching of the Hoop Dance that everything in Creation is connected. Respect is an essential part of building relationships, which leads to the south, symbolized by the tree that grows straight and tall towards the Creator, as well as birds, the sacred beings returning from the south each spring to plant seeds to bring new growth. Relationships rely on truth and honesty. The west is about our responsibilities, symbolized by the deer in the east and the buffalo in the west. Both give their life so that we may live, teaching us sharing and caring through sacrifice. This is also a part of the Hoop Dance teachings

that tells us what we do comes back to us, teaching us responsibility. In the Anishinaabek worldview, the sacred beings, or elder brother or sister, also known as the trickster, lives in the west because we need humour to take on the many responsibilities of adulthood.

The northern direction speaks about wisdom, and is represented by reciprocity, as practiced by our Elders as they pass their knowledge to younger generations. This direction is symbolized by the Bear as a guardian, as well as the stone—our grandmothers and grandfathers in the sweat lodge.

iii. The Outward Spiral

As I examined the traditional concepts of the Nehiyawak and Anishnaabek Medicine Wheels, I was able to see how they were interrelated by looking at my own experience with Indigenous dance and seeking *the good life*. The teachings of each direction correlated with the concentric circles forming an outward spiral moving from the individual in the centre to family and friends, the community, and nation (See Figure 3). Dr. Bell explains that “it is not enough to just focus on each of the wheel’s parts; attention must also be given to what connects each of the parts—the relationship between all the parts.” (37-38)

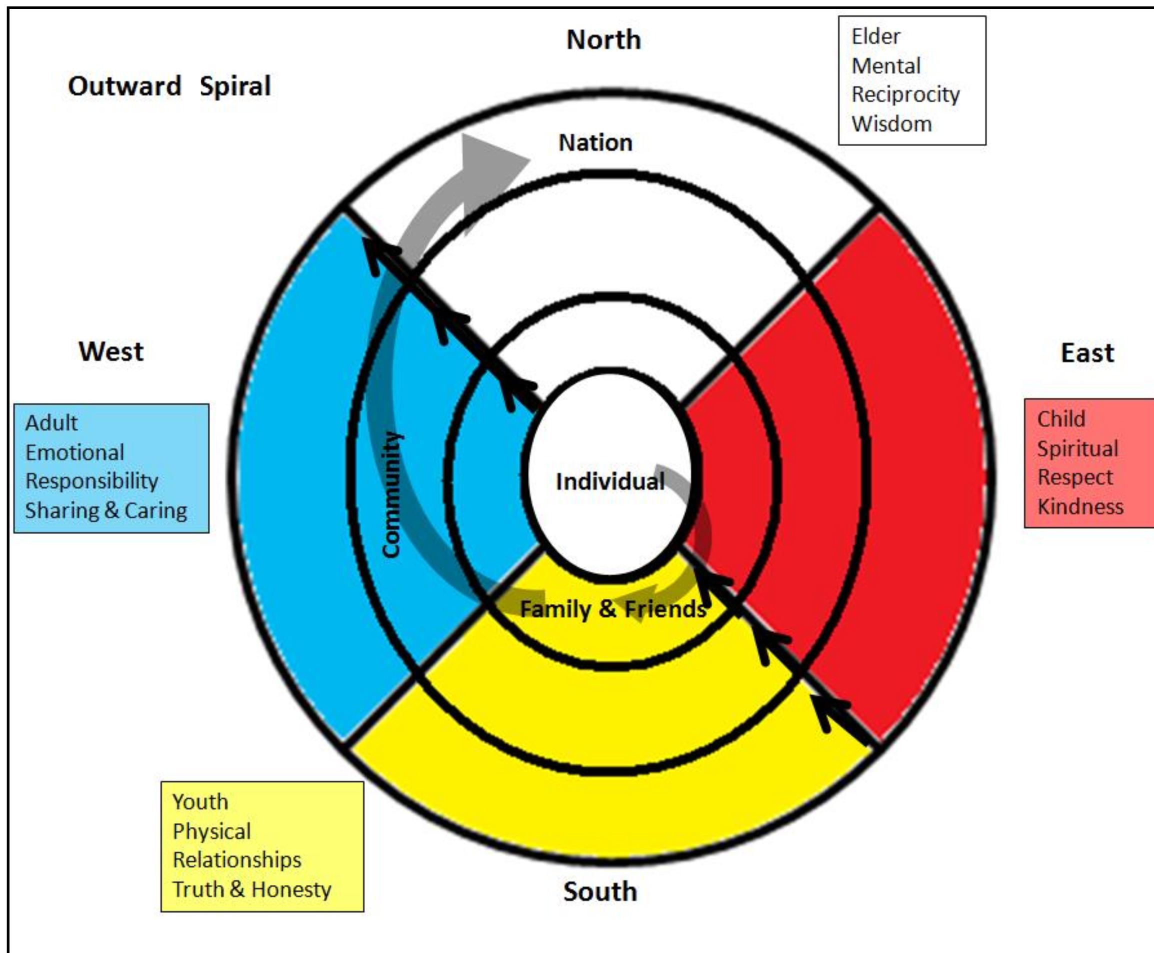

Figure 3: Outward Spiral

In terms of Indigenous dance, the outward spiral begins in the centre when we first learn the teachings and stories associated with our dances. This is the spiritual, which encompasses our culture and identity. For me this began with learning the Hoop Dance. Although I had tried other Native and Western dance styles, the Hoop Dance, combined with the story and teachings, is what led to a transformation in my life. As the spiral moves east, the direction related to respect and kindness, we are reminded that both the elder and child (or teacher and student) need to be respectful in order to effectively teach and learn and this is shown through kindness.

As the spiral transitions to the southern direction and the second concentric circle, friends and family, we put our teachings into practice so that they become a part of our physical world. My experiences with both Native and Western dance highlighted cultural aspects in Native dance traditions. I began to put the teachings into practice, physically dancing, abstaining from drugs and alcohol, and trying to live a balanced and healthy lifestyle. These changes in physical well-being and behaviours influence our relationships with our family and friends. This creates healthy relationships informed by our cultural values and beliefs of truth and honesty.

As the spiral continues west and moves to the community level of the concentric circles, it teaches us about the responsibilities of adulthood and the emotional balance required to meet them. For me, this is part of the journey of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin that includes delivering workshops and creating performances in different communities; sharing my experiences and knowledge of my language and culture through traditional and contemporary practices; and participating in community gatherings, events and ceremonies. In these ways, as adults, we influence not just our friends and families, but also our communities.

In the north, the Medicine Wheel spirals out to the nation, as the wisdom of our Elders supports the healing of our nations. When Elders pass their knowledge on to the younger generations, the spiral begins anew. This reciprocity of wisdom is essential for the culture to continue. For me, this is the next part of my journey, which I have already begun with this thesis. I have also begun by working with national and international choreographers and teachers, and by teaching dance and culture to youth; I still have much to learn as a dancer and teacher myself. As my understandings of the spiral deepen, I experience the layers of teachings,

and how the quadrants combine to create “a collective of interdependent knowledges” (Bell 34). I am inspired to continue learning about dance and performance as I practice and participate further in Indigenous dance, performance, teaching, and sharing with others.

1.4 Analysis of Jerry First Charger’s Story

This section is part of the methodology of using the lived experience and stories of Indigenous dancers to help shape the methods and organization of this research. After completing the interviews with Indigenous dancers and artists, I analyzed the stories they shared by putting each story on the Medicine Wheel. It wasn’t until I listened to Jerry First Charger (Nitsi’tapi from Kainai First Nation—the Blood Reserve in southern Alberta), my Hoop Dance teacher, that I was able to see how the Nehiyawak and Anishnaabek Medicine Wheels could be applied to the individual lived experiences of Indigenous dancers. Jerry’s story provided a guideline for employing Medicine Wheels as an analytical and theoretical framework and thus helped to shape the methodology used in this thesis. This reflects the concept recalled by Dr. Hart: “ . . . Traditional ceremonial leaders explain that every person has their own Medicine Wheel since it can reflect each person’s own life” (39). The teachings of the Nehiyawak and Anishinaabek Medicine Wheels related to Jerry’s stories (as well as my own) in the overall teachings of each direction, which also correlated with the concentric circles that formed an outward spiral—from the individual in the centre to family and friends, the community, and the nation (Figure 4—Jerry First Charger’s Story and Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin).

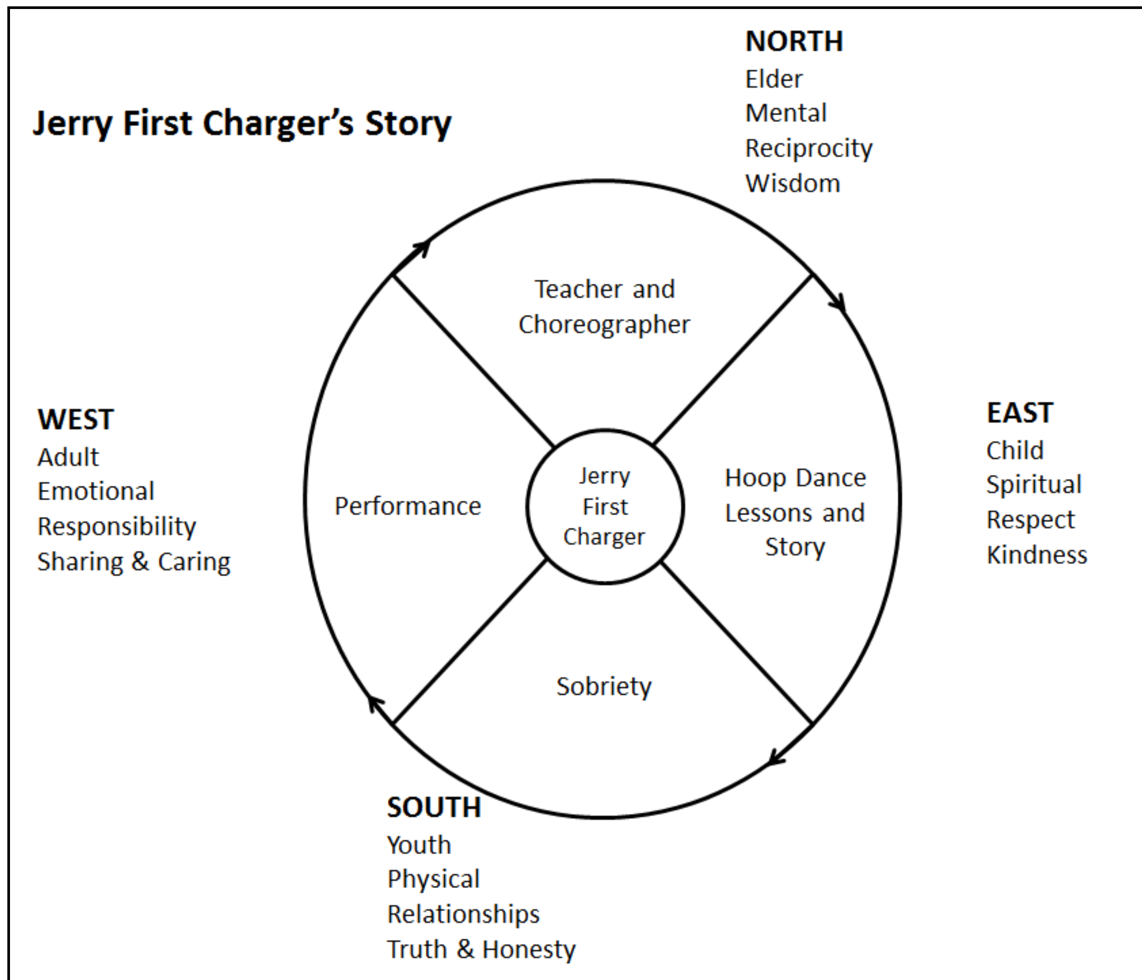

Figure 4: Jerry First Charger's Story and Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin

Jerry's healing journey began when he was learning the Hoop Dance; although he was an accomplished break-dancer and had danced men's fancy dance as a child. Also called the men's fancy war dance, this dance evolved as a way to show the strength and speed of a young warrior and originated around Okalahoma. Jerry shared that he did not learn the teachings, traditions, and stories associated with learning the men's fancy dance:

> My dancing originally started when I was just a young guy. My older brother . . . he asked my mother to get an outfit together, he wanted to do some fancy dancing. They went down to Great Falls [Montana] and they bought his whole bustles to make this

> outfit. They told him, "Okay well you're gonna go dance." He went to one powwow, I think he got a bit shy, and my mom was a bit upset that they made this whole outfit. They had this whole fancy dance outfit for him, so then we went down to Crow Fair, and my mom was telling him to dance, and my older brother was like, "I don't want to dance." So my mom says, "J.J.," and I said, "What?" She says, "Get over here." She said, "We're gonna put this outfit on you and you're gonna go out to the powwow and dance." And I said, "What!?!? I never danced before." So I said, "Okay." So she put the bustles on me and everything, and they get me all dressed up and they tell me to go out there and dance. And so I said, "Well, I never danced before." And so in the process [of getting me dressed], she says, "Well, just look at the other dancers." And I looked at the other dancers . . . and I just kind of started learning how to dance. And so I did a bit of dancing after that . . . (1-2)

It wasn't until Jerry learned the hoop dance and the traditional Anishinaabek story and teachings that he began his journey of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin—seeking the good life. Jerry's transformation began in a jail cell, where he spent the night after being arrested for public intoxication. It was there that he realized if he didn't change his ways, his life would get worse; he began to abstain from drugs and alcohol. Today, he has been sober for over twenty years. His life experiences and how they relate to the hoop dance story and teachings led to creating his own understanding of dance and performance. He shared that the more he danced, the more teachings he received about the hoop dance and his life in general. He has since developed his own style of dance by combining his original breakdance style with the hoop dance. He also created, wrote, directed, and choreographed his own dance theatre piece about

his journey with the hoop dance. Today, Jerry continues to share his unique understanding as a teacher and choreographer. Jerry is currently working as a Native liaison at an elementary school, creating performances with students, and teaching others to hoop dance. His work ensures the continuance of the knowledge and cultural practices of the hoop dance. This is his contribution to the healing of our youth, building towards a future of unity among and within our communities, and demonstrating the reciprocity by sharing the wisdom he has gained.

1.5 Contemporary Interpretations of the Medicine Wheel

As I looked closely at Jerry's story on the traditional Medicine Wheels, I noticed there was something missing. His story did not begin in childhood with spiritual teachings and cultural practices. Neither did mine; although I joined a powwow dance group in elementary, it wasn't until later in life that I began my healing journey. This is a story we hear way too often for Indigenous peoples today. As a result of residential schools and other colonial assimilatory policies and practices, many First Nations peoples, families, and communities become cut off from their cultures and disconnected from their ancestral identities. Because of this, our journey on the Medicine Wheel does not follow a traditional outward spiral that typically begins in childhood. When I examined the Indigenous Research Agenda and the Aboriginal Performance Research Medicine Wheel, I realized that their theoretical foundations helped to fill in this gap. Unlike the Nehiyawak and Anishinaabek Medicine Wheels, these two contemporary Medicine Wheels suggested strategies of resistance and restoration for collectives, organizations, communities, and nations to overcome the impact of colonization. The Aboriginal Performance Research Medicine Wheel helped me to see how the Medicine Wheels assisted Indigenous performance communities to envision and plan training strategies

rooted in Indigenous knowledge, supporting regional dance communities. This resulted in the creation of national Indigenous dance movements across Canada, with connections to international dance strategies in Australia, Mexico, and New Zealand.

i. Māori Four Directions Medicine Wheel: The Indigenous Research Agenda

I first looked at Linda Tuhiwai Smith's diagram of The Indigenous Research Agenda, described in *Decolonizing Methodologies,* because it identified healing and restoration in the northern direction, and was designed around decolonization as an approach to Indigenous research. I found this approach to be relevant to my research because it was a response to colonization and promoted healing and self-determination.

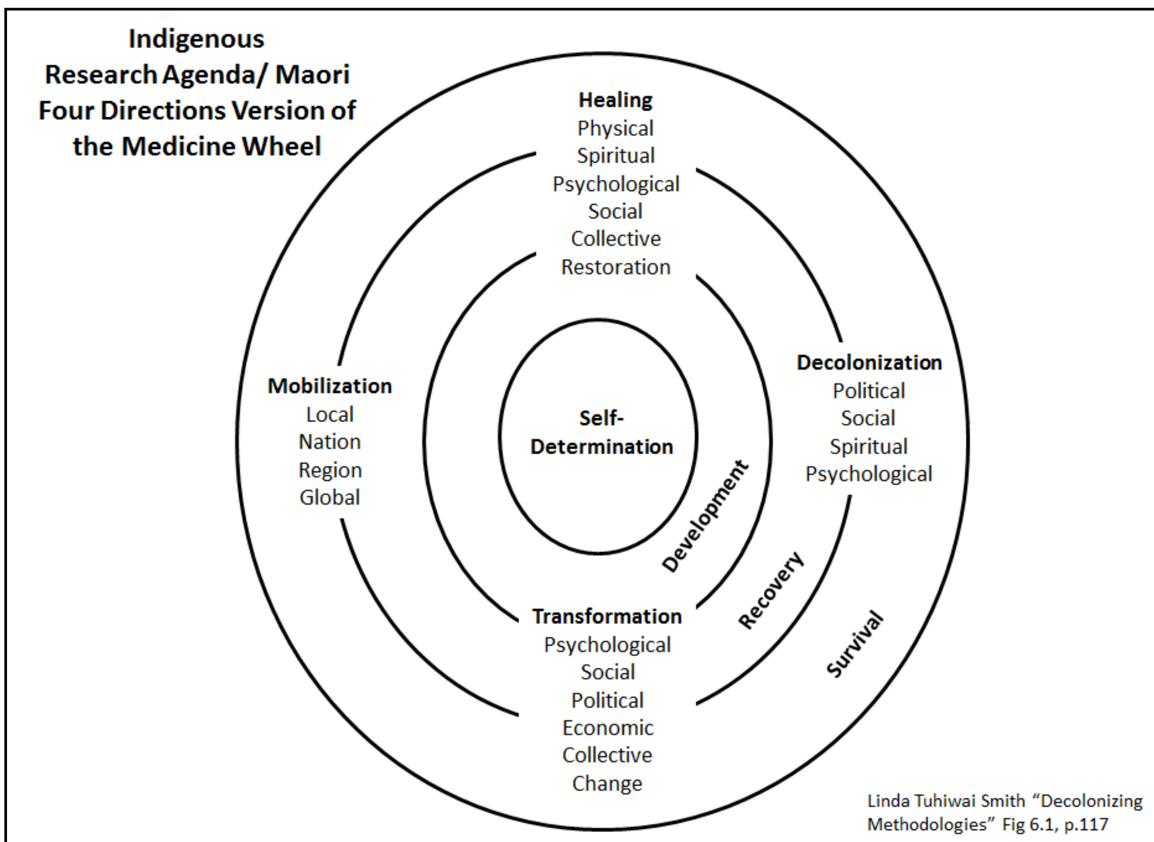

Figure 5: Indigenous Research Agenda/ Māori Four Directions

The Indigenous Research Agenda is based on themes that emerged in New Zealand and Australia in the late 1960s, resulting from social movements of Indigenous peoples creating an agenda for action (Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 115). The Indigenous Research Agenda is the Maori equivalent of the Four Directions Medicine Wheel that uses the metaphor of ocean tides to describe the concentric circles: "The tides represent movement, change, process, life, inward and outward flows of ideas, reflections, and actions" (Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 116). The experiences and actions of the individual ripple outward to affect the nation; and the experiences of the nation also impact the experiences of the individual. These four major tides move inwards from the outside of the circle to the centre—from survival, recovery, and development, with self-determination in the centre. "[They] are the conditions and states of being through which Indigenous communities are moving" (Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 116).

Smith notes that "self-Determination in a research agenda becomes more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains" (116). Social justice is an important aspect of well-being because colonization, racism and self-determination all have a negative impact on Indigenous peoples health (Smylie & Firestone 435). The four directions on the Indigenous Research Agenda represent processes leading towards self-determination; these processes are decolonization (east), transformation (south), mobilization (west), and healing (north): "They are not goals or ends in themselves. They are processes that connect, inform and clarify the tensions between the local, the regional and the global. They are processes which

can be incorporated into practices and methodologies" (Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 116).

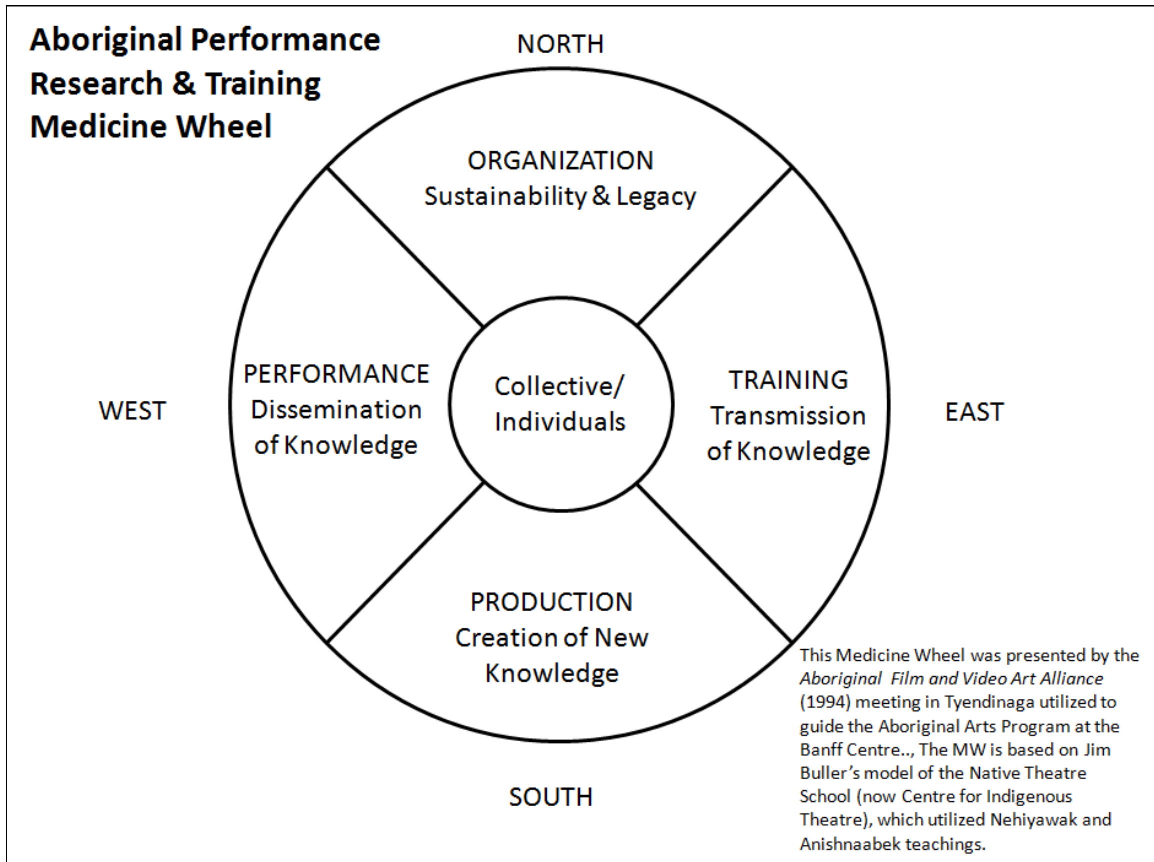

Figure 6: Aboriginal Performance Research & Training Medicine Wheel

ii. AboriginalAboriginal Performance Research Medicine Wheel

The Aboriginal Performance Research Medicine Wheel was designed to vision strategies to inspire the creation of national Indigenous arts movements. Through the creation of professional development and arts training programs rooted in Indigenous knowledge the program was able to reverse the damage of colonization on Indigenous arts in Canada.

This Medicine Wheel, as shared by Marrie Mumford, was presented at the Aboriginal Film and Video Art Alliance (AFVAA*)* meeting in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory (southern Ontario, 1994) as they prepared a strategy to guide the creation of multidisciplinary

professional development training programs at the recently established Aboriginal Arts Program, a partnership program negotiated by AFVAA with the Banff Centre For the Arts. The intention was to gather Indigenous artists to support the established and emerging Aboriginal arts organizations under the theme of *Self-Government in the Arts* across Canada. This Medicine Wheel was based on Nehiyaw elder James Buller's work in the 1970s when he was the executive director of the Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts (ANDPVA), which was established as a provincial Arts Service Organization in Ontario in 1972.

In the summer of 1974, Buller established the Native Theatre School (now the Centre for Indigenous Theatre in Toronto), whose graduates initiated the creation of a Native theatre movement across Canada. Every summer, for a period of twenty years, the Native Theatre School's training program brought together Nehiyawak, Anishinaabek, and Haudenosaunee teachers who explored artistic and performance-based traditions. These teachers were to create culturally-specific theatre work, including Indigenous dance, music, and traditional stories and languages in a contemporary context. The program, informed by traditional Indigenous methodologies, combined training and production, leading to performances. The performances toured to First Nations communities and led to the emergence of Indigenous theatre companies in urban centres and First Nations communities across Canada. These companies created the beginnings of a national Indigenous theatre movement, which contributed to nation-building through sovereignty in the arts.

Elder James Buller was also the International Chairman of the Indigenous Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA) that led to the creation of international Indigenous theatre

networks—twenty countries working together to promote the importance of theatre created and performed by Indigenous Peoples. IPTA was officially established at the first World Indigenous Theatre Celebration in 1980 at York University. The second World Indigenous Theatre Celebration was held from July 31 to August 9, 1982 in Peterborough, Ontario. It began at Waawshkigaamagki (Curve Lake First Nation) with a powwow, while colloquies and intra-cultural workshops were held at Trent University. Performances were open to the public and were held in the Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School Auditorium and the Peterborough Square shopping mall, with outdoor performances in local parks. As Buller wrote:

> Our respective cultures are old ones. We look for our rightful place in this turbulent world, to retain our traditions, some vestiges of our former lifestyles and fundamental elements of our respective heritages. Here we must lay the groundwork and continue to work together, unified in our struggle to be recognized as original creators of contributions to artistic expression (IPTA 2-3).

The evolution of Buller's performance research and training was inspired by the Chinook Winds: Aboriginal Dance Program (1996-2003), an Aboriginal arts partnership program negotiated by AFVAA with the Banff Centre. Graduates of this program have since created nine new contemporary Aboriginal dance theatre organizations, collectives and companies, creating a network and movement in contemporary Indigenous dance across Canada.

iii. Methodology: Jerry First Charger's Story through Decolonization and Survival

My methodology involves looking at the co-research stories and how they related to the medicine wheel. Clarity between the stories and the different versions of the Medicine Wheels became apparent when I applied Jerry's story, and my own, to the Indigenous Research Agenda

and Aboriginal Performance Research Medicine Wheel. This became the method for determining which co-research stories and quotes to select. I was able to see how these contemporary Medicine Wheels could be applied to an individual's life journey in terms of decolonization.

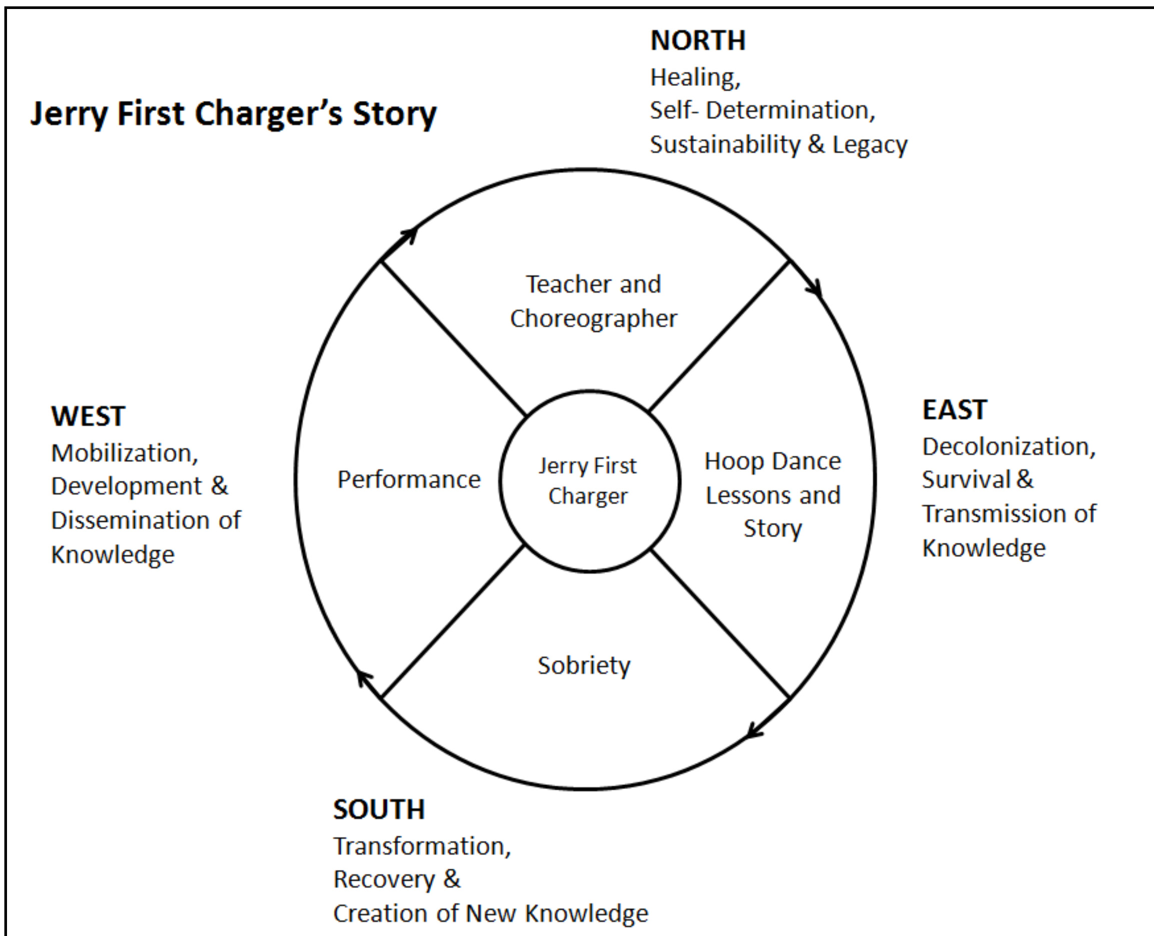

Figure 7: Jerry First Charger's Story through Decolonization and Survival

iv. Inwards Spiral

When I applied Jerry's story to the Indigenous Research Agenda and Aboriginal Performance Research & Training Medicine Wheel, an inward spiral was created, moving through the concentric circles from the outside toward the centre, and beginning in the east with

decolonization and survival. This inward spiral highlights the reversal of colonization (from a nation level) and return to culture in the centre (individual level). This is the opposite of the Nehiyawak and Anishinaabek Medicine Wheels, which begin in the centre with the individual and move outward to the family and, community, ending with the nation at the outside concentric circle. I combined and adapted the Medicine Wheels as follows:

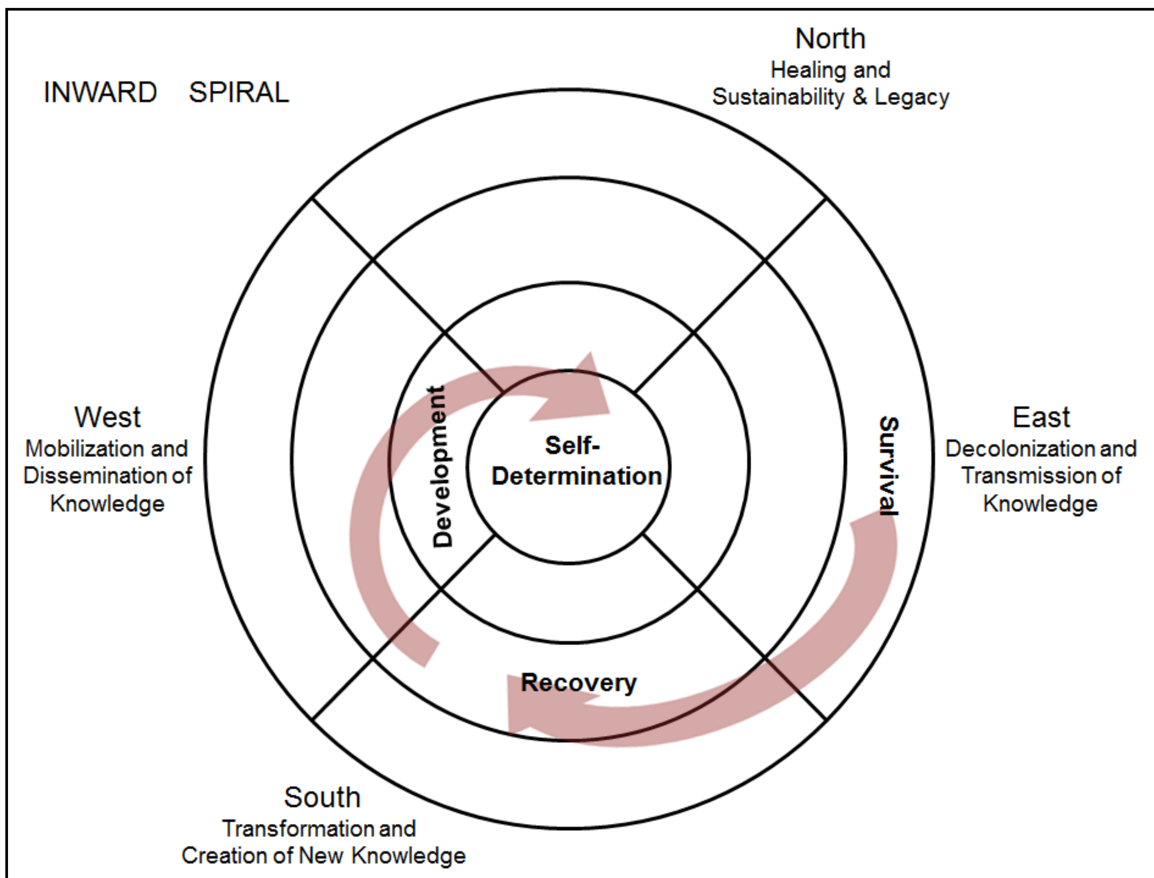

Figure 8: Inward Spiral

The inward spiral represents the journey of returning to our Indigenous cultures, the "site of cultural origin."[9] In Smith's Indigenous Research Agenda, the first step of decolonization is to survive colonization. One way we do this is by ensuring our culture continues. In the Aboriginal Performance Research and Training Medicine Wheel, this begins with the collective—through the *transmission of knowledge* from Elders and/or traditional performance specialists to the next generation. For Jerry First Charger, breakdancing acted as a survival method for a Blackfoot man in contemporary society. Today, many Indigenous youth are attracted to hip-hop culture because poverty, oppression and violence are more true to their reality than the characteristics of mainstream popular culture, which usually promotes stereotypical views of Indigenous people, ignoring or misinterpreting their complex contemporary existence. For Jerry, the process of decolonization began when he was introduced to Indigenous Knowledge contained within cultural practices in his community, and he began to learn about the hoop dance, which happened to occur during the era of revitalization for the powwow movement.

The second tide of the spiral is in the south, which is about *transformation* and *recovery*, exemplified by changing and transforming colonial and racist ideas by recovering cultural practices and traditions. The south is also the *creation of new knowledge*, which may occur

[9] As described by Monique Mojica in reference to the work of the Chocolate Woman Collective, who through their work are "deconstructing the 'house of colonization' through the process of creating art that returns to the site of cultural origin . . . " (61)

through unique individual interpretations, embodying and living within a cultural context. Jerry's physical recovery and transformation occurred when he chose to live a sober lifestyle. He began to create his own unique understanding of the hoop dance and how it had manifested in his life. He transformed himself from the victimization, racism, stereotypes, and oppression Indigenous peoples continue to face on a daily basis, into an empowered individual choosing the path of healing and spirituality; a true warrior, leader, and role model. Healing through self-determination means the individual decides for themselves what life path they will follow. Self-expression through dance is the opposite of oppression and suppression on an individual level. On the nation level, Indigenous sovereignty and true self-governance is the opposite of colonization and oppression.

The third tide of the spiral is in the west, which is about *mobilization* and *development*—unified acts of resistance to colonization, which lead to the dissemination of knowledge, recovered and recreated. Mobilization promotes the development of Indigenous collectives, organizations, communities, and nations as they move towards sovereignty. Mobilization and development occurred as Jerry continued to develop his own unique style of hoop dancing by using breakdancing in his hoop dance routine, learning the native flute, drumming and singing, and performing frequently in his community. He has developed youth programs and performances, which serve to mobilize collective actions and self-expression of groups and communities. The dissemination of knowledge took place through Jerry's performances and workshops—through mentoring others.

In the northern direction, we find *healing* and *restoration*, which is also tied to self-determination, sustainability and legacy; when we are willing and able to make our own

decisions in our life-path, we are able to choose to heal ourselves and others. Elders and senior artists sustain our cultures, providing a foundation of support for younger generations of emerging artists on their journey of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin. Today, Jerry shares his knowledge as a teacher, director and choreographer, as a way of maintaining his own individual healing and self-determination as well as promoting sovereignty, *legacy* and *sustainability* for the communities that he works in.

v. Integrated Medicine Wheel

Together the different versions of the Medicine Wheels create an in-depth understanding of the healing journey through Indigenous dance cultures that each co-researcher experienced in their own unique way. I am able to apply the various perspectives of the Medicine Wheels from different nations to understand not only *how* but *why* inter-tribal Indigenous dance is important to an individual's healing journey and how this has influenced their friends, family, community, and nation. I created a layered Medicine Wheel that integrated the multiple versions of the Medicine Wheels to show how each is related as well as to demonstrate the different spirals, which are depicted in the following diagram (Figure 9: Integrated Medicine Wheel). With Jerry's story, I was able to see how the inward and outward spirals worked together to show how the interrelationship of the individual, family, community, and nation, more accurately representing the Medicine Wheel as a vortex of energy in constant motion.

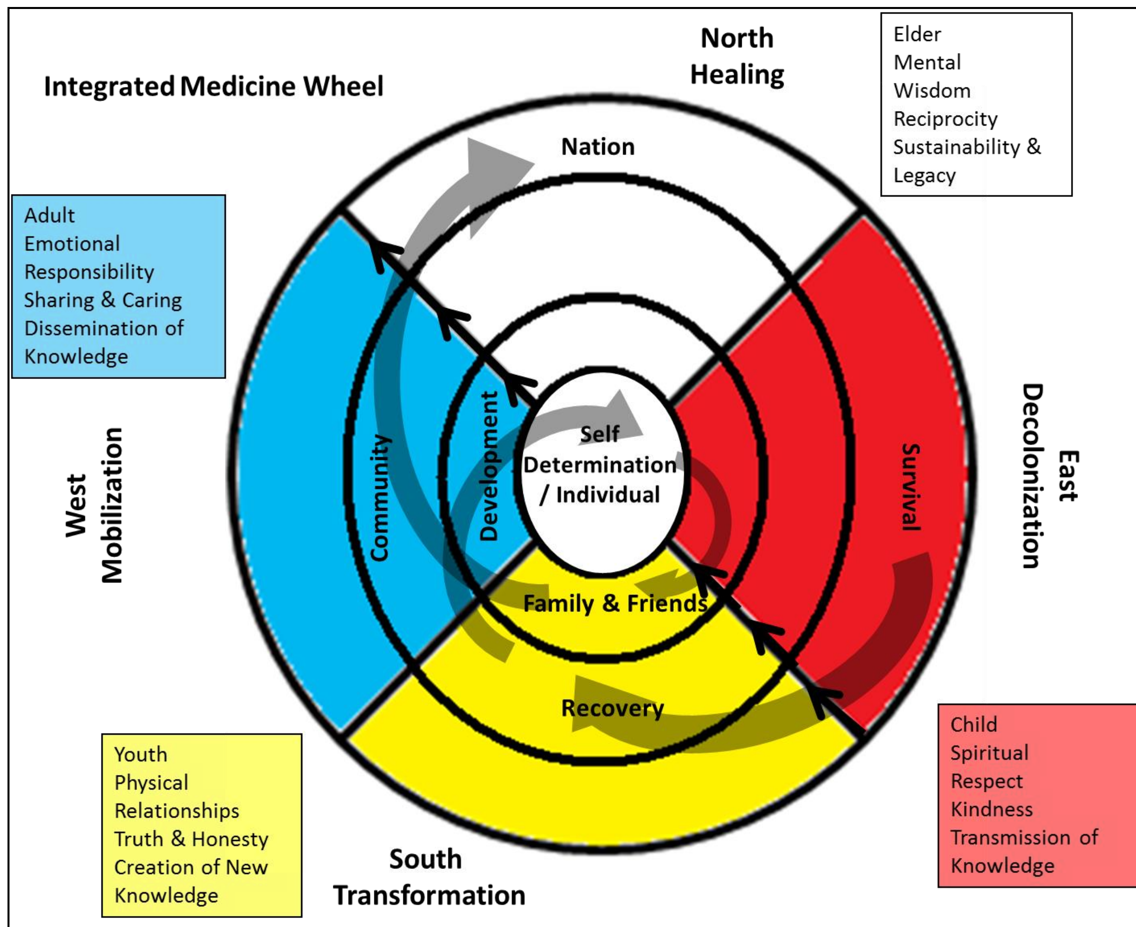

Figure 9: Integrated Medicine Wheel

This Integrated Medicine Wheel shows how the combination of the inward and outward spirals creates a continuous vortex of movement with no beginning or end. We can begin to describe this vortex if we start in the centre with the Individual (Bell 33). The individual is taught their culture in childhood, with kindness and respect; they influence their friends and family around them as they become youth; in adulthood, they participate in the community and community development, taking on more responsibilities and sharing and caring for others; and as they become Elders, knowledge holders or performance specialists, they pass their knowledge and wisdom to younger generations (reciprocity), ensuring the survival of our nations. The journey of participating in and learning our culture (outward spiral) and the

process of decolonization, and returning to our culture (inward spiral), may occur simultaneously with the individual, family, community and/or nation, each building upon the other. Sometimes we find ourselves going through the different stages at different times; this is not a static model but helps us to continually seek balance. If we start with decolonization of the spirit and move *inwards* to achieve self-determination, then we can begin to influence those around us, moving outwards on the journey of healing. This Integrated Medicine Wheel visibly represents the teaching among Indigenous Elders that says we cannot heal others unless we first heal ourselves. It also reflects the Indigenous value of relationships, and shows, like in the Māori explanation, how the nation influences the individual.

vi. Indigenous Co-research Stories

Co-researchers were interviewed about their experiences and discoveries of Indigenous dance and the impacts on their lives, as well as the observations of their friends, family and community. Unanimously, they identified that Indigenous dance promotes holistic well-being. I asked questions around their lived experience, stories and history of the dances they practice, and the benefits of Indigenous dance in terms of spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental well-being. The co-researchers were selected based on those who are well-known as role models in community, with decades of experience as dancers and often as teachers of dance as well. I conducted personal interviews that lasted up to one hour, and offered a gift and honorarium as a sign of respect, reciprocity, and to honour relationships. Oral stories are part of Indigenous ways of knowing, opposite to colonial ways of research, that are based on data, written documents, and objectivity. Knowledge holders with oral stories and lived experience provided

an often missing or misunderstood aspect of the recent history of Indigenous dance that was not available in other sources.

Some of the stories collected from Elders such as Edna Manitowabi (Anishinaabekwe), a Midewiwin grandmother from Wikwemikong Unceded Reserve, Manitoulin Island in Ontario, who shared her experience with helping to bring the first powwow in Ontario in 1960, demonstrate the interconnection and influence of the nation on the individual, and vice versa. Muriel Miguel (Kuna/ Rappahannock), co-founder and artistic director of internationally acclaimed Spiderwoman Theater (established in New York City in 1975) lived in New York City during the time when 'Indian dancing' was outlawed. She shared that during this period in time in New York City, nobody cared if Indians danced or not, and she and her family were able to bring the first powwow to Connecticut in 1941. This story helps to fill in some of the history and the individual and nation level impacts by showing voices of those directly involved with dance during this time.

Marrie Mumford has many years of experience in Indigenous performance. She is the artistic director who initiated the Chinook Winds Aboriginal Dance program, a partnership program with the Aboriginal Film and Video Art Alliance and the Banff Centre. As well, Daystar/ Rosalie Jones is recognized as one of the founders of Modern Native Dance, who serves this thesis as both an interview participant and scholar through articles and papers (published and unpublished). Much of her work involves the creative process, and choreography that reflects Indigenous stories, traditions, and philosophies. Her extensive understanding of the importance of Indigenous dance as it contributes to the well-being of Indigenous peoples is demonstrated in the interview quotes used in the following chapters. In discussion with Rosalie Jones, she

stated that the reason she chose to become a dancer was that, for her, it was the most holistic form of expression:

> Having studied various kinds of art forms, I actually started as a visual artist doing painting, sculpture, and drawing. I was involved with Western music and piano, and at one point I took a modern dance course . . . I have to say it changed my life; in it, I found a way to totally be myself. I felt that as a dancer it was a more complete expression—you are expressing through the body, mind, spirit, and emotion; you are utilizing everything that is yourself, in this work of art. To me, the other arts felt rather incomplete, and dance was truly a complete art form, no matter what style of dance you might be doing. And so for that reason I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to become a dancer.

Other interviews include jingle dress dancers Karen Pheasant and Lianna Tootoosis. Hoop Dancers Lisa Odjig and Nimkii Osawamick. Powwow singer, drum keeper and men's traditional dancer Bruce Smoke. Theater artist, knowledge holder and storyteller Don Kavanaugh. These co-researchers all have experience in all aspects of storytelling, cultural knowledge, performance, and academics. Also included are contemporary performers, choreographers, and directors who incorporate both Western and Indigenous forms and approaches within their creation of new work—artists such as Rulan Tangen, Rosalie Jones, Rosa John, and Muriel Miguel. The stories and analysis of co-researcher stories demonstrates how re-creation is about using the knowledge of our ancestors to reverse the destruction of colonization to create healing for ourselves and ensure future generations continue on this path of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin.

vii. Medicine Wheel as a Framework for Indigenous Dance Research

When combined, the four Medicine Wheels provide a comprehensive framework and methodology for analyzing and organizing the stories and experiences shared by the Indigenous dance co-researchers that I interviewed. The history of Indigenous dance in our communities includes the journeys of individual dancers toward Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin, and takes us on a path of healing through self-determination and sovereignty. The discovery of the interrelatedness of each of the Medicine Wheels continues to provide the framework for the following chapters, organizing each around the four key questions of the Anishnaabek teachings as they relate to the traditional Medicine Wheel: Chapter 4: Where Did We Come From? (in the east); Chapter 5: Where Are We Now? (in the south); and Chapter 6: Where Are We Going? (in the west) And How Will We Know When We Get There? (in the north).

The Medicine Wheel methodology used in this thesis can be thought of as a moving field of energy which directs us to a good life or holistic healing. As Bell describes it, this "spiral of energy in motion" can also be applied to Indigenous dance itself as it is always changing, evolving, and in a constant state of flux as dancers who practice the teachings strive toward wholeness, balance, harmony and growth. I saw evidence of this in the stories told by individuals as well as the experiences of their friends, families, and communities, who they taught and performed with and for. My research leads to discussions of how Indigenous dance is truly a means of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin, which is illuminated by the original teachings, concepts, and values of the Medicine Wheel.

Chapter 4: Where do we come from? – Resistance and Survivance

This Chapter is focused on the question, "Where do we come from?," put forward by Dr. Nicole Bell. This question is addressed through analysis of existing literature and oral histories from personal interviews. I examine literature related to Indigenous dance, Indigenous history, and Indigenous peoples health and well-being, with a priority of using those written by Indigenous authors, scholars, and dancers. This includes biographical texts about Indigenous dancers such as Molly Spotted Elk. It is framed through the Medicine Wheel to create a more complete understanding of the movements and evolution of Indigenous dance from Indigenous perspectives. This chapter examines how and why Indigenous dance has endured from pre-contact traditions, through the impact of colonization, and continues to support Indigenous healing, well-being, and self-determination. Contemporary versions of the Medicine Wheel provide a framework for organizing the research, both historical and contemporary, as related to Indigenous dance, history, and well-being. The stories and lived experience of co-researchers overlaps with some of this history and evolution of Indigenous dance; those stories which help create a more complete understanding of the history of Indigenous dance are included here.

1.1 Re-Creation of Indigenous Dance: From Decolonization to Healing

Following the systemic attempts at colonization and assimilation, this section traces the re-creation of Indigenous dance on a national level through Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Indigenous Research Agenda* introduced in Chapter 3. To reiterate, these processes include decolonization (east), transformation (south), mobilization (west), and healing (north). These processes are reflected in the Medicine Wheel teachings adapted by the Aboriginal Performance Research & Training Model, based on Nehiyawak and Anishnaabek teachings. Both of these Medicine

Wheels were designed to help Indigenous nations in their healing from colonization; when combined, they provide the framework for analysis of the movements of Indigenous dance from colonization to healing.

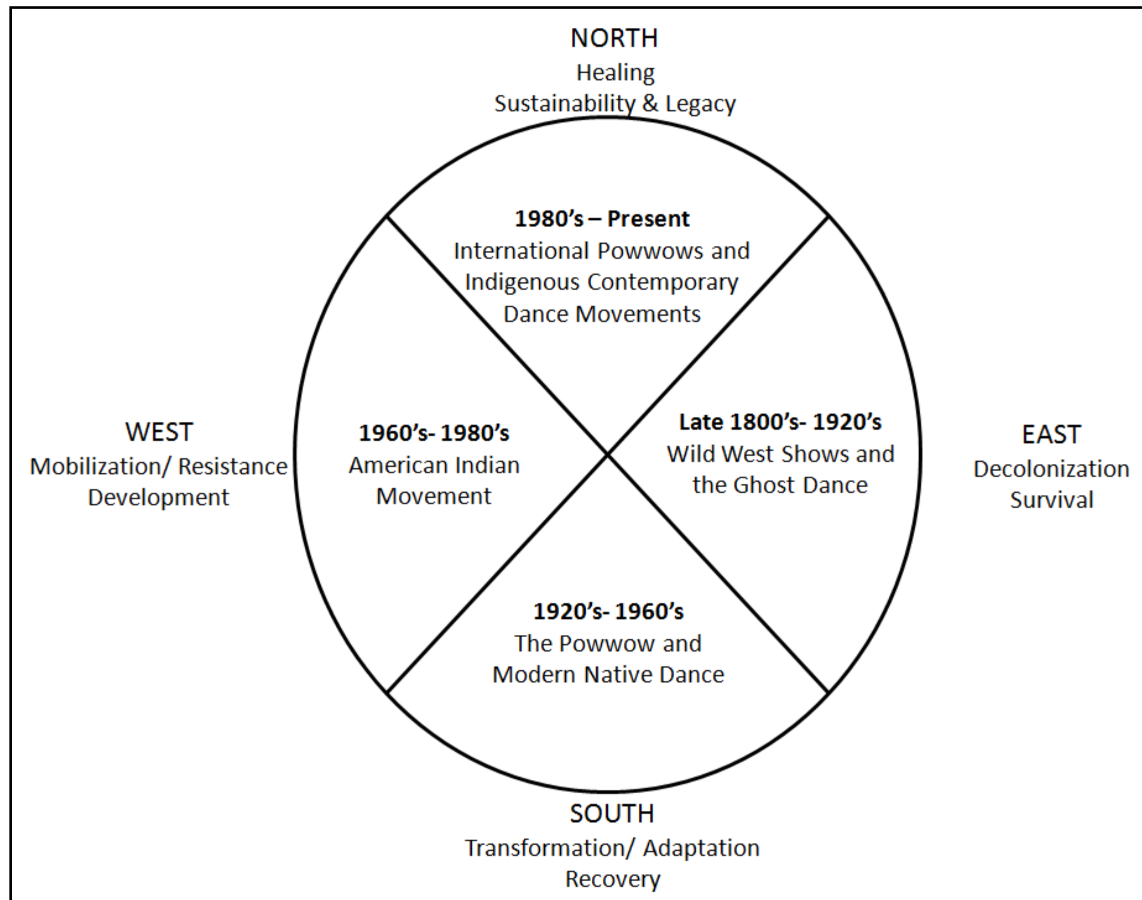

Figure 10: Indigenous Dance History through Decolonization and Survival

i. Decolonization through Survival and Transmission of Knowledge: Wild West Shows and the Ghost Dance (Late 1800s-1920s)

Decolonization as described in the *Indigenous Research Agenda*, is one of the processes that begins to initiate a movement toward healing, and is achieved in the eastern direction of the Aboriginal Performance Research & Training Model through the transmission of knowledge. The first step towards healing is to survive colonization, not only physically, but spiritually,

emotionally, and mentally. One way in which this is done is through the transmission of knowledge via oral traditions as well as contemporary means, including books, audio and video resources, and performance. As Rosalie Jones writes in her article, *Modern Native Dance*:

> The history of Native Americans is one of a people steeped in lessons of survival handed down through generations. While the achievement of survival can be manifest in a people's material culture, it is in their songs, dances, and oratories that the testament of their enduring spirit is truly found. (169)

The ability to hold onto dance, sing, celebrate and have hope in the face of ongoing colonialism, oppression, and racism, it is not only healing but also an act of decolonization. The late 1800s up until 1951 saw the outlawing of Indigenous dance throughout Canada and the United States.

1. Wild West Shows

During the late 1800s to the 1920s there was a prevalence of Wild West shows, which were used both as a means of survival by Indigenous peoples and as a means of colonization by non-Indigenous producers. These shows, under the control of non-Native producers, employed many Indigenous dancers and performers for Wild West Shows, Medicine Shows and Vaudeville shows. Bunny McBride, an American writer and anthropologist, writes, "In an irony seemingly lost on them, white Americans eagerly paid to see Native people perform the very traditions that they were destroying. The message was clear: control American Indian traditions by confining them to the stage" (43). Entertainment in a Western context was acceptable to European settlers, but Indigenous dances done for healing in a self-determined and sovereign way were illegal. Indigenous dance was not only suppressed but was also made into a commodity for mass consumption.

In 1884, William Frederick Cody (Buffalo Bill) presented his show for the first time—Buffalo Bill's Wild West. These shows greatly influenced images of the American West and were said to be one of the largest employers of Indians outside reservations (Maddra 22-25). Jacqueline Shea Murphy states that, "show dancing continued to function as Native dancing. While [the dancers'] bodies conformed to audience expectations . . . their dancing nonetheless continued to invoke and enact cultural, political, and spiritual agency" (*The People…* 69-70). These shows became some of the first jobs for Indigenous peoples in this 'new world' that was thrust upon them as they transitioned from their traditional ways of subsistence:

> As tribes crumbled, Buffalo Bill and other producers stepped forward to claim the survivors for their shows. Even great Indian heroes, forced onto reservations by the ceaseless encroachments of white settlers, grabbed at road shows as a last straw for survival. (McBride 44)

Sioux holy man, Tatan'ka Iyota'ka, translated by non-Natives as 'Sitting Bull,' was given his name after he counted his first coup (Vestal 11-13). In 1885, Sitting Bull joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show drawing enormous crowds; those who called him "Killer of Custer" also paid him for signed photographs (Brown 427). It is said that he "gave most of the money away to the band of ragged, hungry boys who seemed to surround him wherever he went . . . he could not understand how white men could be so unmindful of their own poor" (427). In 1887, Sitting Bull declined Buffalo Bill's invitation to tour Europe as it occurred at the same time as threats to his people and their lands (427). Some, including Black Elk (Oglala Sioux), accepted the opportunity to travel and experience European culture first-hand, for "the opportunity to perform in the

shows was seen as providing a way of understanding the white man's world and of judging for themselves its relative merit" (McBride 67-69).

In Wild West shows, Indian agents policed the authenticity of the dances, often passing the performances off as fake, and dismissing any traditional significance. Native dancers were thought to be trying to be something they were not, since the audience believed that the 'real' dances were a thing of the past (Murphy 58-59). In contrast, Indigenous views of culture and dance continue to be more fluid; "A living and practiced art, passed on from teacher to student (from guru to disciple), dance is a fluid, constantly evolving tradition" (Shresthova).

The different views toward the show dancing can be seen in Black Elk's participation in a private showing for Queen Victoria in 1887. The Queen suggested that the shows were degrading to Indians, stating: "If I owned you Indians, you good-looking people, I would never take you around in a show like this" (Murphy, *The People…* 67). Black Elk did not see the Queen's response as demeaning but, rather, interpreted the Queen's reception as a sign of honour and respect. In his recounting of the story nearly thirty-five years later, he says that the Queen did not like the white men in the show: she didn't shake their hands; she only shook hands with the Indians (67). While outsiders may have looked at the Indian dancing as demeaning, the performers certainly realized the opportunities that dancing provided.

Muriel Miguel of Spiderwoman Theater, who grew up in the 1940s, shared:

> My father was in the Wild West shows and made a living there; he would make Indian medicine in the bathtub and get all dressed up and go out and sell this Indian medicine on the street corner.

She continued to explain that for her father it was a matter of survival; he did what he had to do to feed his family. In those days, it was a common belief that the "Indian" was a dying race. This made it all the more important for Indigenous peoples to ensure the transmission of knowledge to younger generations, which sometimes meant finding new ways to share their culture.

2. The Ghost Dance

Dancing was used as a way to cope with numerous assaults on Indigenous cultures. One of the most contentious examples is that of the Nanigukwa (Northern Paiute for 'dance in a circle') (Hittman 63). The Nanigukwa was named 'The Ghost Dance' by Europeans. Originating in Western Nevada, the Ghost Dance began in 1860 and was described as, "a reformation and revitalization movement" (Maddra 22). The Nanigukwa originated with the Paiute spiritual leader, Jack Wilson, also known as Wovoka, after receiving a message from God that," . . . if they lived peacefully, did not lie, worked hard, and performed the Ghost Dance, dead friends and relatives would return and all would live together in the traditional way with plentiful game" (6). This could be interpreted in different ways, such as the return of traditional ways of living or the return of the spirit of the ancestors, not necessarily physically returning from the dead.

Sitting Bull was told of the Messiah and Ghost Dance from Kicking Bear. "[Sitting Bull] did not believe it was possible for dead men to return and live again . . . but he had no objections to his people dancing the Ghost Dance . . . [but] he did not want soldiers coming in to frighten them and perhaps shoot their guns at his people" (Brown 434). On December 15, 1890, Sitting Bull was assassinated by the U.S. Army. The revitalization of the Ghost Dance

ended with the Wounded Knee Massacre on December 28, 1890 (434), when underneath a white flag, while taking down camp, as many as 300 men, women, and children were massacred by the U.S. Army (Maddra 27). Black Elk, who had witnessed the aftermath of the massacre, is quoted in his later years, as he looked back on what he saw:

> I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream . . . the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead. (Neihardt 218)

The massacre of the camp highlights the profound impact of this genocidal act. Beyond the loss of life, including children, it was also an attack on the hope for the future, the celebration of being within community, and the connection to past and ancestors that the dance itself represented. It was an attack on self-determination and sovereignty. Despite this attack and others, Indigenous peoples continued to find ways to maintain their culture and identities while adapting to the changes forced upon them. As Leslie Marmon Silko writes in the *Almanac of the Dead*:

> The truth is the Ghost Dance did not end with the murder of Big Foot and one hundred and forty-four Ghost Dance worshippers at Wounded Knee. The Ghost Dance has never ended, it has continued, and the people have never stopped dancing: they may call it by other names, but when they dance, their hearts are reunited with the spirits of beloved ancestors and the loved ones recently lost in the struggle. Through the Americas, from

Chile to Canada, the people have never stopped dancing; as the living dance, they are joined again with all our ancestors before them, who cry out, and who call the people to take back the Americas. (724)

Hugh Dempsey recounts several stories of the origins of the Blackfoot Ghost Dance, which was primarily meant as a ritual to protect young vision seekers. When the Blackfoot settled onto reserves they "adapted in order to survive in a changing culture" (3). For the Lakota, both the Ghost Dance and Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows offered "various alternatives to the dependence that the government's Indian policy had brought about, while also enabling them to retain their Indian identity;" as a result, both were viewed as threats to assimilation (Maddra 4, 26). The Ghost Dance revitalization and fierce suppression sends the message that colonizers do not want Indigenous people to be active, empowered, or even to physically move; one could assume the preference, or even the goal, is for Indigenous people and communities to be still, silent, idle, and inactive.

1.2 Transformation through Recovery and the Creation of New Knowledge: The Powwow and Modern Native Dance (1920s-1960s)

The period from the 1920s to 1960s was the beginning of transformation through a process of adaptation and recovery. Transformation is found in the south on the Indigenous Research Agenda's Medicine Wheel, and in the southern direction of the Aboriginal Performance Research & Training Model, which correlates to the creation of new knowledge. This period of transformation is characterized by Indigenous people practicing their cultural ways in a modern setting, beginning to adapt their dances and cultural praxis through negotiating between traditional and contemporary worlds. In some cases, traditional dances and practices evolved to

fit into contemporary Indigenous contexts, such as the powwow movement. In other instances, cultural traditions were adapted to fit Western contexts where traditional stories were brought onto the stage using various combinations of traditional, modern, and contemporary Indigenous dance.

Not only did Europeans influence Indigenous dance, but the reverse was also true: "Interest in Native American tribal dances has been ongoing from the first moment the Europeans glimpsed what many call 'the savage and primitive beauty' of the first Americans;" in seeking to return to "'basic' dance, to natural and 'authentic' movement," modern dance turned to dances of Native Americans (Jones, *Modern Dance Native* 169). Ted Shawn (1891-1972) was a notable pioneer of American modern dance, and Martha Graham (1894-1991) was an extremely influential American modern dancer and choreographer; both choreographed pieces inspired by Native American dance (170). There were also Native American dancers such as sisters Maria and Marjorie Tallchief (Osage), skilled ballerinas who danced with various professional ballet companies such as the Paris Opera Ballet, of which Marjorie was the star for several years, and the New York City Ballet, where Maria was the leading ballerina from 1947 to 1960 (170).

An example of the struggles and triumphs during this period of transformation is Molly Spotted Elk (Penobscot and Maliseet) from Indian Island, the Penobscot reservation in Maine. Born Mary Alice Nelson, which was pronounced the Indian way as Molly Dellis, and was shortened to Molly (Spotted Elk, vii). McBride says that it is likely that the name Spotted Elk was given to her when she was adopted by the Cheyenne during a powwow in Oklahoma where she was selected as the best of some nine hundred dancers. Elk was a common name among the

Cheyenne; there were no elk in Penobscot territory (McBride 69-70). Born in 1903, Molly Spotted Elk kept extensive diaries of her life as a scholar, published author, and internationally renowned Indigenous dancer and performing artist during the 1920s and 1930s.

In her early years, she experienced hecklers that criticized her performance or the fact that she was Indian: "After a school performance, she challenged insults by writing a 'criticism on a school problem and racial feeling to the Boston Telegram'" (McBride 49). Although criticized, she became a very accomplished woman. She attended the University of Pennsylvania, audited anthropology courses at the Sorbonne University in Paris, and was a silent film star in Europe and America (in *The Silent Enemy*, filmed in 1930 between Lake Temiskaming and Lake Temagami in northern Ontario). Molly Spotted Elk was not only a published writer and poet; she was grounded in her culture, spoke her language, and knew the traditional stories and oral history of her nation. She published these stories in *Katahdin: Wigwam's tales of the Abanaki Tribe* (2003). Her Penobscot legends were originally meant to be published by Paul Geuthner Publishers in Paris in 1939, but "on [September 1st], just before the promotional campaign for her book was to begin, Hitler's army invaded Poland. Two days later, France and England declared war on Germany, and Molly's book became one of the casualties of war" (McBride 257).

In 1924, Molly began auditing an anthropology course at the University of Pennsylvania; but after the winter semester of 1925, out of financial need, Molly joined the 101 Ranch with her sister, Apid. The 101 Ranch had been seeking to expand and recruit new talent. Their show re-created historical battles as Indian performers watched grimly. Indians were presented stereotypically as "brute savages" (McBride 67). Many American Indians joined Wild West

shows for their livelihood and “a diversion from their plight,” but some, such as Sioux Chief Chauncey Yellow Robe, spoke out against these shows as exploitative (68). In 1925, Molly left the 101 Ranch because of low wages; however, in later diary entries, “she proclaimed her desire to do performances that were ‘authentic’ and ‘true.’ It seems clear that it was more than low pay that drove her away from the 101’s circus atmosphere” (71).

In 1931, Molly performed at the World’s Fair in Paris where Indigenous performers were subjected to appalling conditions:

> People presented in human showcases faced psychological and physical hardships. Beyond homesickness, public ridicule, and being used as objects to demean their own cultures by presenting them out of context, they struggled with alien foods, climate, and viruses. Some ran away once they realized what it meant to be on display. Many became sick, some died. (153)

The performers were instructed to act as the Western world assumed they normally do, “head hunting, performing religious rituals at set times, feigning cannibalism, pantomiming hunting activities, dancing, singing, and doing various arts and crafts.” These displays were used as justification for colonialism (McBride 152).

As a dancer, performer, storyteller, and academic, “. . . art and academic pursuits were inextricably intertwined: [Molly’s] studies deepened the content of her short stories, dances, and songs, and stirred her to enhance her performances with explanatory lectures when possible” (MrBride 63) She struggled to hold together her marriage of art and academics, while supporting herself and continuing to send money home to her family; she danced in clubs and theatres more out of necessity than anything else (McBride 62-64). Throughout her life, Molly

struggled during this period of transformation as she worked toward adaptation and recovery of Indigenous dance by moving beyond stereotypes and traditional images to create a contemporary identity as an Indigenous person.

Muriel Miguel, who began her career as a powwow dancer, was an active participant in the recovery of Indigenous dances and culture, and helped in the creation of new knowledge by bringing traditional cultures into a modern setting. Her experience with dance in a mainstream environment helped to pave the way for others to share their dance and culture in contemporary settings, empowering still others to embrace modern theatre and performance while maintaining their own individual and cultural perspectives. In her interview, she shared the story of growing up in Brooklyn during the period when dance was still illegal in Canada and the U.S.. She said that dancers from many nations, such as the Iroquois, Cree and Ho Chunk, from Canada and the western United States, came to New York City because "nobody cared if you danced in New York City." Muriel explains: "For me, dance was always there, it's what we did. It never occurred to me *not* to dance." The dancers and performers that she grew up around were focused on survival because in those days, she says, people really believed that Indians were a dying race and a dying culture.

In 1940, Muriel and her family helped to initiate the Intertribal American Indian Council, and hosted the first eastern powwow in New Haven, Connecticut. Her family was part of the Wild West shows. She was raised in the time when women's fancy shawl dance was just starting in her community and she remembers watching Tony White Cloud, founder of the modern hoop dance, performing at Wild West shows in New York City. She remembers learning many different dances from these dancers; she said they taught the dances to anyone who

would learn them because they were afraid they would lose them. She said that she was even taught ceremonial songs and dances. She remembers as a young girl, her Social Studies teacher saying that Indians were all dead and their culture was dead. This inspired her and some of the other Indigenous students to start a dance troupe; they called themselves the 'Little Eagles' (known today as the Thunderbird American Indian Dancers), and went to schools and events demonstrating and teaching about the dances they had learned. They even created their own dances and performed dances in public that they didn't know were sacred, which led to discussions at the time of the difference between social and ceremonial dances. Muriel's sisters urged her to take Western dance classes, so she took ballet, tap, and modern dance. She said she always kept it separate from "my dance" (Indigenous dance) because Indigenous dance was her spirit.

Although in Canada the Indian Act dropped Section 140, the anti-potlatch laws, in 1951 (Murphy 137), the negative images that were created during this era continue to weigh heavily on Indigenous peoples and communities. As an example, Elder Edna Manitowabi, Anishnaabekwe, said that in her community, Wikwemikong, the dance they practiced was square dancing; they didn't practice any form of Indigenous dancing. It wasn't until she moved to Toronto as a teenager that she discovered powwow dances together with other Indigenous people in the city. She then began a journey to reclaim the culture that she was removed from through the residential school system. Edna shared her experience of the first time she heard the big drum:

> . . . The big drum was the one that initially spoke to me in a very, very, very powerful way, and I always felt that that's what really drove me, that was the catalyst in terms of

the determination and the desire, strong desire, in order to pursue that knowledge. And so the sound of the drum was like an incredible awakening because my heart started to just really, really vibrate and was pounding, and then eventually I could feel it coming up and I was trying so hard to push this, whatever was coming up, to push it down, but it was very, very powerful and I knew that it was the spirit of that drum. It was coaxing, it was urging, that sense of urgency to learn, to pick up, too, to find out more about our own way[s] and so, really that's how it started for me, kind of groping around in the dark in my teenage years, but knowing that there was something out there that needed to be brought home.

The sound and vibrations of the drum served as a way for Edna to access the 'blood memory' of intergenerational healing. As many people say, we carry intergenerational wisdom and resilience just as we carry intergenerational trauma. In 1960, Edna supported the recovery of Indigenous dance by helping to bring the first powwow to Wikwemikong, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in August, 2010. On the cover of the 2010 50th anniversary program, there is a picture of Edna dancing in the first powwow, on a stage with drummers and dancers from Piapot First Nation in Saskatchewan, recruited for the event. Her experiences with powwow and wanting to learn more of the knowledge of her culture led Edna on an in-depth search for spiritual knowledge—elders' stories, teachings and ceremonies, which also included knowledge of Indigenous dance and music. This journey led her first out west to Alberta and then to Montana:

. . . I always thought it was out there, that I had to go out there to find what was missing in my life, looking for ways to fill that emptiness that you felt. So I sat with the Elders,

> the storytellers, the grandmothers, and the ceremonialists, and so I ended up at Rocky Mountain House . . . That's really how I experienced my first, my very first, ceremony in terms of sweat lodge and the pipe ceremony. We were able to organize the first ecumenical, traditional gathering in Crow Agency in Montana in the beginning of the 70s and it was bringing together traditional knowledge keepers and recognizing the fact that these old ones were getting on and they were taking this knowledge with them . . . I needed to be fed spiritually and so they did that, and that's how they did it with their stories and it was just the beginning of the 70's at Morley, Alberta it was just so incredible, just so incredible, we would sit out on the land and hear stories from Elders, from grandmothers, from the old men and then at night they would dance, they would sing and dance and the Diné with their hand drums and it was just, it was just so awesome… they were leaving something big for us to, to help us so that, because back then there was talk about the vanishing Indian, and that we were dying, that we were a dying race, but for me it was the sense that these Elders who were moving on, who were dancing out from this physical realm, they were moving in to that and going, they weren't, they were leaving, they were leaving this behind for us and so they, the songs, they dances, the drum, they stories, the ceremonies… they left an incredible, beautiful, beautiful legacy behind for us.

Her experiences in the west brought her back home; she was given a pipe and told to find Elders from her own community. The search for Elders and knowledge keepers from her Anishnaabek community led her to ceremonies in Michigan where she first heard of the 'Little Boy,' the Midewiwin water drum, in 1973:

> . . . It was the sound of the drum, but this time it's different, it's the water drum . . . I don't know what happened, it was such a powerful, powerful experience that to this day I still work with the drum, because of the impact . . . I always felt like I was turned upside-down like this and shook, and so the waterfall came, because it's a water drum, and so, the tears came and it's like all the emotions, all the tears that I held back in, in residential school, when I cried as a little six-year-old . . . I had pushed all of that down, but this drum, this water drum, when I was, that sensation, nobody turned me upside-down, but that's how it felt for me, that I was literally turned upside down and shook . . . I had a major transformation and from that, just from the dance, from the songs, the vibration, the drum, all of that, the stories, the ceremony, it was like I was able to retrieve, regain, find my voice and focus on that work, on that knowledge, and because that's really what had a strong impact on my life. (4)

Edna, professor Emeritus at Trent University, is also a fourth-degree traditional grandmother with the Midewiwin society and works with Indigenous women and youth in communities across Canada and the United States, sharing her cultural and spiritual knowledge through ceremonies, songs, dances, and traditional teachings. Edna was the cultural director of the Native Theatre School (NTS) in 1990 and was part of the team that created the vision to transform NTS into the Centre for Indigenous Theatre (CIT) in 1994. Edna established the first Native theatre class at Trent University, and it was through her vision that Trent's Department of Indigenous Studies was inspired to create and establish Nozhem: First Peoples Performance Space, the first Indigenous performance space at a Canadian university and, perhaps, the first in North America. Edna also helped launch the Indigenous Performance Initiatives (IPI) collective

at Trent; she is currently the cultural director of IPI's programs. IPI is mandated to animate, fundraise, and program for the Nozhem performance space.

Another celebrated Indigenous woman is Daystar/ Rosalie Jones who was born on the Blackfeet Reservation in Browning, Montana in 1941. She is known as the founder of Modern Native Dance, and received her Master's degree from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Her thesis, "The Blackfeet Medicine Lodge Ceremony: Ritual and Dance-Drama" (1968), is about the Blackfeet Medicine Lodge ceremony (also known as the Sundance). One of her visions for the future that came as a result of her thesis was the need for a national traditional and contemporary Indigenous dance company:

> . . . There was no national traditional dance company of any kind in the 1960s and there certainly was no Indigenous modern dance. I felt that those two things needed to happen because we needed it as people, and we needed that way of presenting ourselves to the wider population . . . It wasn't until 1975 that Hanay Geiogamah formed the American Indian Dance Theatre, which in the United States became the primary professional dance company that specialized in presenting traditional dance on stage. When I was writing my thesis, I looked globally, at other cultures, other countries, and found that Russia had a national traditional dance company, the Philippines had a national dance company, and Mexico had a national dance company. The government actually supported and maintained those companies, but that wasn't happening in the United States . . . They hadn't even thought of the idea of supporting a national dance company that would really present to the world: "This is who Indigenous people are," that this is our folk dance, these are the people that are the first people of this country,

> and of course that has all kinds of implications for the history of Indigenous peoples—the actual genocide of Native peoples in the United States . . .

The quote shows Daystar's transformative way of thinking and wanting to make a change in the world, something she has definitely done. She has literally paved the way for many more Indigenous contemporary dancers today, many of whom have performed her renowned work, *No Home but the Heart*. After completing her Master's degree, Daystar was hired at the esteemed Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico where she completely revamped the modern dance choreography she had created based on the Medicine Lodge (Sundance) ceremony:

> . . . What I did was completely eliminated all of the balletic modern dance vocabulary, there were no extensions, there were no jumps and leaps . . . it became based on the pulsation, which is the basis of Indigenous dance, it's the pulsation of the energy, and that became really the basis of the choreography and it was a totally different piece, and I feel, I felt then and I still feel now, that it was much more successful and much more Indigenous in quality . . . That was a turning point for me because I realized this is not about modern dance, Western modern dance. What I want to do is really choreograph with the Indigenous vocabulary and how can that be translated on stage that would be valid for Native people but also, and this is the other tricky part, is that it also has meaning to non-Native people who are in the audience, that they have a way to see what they're seeing and to find the meaning of it.

Daystar's artistic and academic work was a major influence in the transformation of Indigenous dance , introducing a new way of sharing and teaching traditional dance movement, stories, and protocols, bringing traditional Indigenous dance forms into a contemporary context. Her work played a key role in the development of modern Indigenous dance by combining traditional music, dance, and stories with contemporary dance, theatre, and performance techniques.

In Canada, one of the early contemporary Indigenous dance artists was René Highway. Highway studied at the Tukak Teatret in Denmark, as well as at the Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey schools in New York, and at the Toronto Dance Theatre. He collaborated with his brother, Tomson Highway, a concert musician and playwright, on several productions (Jones 180). He presented "The René Highway Dancers at the Kennedy Center's 'Night of the First Americans,"' thereby making Native American dance a national theatrical event" (180). Michael Crabb writes in a 2010 *Toronto Star* article that, "René Highway, a charismatic dancer/actor of Cree descent—the brother of playwright Tomson Highway—had quit Toronto Dance Theatre in 1979 to explore his Native heritage and find ways to give it contemporary theatrical expression." At the premiere of "New Song, New Dance," René is quoted as saying:

> The theme is exploring Indian experience . . . and how growing up in a foreign environment affected all our lives . . . It's about assimilating. It shows that we are able to survive, and we have survived . . . Natives have already learned to express themselves through the performing arts . . . The message is to use what we've learned and experienced and to come up with a way of expressing ourselves. (Crabb 180)

The theme of transformation is evident in René's explanation of his work: the power of dance as being able to transform colonial experiences into healing ones, thereby transforming ourselves from victims to survivors and warriors. Although he died in 1990, René remains an inspiration for many contemporary Indigenous dancers. He was also the inspiration for the *Chinook Winds Aboriginal Dance Program* created through support from the Aboriginal Film and Video Art Alliance partnership at the Banff Centre in 1996. If it wasn't for people like Muriel Miguel, Edna Manitowabi, Daystar/ Rosalie Jones, and René Highway wanting to transform and uplift Native dance, music, and cultures, and apply it to a contemporary context, we may not have the new knowledge that allows our cultures to continue to be relevant and vibrant today.

1.3 Mobilization through Resistance, Development, and the Dissemination of Knowledge: The American Indian Movement (1960s–1980s)

Mobilization, located in the western direction of the Indigenous Research Agenda, as described by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, is accomplished through resistance and development. This also correlates to the dissemination of knowledge on the Aboriginal Performance Research & Training Model. When we speak up and share our knowledge, we are resisting colonization and assimilation. The act of dissemination of knowledge mobilizes and helps to develop our own ways of being and knowing. As Smith writes, "Indigenous social movement[s] . . . developed simultaneously out of the survival strategies and cultural systems which have nurtured people, their values and their beliefs within their own communities, reserves, tribes, and nation for over 500 years" (108). These social movements serve as an important and powerful way to disseminate knowledge, develop collective understanding, continue our cultures, and empower us to resist colonization. Movements among Indigenous peoples continue to help develop new

understandings and strategies that examine our history and present-day situations while maintaining and uplifting cultural knowledges. The American Indian Movement (AIM) played an important role in ensuring cultural traditions and practices survived colonization and continued to be shared through Indigenous dance and music. By mobilizing Indigenous people to resist oppression, through the development of our own programs, through the dissemination of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous dance, we can support the process of self-determination and sovereignty. The American Indian Movement, which paralleled the civil rights movements in the 1960s, is a great example of this, as it protested the injustices and poverty that existed among Aboriginal peoples across the Americas. This movement included a return to Indigenous cultural knowledge through ceremonies, gathering around the drum, rebuilding our communities through elders' teachings and practices—celebrating, remembering, and continuing the music and dances of our ancestors as an important part of the resistance.

Bruce Smoke from Alderville First Nation in Ontario, is the lead singer of an award-winning drum group, Smoke Trail, and a champion men's traditional dancer. Bruce and three generations of his family have a traditional performance group, the Smoke Trail Cultural Group, that presents traditional singing and dance demonstrations as well as performances throughout Ontario and beyond. Bruce began singing and drumming when he became friends with people involved in the American Indian Movement in the late 1970s; they were always singing, and encouraged him to join. He shared why this experience was so important to him:

> Not once, nobody ever talked to me about anything like that, my parents, my grandparents, they came from Cape Croker reserve, and they never had any kind of culture like that to pass on to their grandkids or their children. And if they did they were

> very quiet about it, I don't know if you could say ashamed, I don't know what it was, but they never taught us one bit about it, and I didn't know anything about it until, like, when I left home, and that's when I started learning about the culture and everything, and when I became a parent . . . we started getting our own children into it. We went everywhere listening to drumming, watching videos, as many times as we could for our kids, and we went to ceremonies—my wife didn't go to the ceremonies but I did, a lot of them—and just by going to those before I even had a family, I was able to teach them what I knew a little bit, so that's why it's very important for me today, for my culture, to pass to my kids.

Bruce's comments show that oppression of Indigenous dance and culture impacted families and communities intergenerationally, disrupting the dissemination of knowledge. The American Indian Movement began in 1969 with a group of Indigenous people, mostly college students, who occupied the prison island of Alcatraz to create awareness for Indigenous rights; "they wanted programs, Indian faculty slots, and course offerings that highlighted the contributions of American Indians to knowledge and culture" (P. Chaat Smith 3). Many of the meetings, gatherings, rallies, and protests included cultural elements, usually in the form of ceremonies and elders' teachings with drumming and singing (43, 83, 198). One of the movement's influential leaders, Ponca activist and champion fancy dancer Clyde Warrior, advocated for Indigenous culture in a time when many Indigenous peoples were taught to be ashamed of their culture and who they were (37–41). By 1972, AIM was "advocating a return to Indian traditions and seeking spiritual guidance . . ." (139). AIMsters, as they came to call themselves,

promoted cultural teachings and visited schools to teach about spiritual beliefs and to protest racist attitudes (131, 188).

AIM was said to be successful because of their support from traditional and reservation Indians; in return, the urban AIM members supported the causes of the traditional reservation Indians (112–17, 191, 195–200). During the standoff at Pine Ridge, it was said that:

> The old chiefs had everything the young bloods of the movement wanted: tradition and ceremony, wisdom and ancient knowledge. Those things had been denied the shock troops of the movement. To them it burned like the theft of something priceless, irreplaceable, and with it came a smouldering resentment they felt nearly every waking moment. This, more than any specific grievance, fuelled their bold activism. (199)

Although the standoff at Pine Ridge ended after seventy-one days with several days of negotiation, two AIM members, Frank Clearwater (Apache) and Buddy Lamont (Oglala Sioux), were killed. Almost twelve hundred were arrested, and leaders of the movement were indicted (Akhtar 61). The prosecution of Dennis Banks and Russell Means who were both at Wounded Knee, "foundered on revelations that the FBI had altered or suppressed key documents, committed illegal electronic surveillance, and had persuaded law enforcement officials in River Falls, Wisconsin, to drop rape charges against the government's main witness, Louis Moves Camp" (61). Between 1973 and 1976, the homicide rate at Pine Ridge escalated and fifty AIM members, supporters, and family members were murdered. Friends of those killed suspected the FBI was behind the murders (62). In 1975, Leonard Peltier was one of three AIM members arrested after a skirmish between AIM and the FBI, which resulted in the death of two FBI agents and one 'Indian,' Joseph Stuntz (69). Although the other two AIM members, Bob

Robideau and Darrell Butler, were acquitted on grounds of self-defence, Peltier was found guilty and sentenced to two consecutive life terms even after the FBI withheld ballistic evidence and other documents (69–71). The U.S. Attorney has even admitted: “The government does not know who actually shot the agents.” They claim Peltier is still guilty whether or not he fired the gun or was an accessory to the murders (71). Peltier is still serving those two consecutive life terms and is currently imprisoned at the U.S. Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. In 2000, Peltier published *Prison Writings: My Life is my Sundance*, in which he recounts his prison experiences and insights, and maintains his innocence.

However controversial and political the actions of the American Indian Movement may seem, the mobilization, development, resistance, and dissemination of knowledge this movement initiated are still alive today. Karen Pheasant, an Anishinaabekwe (Ojibway woman) from Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve in Ontario, is well known as a celebrated jingle dress dancer, published author, and teacher. During her interview, she recalled a recent conversation, stating:

> Powwow culture kind of happened in ’68 and the early 70s during the civil rights movement. Alex Akiwenzie, who was the Canadian American Indian Movement director, I bumped into him two weeks ago and we were talking about this, and he said if AIM wasn’t there in the 70s there wouldn’t have been drums, people were breaking it up, and even Indians were saying, “What are you guys doing? Stop that,” and AIM was there making sure it went on.

This period of resistance, development, and mobilization was vital to the emergence of many national and international Native organizations and gatherings in Canada and the U.S.,

such as the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), formed in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1962 and Native Canadian political organizations such as the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) formed in 1968 (known today as the Assembly of First Nations). Trent University was the first university in North America to establish a department dedicated to the study of Aboriginal Peoples (1969), and was followed by the University of Lethbridge, Alberta. The Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts (ANDPVA) was established in 1972 , and the Native Theatre School (NTS), initiated under ANDPVA's umbrella in 1974, became the Centre for Indigenous Theatre (CIT) in 1994. The *Indigenous People's Theatre Celebration: Gathering of International Tribal People in Performance* was also initiated in 1982 by ANDPVA at Waawshkigaamagki (Curve Lake First Nation) and Trent University, with site-specific performances at various locations in Peterborough, Ontario. Native Earth Performing Arts (NEPA) was established in 1983. In the United States, the Gathering of Nations Powwow was formed in 1983; the American Indian Dance Theater began in 1987. The level of development within Indigenous communities and nations following this period of mobilization and resistance was profound, and continues to aid in the dissemination of knowledge, continued resistance, and ongoing developments by Indigenous peoples, communities, and nations around the world today.

The mobilization of Native North Americans is only one example of the social movements that were taking place globally during this time among many diverse social groups, such as the African American movements, Western feminist movements and environmental movements. Major international movements were also initiated after World War II. The United Nations was founded by 51 countries, "committed to maintaining international peace and

security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights" (United Nations, *UN at a Glance*). The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was not adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations until September 13, 2007 (sixty-two years later). A majority of 144 states were in favour with four votes against, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States (United Nations, *United Nations Declaration)*. More recently, these four countries have officially endorsed it; Canada signed in November 2010, and the United States in December 2010—the last two countries to endorse this declaration.

Regarding the international mobilization of Indigenous peoples, Elder Arthur Solomon wrote a letter to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, Geneva, Switzerland:

> I think it is true to say that together in solidarity, we the oppressed and wretched of the Earth along with a multitude of the human family, have become of one mind in action and in prayer, and together we will take the measure of the monster that oppresses us and of those governments that facilitate that evil work. (161)

The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was seen as the beginning of the work to be done in Indigenous communities and nations around the world, creating an international movement toward healing. In Saskatchewan in the 1980s, tribes gathered during the summer for cultural celebrations in the spirit of renewal that included Nehiyawak, Saulteaux, Assiniboine, and Dakota Nations (Deiter-McArthur 41). This is one of the ways in which Indigenous peoples seek healing: gathering in celebration to exchange and share our cultures and learn from one another. In 2012, we saw what is commonly known as the 'Round Dance Revolution' through the global Idle No More resistance and mobilization characterized by flash round dances in

cities and communities around Canada and the world. Recently, in 2020, the Black Lives Matter mobilization brought systemic racism into greater awareness globally, in alignment with Indigenous people, and in support of Indigenous sovereignty. These movements support both individual self-determination and the sovereignty of nations.

1.4 Healing through Self-Determination and Sovereignty to Sustain a Living Legacy: International Powwows and Indigenous Contemporary Dance Movements (1990s - Present)

> The Spirit of Powwow is to bring nations together . . . to gather people from across Turtle Island, to . . . allow participants the opportunity to renew ties with Indians from other nations to celebrate a common identity and to display the distinctive qualities of their own identity, and its traditions . . . to promote a return to Native social and cultural values . . . As long as people gather to celebrate the Indian way, there will be a future. (Francis 1992)

Self-determination and sovereignty are processes of learning, growing, and being-in-becoming. These processes require active engagement with communities—we cannot learn, practice, or share cultural knowledge on our own; it is part of our living legacies. Healing, found in the northern direction of the Māori Four Directions Indigenous Research Agenda, encompasses the journey of each direction—decolonization, transformation, and mobilization, culminating in healing. This direction corresponds to the Aboriginal Performance Research & Training model's northern direction that culminates in organizing collectives to sustain the knowledge of our cultures and practices, leaving a living legacy for future generations. The Aboriginal Performance & Research Training model also includes the journey of each direction: the transmission of knowledge, the creation of new knowledge, and the dissemination of

knowledge. Healing engages all these processes: decolonizing through relearning cultural knowledge; embracing transformation through adaptation in the recovery of traditional cultural practices, creating new knowledges; mobilizing through resistance, taking action, teaching others, and disseminating the knowledge we have experienced—which is both how we walk the path of Nitona Miyo-Pimâtisiwin- seeking a good life, and how we ensure that it is sustained for future generations.

Both the powwow and contemporary Indigenous dance have evolved to represent communities of collectives or companies of intertribal and international Indigenous dancers with their own unique identities and specific cultures. Jacqueline Shea Murphy writes that Indigenous contemporary dancers in the twenty-first century "engage in contemporary stage dance, investigating multiple training approaches, drawing on specific stories, seeking out and engaging connections across multiple realms, redressing the violent effects of colonization . . . Yet the focus remains tied to choreographers' particular Indigenous worldviews and histories" (244). In the powwow, we also see individual expressions of Indigenous worldviews and histories within an intertribal context. Karen Pheasant has seen the development of individuality within the intertribal powwow through the evolution of dance outfits into more personalized styles:

> There was the time where the Sioux designs, the geometric, and then the eagle feathers, or the medicine wheels were very common. They are generic, almost a pan-Indian design, and you see those scattered through outfits. But as powwow culture gets stronger and the tribal identity becomes stronger, then when you look on the powwow floor now, I am very excited to see that more and more people look at who they are,

> and what I am, and therefore what I am is what I bring to this floor. So for instance, myself as an Anishinaabekwe and Ojibway woman from Manitoulin, and being born in June, and my house sits in a field of wild strawberries. And with us, we have a ceremony with the berries, ode'imin, the heart berries, and quill work is like, comes from Manitoulin, it's world famous. So I—one of my outfits originally, a dozen or so years ago, was a strawberry outfit reflecting who I am and my land and my people.

This story illustrates the movement from the nation to the individual, having a broader understanding that becomes more individualized and specific over time. Both contemporary Indigenous dancers and powwow dancers sustain the movement towards healing through self-determination as they continue to unearth specific Indigenous stories, teachings, histories and worldviews and express this through Indigenous dance practices.

This expression of individuality and sharing of culture assists in creating relationships and understanding between Indigenous peoples—individuals, families, communities and nations. As Cheryl Blood (Rides-at-the-Door) states, "The sacred circle signified an understanding and a renewal of our unity as Native people" (172). In this way, Indigenous dance promotes nation-building and sovereignty for Indigenous communities and nations. In her article, "The Value of Indigenous Dance in Academia" Daystar/ Rosalie Jones states:

> No one dancing intertribal can dance only for technique, or only for 'show' or only for self. If it is anything at all, Intertribal Dance is the expression of the collective culture of the community, in its regalia, in its protocols and etiquettes, in its song, and in the spirit present when one dances.

The interviews I conducted with co-researchers demonstrate how the seeking of knowledge has impacted individual Indigenous dancers today, supporting the sustainability of a living legacy. Rulan Tangen, a dancer and choreographer, as well as the founding artistic director of Dancing Earth, Indigenous Contemporary Dance Creations, describes her effort to find a way to bridge her contemporary dance career with Indigenous cultures, and to create space for Indigenous people. This led her to create choreographic work in new contemporary Indigenous dance styles. She shared her experience of learning her culture and identity, which occurred during the healing movements of the late 1980s and early 1990s:

> I started visiting some family and friends in South Dakota and became adopted by a grandmother there and went through this long protocol . . . I didn't know how to act . . . just what was considered rude, "I want this or I want that," or "I want an Indian name," and she told me, "Well, go clean the floor, go do this, go do that." I was just like, I'm an artist, I'm not supposed to be domestic. And I had to do all that stuff in order to learn how to serve and how to be a part of the circle and to be humble. So I learned how to do that, slowly. And I learned how to make regalia and how to give it away, and eventually I was introduced into the powwow circle as a Northern Plains traditional dancer. And my grandma passed her Indian name down to me, and she asked me to do that style instead of fancy shawl, because she thought I was fancy enough already.

Rulan's story demonstrates some of the traditional methods for transmission of knowledge in Indigenous cultures, such as learning through experience, and the examples of how values such as humility, respect, and responsibility are taught.

Growing up in the 1980s and 1990s, Lianna Tootoosis began learning about her culture and identity during her childhood. She considers herself lucky because her mother was the only one in the family who took an interest in her culture. When she was nine or ten years old, she received her first jingle dress: "At that age, I already knew what it meant to me. And I already knew how sacred it was and what I was going to do with it" (3-4). She keeps her jingle dress as sacred as it always brings her back to her culture when she needs it (6).

For Nimkii Osawamick, raised in the 1990s and 2000s, culture and Indigenous dance have been part of his life since the beginning, and as he continues to dance, opportunities abound. He shared a story from when he was in the womb, and Edward Benton-Banai told his mother, Liz, that he could feel Nimkii's spirit and that he was going to be a champion dancer one day (5). Today, as a young adult, Nimkii is already well-known as a champion dancer. Nimkii describes the journey of his simple cloth outfit growing over the years to include more beadwork; and eagle feathers being gifted to him for his dedication, talent, and achievements (3-4). He also describes his travels throughout Canada and the United States as a bonus from his commitment to Indigenous dance; he has dreams to travel the world (5). He started as a grass dancer, and over the years, learned men's fancy dance and the hoop dance; he recently began dancing the men's chicken dance from the Blackfoot people (3-5), and now has created his own drum group: DNA—Dedicated to Native Awareness.

Contemporary Indigenous Dance is still a recent movement in Canada with training that was provided by René Highway in the 1980s. Raoul Trujillo (Apache/ Mexican/ French-Canadian) from New Mexico also supported René in the beginning of a movement in Native Modern Dance in Canada. Trujillo first met René in 1978 at the Toronto Dance Theatre, and said

that they shared a dream that one day they would have their own dance company (Trujillo 23). He joined Highway in 1987 to dance in "New Song, New Dance," and then returned to New York to co-direct and choreograph for the American Indian Dance Theatre: "That was the first attempt to create a Native dance company. I thought, perhaps, that company was the dream, but it wasn't. The producer wasn't interested in the investigative process of bridging the two worlds of traditional and modern dance" (24).

Meanwhile, "René was doing his exploration into modern dance using Native ideas and legends . . . trying to create a new movement language based on his emotional experience coming from a remote reserve [and] from residential school" (24). In 1988, Raoul returned to Toronto and rejoined René. They began to work together with Alejandro Ronceria, an Indigenous Columbian-born director, choreographer, and film artist.

It wasn't until the Chinook Winds Aboriginal Dance program, years after René's untimely death in 1990, that there was another opportunity to train in Native Modern Dance with roots in traditional Indigenous dance practices in Canada. The Chinook Winds program was established at the Banff Centre in 1996 by the Aboriginal Arts Program Artistic Director, Marrie Mumford, in consultation with Alejandro Ronceria, who became the first program director. The program was based on the model of the Native Theatre School as established by Jim Buller. The Chinook Winds program became an intergenerational community that included Elders, Indigenous traditional performance specialists, and professionally-trained Indigenous contemporary and modern dance instructors. The Aboriginal Arts program, negotiated by AFVAA with the Banff Centre, was in place for eight years until the fall of 2003. During that time, the theme of the Aboriginal Arts Program was "Self-Government in the Arts."

Powwow dance served as the foundation for contemporary Indigenous dance training. Indigenous performance and powwow dance specialists such as Aroha Crowchild, Rosa and Melvin John, Linda Manitowabi, Alvin Manitopies, Karen Pheasant, and Delbert Wapas were instructors during this period. In addition, the Chinook Winds Aboriginal Dance program brought in some of the best contemporary Indigenous dancers and choreographers, including program directors Alejandro Ronceria and Georgina Martinez (Zapotec), and guest choreographers Raoul Trujillo, Muriel Miguel, Daystar/ Rosalie Jones, Donna Burnhardt (Inuvialuit) and Gaetan Gingras (Mohawk). The program was guided by Elders Edna Manitowabi, Vera Martin, and Don Kavanaugh.

Due to the length of the Chinook Winds Dance program at Banff, dancers with families were encouraged to bring along their children and a childcare worker, who was often a member of their family. The childcare worker was provided with a room by the Aboriginal Arts program. The children and their childcare workers participated in all the cultural activities of the program, and often, the caregivers worked together to take advantage of the many programs that were offered in Banff. The model of intergenerational participation is still a practice in Indigenous dance companies today; their processes involve powwows, contemporary and/or modern Indigenous dancers and choreographers, and Elders in a multitude of roles, such as consultants, teachers, performance specialists, storytellers, and, of course, as invited audience members.

In the present moment, we can see a phase of re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence of Indigenous dance through the flourishing and abundance of powwow and contemporary Indigenous dance. This chapter helps to fill in some of the gaps in Indigenous

dance history in Canada by tracing the movement of Indigenous dance beyond survival towards decolonization, describing processes that have led to healing, self-determination, and sovereignty, and helping us to determine where Indigenous dance and performance is going. In the next chapter, looking further into interviews with Individual Indigenous dancers, I will share stories of how the journey towards Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin is established in one's life, and how this journey contributes to sustaining the legacy of Indigenous dance cultures.

Chapter 5: Where are we now?

Healing is found in our traditional ceremonies.
Healing is found through the drumming, singing, and dancing
~ Grafton Antone

This chapter uses the stories and lived experiences of the co-researchers to show where we are now. These stories show how learning and participating in Indigenous dance was a catalyst for Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin—seeking the good life—for many of the co-researchers. The stories they shared of their journeys followed a pattern that began with seeking cultural knowledge in order to affirm their identity, a journey that led toward a path of healing and self-determination. Elder Edna Manitowabi reminded us: "When people are going through hard times, one of the things that they'll be asked to do is to go and dance in the powwow, or make an outfit or a dress, and go dance . . . just go be part of the powwow movement, as a way of healing." Through our stories and dances, rooted in cultural knowledge and traditions, we are able to reverse the damage of colonization, moving the process of decolonization beyond survival toward healing.

1.1 Decolonizing the Spirit

For many Indigenous dancers, decolonizing the spirit through learning about culture, identity, and tradition was the catalyst for Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin. An important aspect of decolonizing the spirit is the space in between—the transitional space between the northern direction and the eastern direction. This is where the movement occurs and the spiral renews, the passing on of knowledge from Elders to younger generations, which ensures our survival as Indigenous people. Requiring respect toward traditions and teachers, intergenerational relationship is deeply important, as can be seen in a study by Michael J. Chandler and

Christopher Lalonde, titled *Cultural Continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations.* Linking self-continuity with youth suicide in several Indigenous communities in British Columbia, this report found that communities that worked to 'preserve and rehabilitate' their own cultures had significantly lower youth suicide rates (193). Sharing culture and traditions with family, Elders, and community helps to decolonize the spirit by reconnecting that which colonization sought to suppress through violence, policies, and discriminatory laws.

The importance of identity, culture, and self-continuity is evident in interviews with contemporary Indigenous dancers and emerging choreographers who took part in the *Chinook Winds Aboriginal Dance* program, a partnership program, negotiated by the Aboriginal Film and Video Art Alliance at the Banff Centre. Contemporary Indigenous dancers such as Santee Smith (Mohawk), Penny Couchie (Mohawk/Anishinaabekwe), Sid Bobb (Sto:lo) and Shalan Joudry (Mi'kmaq), were interviewed by Jacqueline Shea Murphy. Murphy writes that the dancers all shared a common view that ancestral memory and knowledge is carried within, and can be explored and developed through movement and dance; they understood "the body, and especially the dancing body, as holding and inhabiting histories and ways of understanding that dancers might not even be fully aware of" (Murphy 141–44). Indigenous dance provides a continuous intergenerational connection that is spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental. We are not just individuals living life for our own; we are interconnected through our ancestors, and carry the responsibility of decolonization for the future generations. This responsibility for sharing knowledge from one generation to the next is the movement that sparks inspiration and action allowing cultures to continue.

Geraldine Manossa (Nehiyaw) is a contemporary and traditional Indigenous dancer, choreographer, and teacher, who has been involved with both Indigenous and Western dance for over twenty-five years. She trained at the Native Theatre School, the En'owkin Centre, the Chinook Winds Aboriginal Dance Project at the Banff Centre and received a Master of Arts degree in Theatre at the University of Lethbridge. Manossa has served as representative of the Aboriginal Dance Program at the Canada Council for the Arts. She also shares the view that cultural knowledge is embedded in movement:

> I think that when we enter a studio, whether or not we're working in traditional dance or contemporary dance . . . once we start tapping into the physical movement and that way of thinking . . . we're automatically making the connection to our ancestors.

Another example of cultural knowledge embedded in movement was shared by powwow dancers and choreographers, Monique Diabo and Crystal (Beany) John, daughters of Melvin and Rosa John, co-founders and artistic directors of Kehewin Native Dance Theatre. Monique and Crystal were instructors at the Kaha:wi Dance Theatre's Aboriginal Dance Training Program at the National Ballet School of Canada, which I attended in August 2011. When teaching the men's traditional dance, they explained that it was a storytelling dance: the dancer represents a hunter and tells stories of hunting and/or war, and you might see the dancer offer tobacco or smudge before they make their kill. As such, the dance itself embodies traditional teachings and practices. By connecting with and embodying cultural knowledge and teachings, our movement counteracts the colonial policies and practices that continue to control our physical movements, such as the pass system, being forced onto reservations, disrupting hunting practices, banning dance practices, and forcing children into an education system that

has us sit still in order to learn. All these serving to destroy a nomadic, interconnected, life way reliant on movement with the land, with community, and with other nations.

The cultural knowledge and continuity of cultural practices provided by powwow dance in particular has meant that the powwow today is hailed as one of the best ways for an individual to learn about themselves within their culture. As Aroha Crowchild (Māori), artistic director and co-founder of *Red Thunder Dance Theatre: The Next Generation*, states, the significance of powwow dance is that, "you're not just talking about people learning a style of dance, you're talking about people learning about themselves more than anything." She explained that this spiritual aspect of powwow dance cannot be taught: "I can only teach them steps, then we put them into the powwow arena to find the spirit . . . the spirit of that dance."

For Rulan Tangen, who worked as a ballet dancer, modern dancer, and teacher since age sixteen, powwow dance is about the embodiment of identity and acceptance within, and responsibilities to, her ceremonial adoption (not bloodline) by her Lakota grandmother; this relationship, including the intertribalism of powwows, is the foundation of the responsibilities inherent in this adoption. This relationship provides the meaning and purpose for the contemporary dance choreographies Rulan creates, teaches, and performs. In her late teens, Rulan was offered a dance position in Europe, which had been her dream. But she decided not to go because of dear dance friends in New York City becoming victims of the AIDS crisis during that time. She felt an inexplicable pull to stay rooted on this land. She said:

> I really feel like there was this call that I can't explain through logic or reason, towards the ground beneath my feet. This led me towards the culture and identity which eventually claimed me. It took a modern dance choreographer, his name is Miguel

> Valdez-Mor, Apache and Mexican, part of the Martha Graham company who [said], "Well you could get into modern dance." . . . He was saying, "We need to look deeper into our ancestral cultures for source." So we did, and, creatively, I could understand his movements before he would even make them. He was the one that first sent me to powwows and other global cultural, spiritual, and artistic practices, to more deeply understand the origins and purpose of dance, which has led me to where I am now.

This inclusion of Indigenous dance it especially valuable for those who have been disconnected from their family, community, and nation, even if they are not Indigenous to North America. Karen Pheasant has studied the relationship between culture, identity, and literacy during her work as researcher for the province of Ontario, where she discovered that:

> according to Stats Canada, fifty percent of First Nations do not have high school . . . and a common denominator when I spoke with literacy coordinators and also when I did the local youth program, was the need for a cultural identity, a self-identity which of course includes a cultural identity, and that the usual, entrance way for an individual to seek their cultural knowledge is the powwow culture because it's . . . [a] very safe, almost a nurturing environment for an individual, particularly a youth, to put their foot in the door.

This highlights the importance of the role culture and identity plays in academic success in terms of inspiring and motivating students. In contrast, cultural marginalization is a barrier to Indigenous students attending school (Fowler 2).

The importance of the collective nature of the powwow circle reverberates in a story told by Bruce Smoke. He shared that certain drummers may be referred to as 'Mr. Powwow,'

and he describes their behaviour, saying, ". . . they go around with a drumstick in their back pocket and as soon as the drum comes, they want to be right in there." He explains that they want to be the centre of attention rather than behaving respectfully. In this case, we see that acting respectfully means focusing on the culture, the drum, and the community, not the individual. This idea of respect is essential to decolonization in today's individualistic society. Returning to our culture means becoming a part of the circle again, humbling ourselves in order to strengthen our communities, and doing the work that does not only centre ourselves.

Although Indigenous dance involves the entire community, it is up to each individual to make the choice to follow cultural stories and teachings. This is congruent with Indigenous ways of teaching and learning, as explained by Neal McLeod in regards to Nehiyawak storytelling: "People make up their own minds about what they think about something; they have to decide what they believe to be true and the listener is given a chance to internalize the stories" (13). We are able to internalize a story when we are able to apply our own personal experiences and prior knowledge to the story. If the story is aligned with our experiences and knowledge, we can assume the story is relevant. We show respect to our Elders and our culture when we choose to follow the teachings.

Cultural teachings can then be expressed as 'options of knowing,' as explained by Rosa John, co-founder of Kehewin Native Dance Theatre. She says that these 'options of knowing' provide the reason why a specific thing is done, and gives this example:

> Let's say you get a teaching that has to do with respecting your outfit, right? You don't roll down the hill in your outfit. They don't just say, "You don't roll down the hill in your outfit." They say, "You know what you're wearing? That was an animal at one time.

> Somebody gave thanks for killing that animal and you're wearing that. So you know that's sacred now." You get those little reminders, so you think next time, "Oh, I want to roll down that hill . . . well, maybe not, because I got to respect this animal that I'm wearing. I have to respect these bones and this fur and these feathers . . ." And so [cultural teachings are] not really enforced, so much as shared and taught.

This shows that cultural teachings are about empowering others to seek a good life, rather than enforcing rules; if the choice comes from within, it is much more powerful and likely to be adhered to. Cultural traditions and teachings as 'options of knowing' also make role modelling vital. As Michael Hart writes, "strong role models serve to inspire others and support them to see their own potential to reach Miyo-Pimâtisiwin . . . [This] requires a person to live the life that is to be taught" (57). Bruce Smoke explained that a person who knows all the stories and traditions of their culture does not automatically mean that they will act accordingly; where and how you are taught influences how you will follow the teachings. He related a story about a friend who went to university to learn about his culture and language but ended up addicted to drugs despite his intentions. He explains that, "some people learn their traditions and customs, [but] they don't respect where they learned it; if they were taught by their parents they might have better control and respect…" Traditions and customs may be considered 'options of knowing,' but that does not mean they are without consequence. Our actions and words have natural consequences; sometimes, teachings, such as responsibility and respect, are referred to as 'natural laws.' As I was taught through the hoop dance, the symbol of the circle or hoop is not stagnant; it is always moving. Everything we do comes back to us, teaching us to work hard at being kind and good to ourselves and others.

When dancers model a good life and other people see their success, happiness, and health, they will want to be a part of that; they will want to participate in their culture. In traditional Indigenous families and communities, parents, family, and friends often serve as teachers through storytelling and role modelling. While childhood is an ideal time to learn about cultural knowledge and practices, learning about your culture and identity from your parents is not always possible today. Severing relationships between older and younger generations led to the destruction of many Indigenous families, communities, and nations; this was the intention of colonial systems when they established residential schools and the 'sixties scoop.' A study published by the Assembly of First Nations, *Kiskisik Awasisak: Remember the Children*, describes the disruption in Indigenous families and communities:

> The arrival of non-Aboriginal settlers, and subsequent extension of colonial policies into First Nations territories, disrupted traditional systems of child rearing and imposed practices which resulted in the removal of tens of thousands of First Nations children with the residential school system and was continued by the child welfare system under the policies of the "Sixties Scoop." (Sinha x)

Although many First Nations child welfare agencies today have begun to develop "preventative, community-based and culturally sensitive approaches," the disproportionate representation in the child welfare system still exists, and "the proportion of First Nations children placed in out-of-home care continues to be much higher than the proportion of non-Aboriginal children in out-of-home care" (x). Indigenous patients and prisoners are overrepresented in terms of substance abuse, gang violence, prison system, and health care system.

The importance of family relationships is seen in a study that found suicide rates among Aboriginal Canadians were highest among those living in urban settings in contrast with traditional living arrangements. The study states that "extended family households may offer protection against suicide" (Kirmayer 24). Co-researchers Bruce Smoke, Aroha Crowchild, Rosa John, Karen Pheasant, Liz Ozawmick, and Nimkii Ozawmick, all shared how they travel with family and friends to both performances and powwows, which often means that three generations of family and friends travel and dance together. This is a practice which helps hold together family units that colonial systems are intent on destroying.

For Rosa John, her family's participation in the powwow helped to form close family relationships:

> . . . It helps the family to stay together . . . to have that respect, that familial respect for things; to respect each other because of what's happening in the circle . . . I think that's really important in that part of the powwow, that the family is so important.

Powwows create a space that brings families together by including men and women of all ages and abilities in the different styles of dance. These families often engage in the practice of adopting others as family, a tradition inherited from Indigenous communities and dance circles. In the powwow circle, this may be referred to as a 'powwow family,' reflecting traditional kinship practices, such as the Nehiyaw concept of Wakhotowin— we are all related. This was the case when I was living with my husband and my oldest son, Lowell, in Peterborough, Ontario, away from our families in Alberta. Bruce Smoke and his family became our 'powwow family' as we travelled together to powwows almost every weekend from the spring throughout the summer until fall. We developed close relationships that grew into

celebrating birthdays and holidays together as family. This is in alignment with the idea that living a good life includes self-continuity. Nadia Ferrara, art therapist, shares that according to a Cree elder she interviewed, ". . . .healing involves the restoration of 'balance' that leads to a composed sense of self; this self relates to an individual's unique existence, and it is usually defined in relation to other people in the individual's environment" (13). Thus, healing and living a good life requires that we have a healthy construction of our self-identity, which can be a struggle in a world that has constructed racist stereotypes of Indigenous peoples through a variety of stories, images, and ideas that continue to exist today.

1.2 Transforming the Physical

The spirit sparks us into action. As we replace colonial ideas with our cultural teachings and traditions, we have a new choice of how to act; we transform how we physically move through the world. Transforming the physical occurs in the movement from the spiritual to the physical, as the knowledge of history and cultural practice is experienced and embodied. Richard West explains: "Dance is the very embodiment of Indigenous values and represents the response of Native Americans to complex and sometimes difficult historical experiences" (ix). Physical disconnection from our bodies, families, and communities, and therefore our culture (including dance) and the land are all part of the colonial history and assimilatory policies in Canada. Therefore, participation remains fundamental to Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin through Indigenous dance. Daystar/ Rosalie Jones elaborates:

> If you actually get up and join the other dancers . . . it's like a thousand times more that you involve your body and your mind and your spirit, in a very expanded horizon and an

expanded world. It activates everything within you, and you are suddenly a part of another kind of community that is moving around the circle.

For powwow dancers, the drum is a symbol for interrelatedness; the drum beat represents the heartbeat of the earth; and provides a connection to all living things. Lianna Tootoosis (Anishnaabekwe) began dancing at a very young age and spent many years around Anishnaabek ceremonies, celebrations and gatherings:

> . . . As soon as I got [into the powwow], I was like I just wanna dance . . . and I told my mom that . . . I asked her how come every time I go into a powwow as soon as I hear the music, why is it that I just wanna dance, and [she said] it is the first sound that we ever hear . . . in the womb . . . and that brings us back and reminds us and we hear that heart beat all over again. And that's what makes us happy because you know when you're in your mother's womb, you're in the safest place . . . and you hear that drum that brings us back to that . . . Every time I go to a powwow I feel like that, and now I'm thinking to myself, 'so if I feel like that and there's all these people here, I bet you they're thinking the same thing.' So for me my world just expanded . . . I just think, 'Well, I'm not the only one at this powwow, and there's so many people that aren't dancing that probably all have the same feeling.'

Daystar/ Rosalie Jones shared her knowledge on this same concept:

> It is the body that calls us to dance and then in the process of actually dancing . . . the person dancing within the group becomes harmonized to the sound and quality of the drum. There have been some studies done that seem to indicate that in hearing the

> drum and being in its presence that there is a regulation that takes place in the heart. It is not as if the individual hearts are beating in the same tempo as the drum, but that the heartbeat becomes very regular. So I think that is a health benefit in itself, that the heart beat becomes more regular and more firm in its heartbeat and because of that . . . in the entire group, there becomes a harmonization that takes place.

The physical senses of the body are engaged in Indigenous dance, not just physical movement, but the beat of the drum and the sensation of the reverberations within the body, the voices of the singers, as well as eagle whistles, bells, jingles, the sounds of the stomping, dance steps, and subtler sounds of beadwork and breastplates. Physical senses are engaged through the languages and prayers of Elders, and the smell of smudge; if the powwow is outdoors, the physical sensations, feelings, smells, and sounds of being on the land are all engaged as well. In *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway,* Edward Benton- Banai explains how the senses are gifts given to the people (78). Thinking of the senses as 'gifts' that help us to navigate the world and protect us, implies they are part of our health and can be a tool for healing. This highlights the complex, interconnected, and enriching experience that Indigenous dance can be.

The most obvious physical benefit of participating in Indigenous dance is the transformation of the body due to increased activity. This is especially important for Indigenous people who suffer from disproportionately high rates of chronic disease. Dr. Jeffrey Reading, the Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Health Research at the University of Victoria, writes:

> It is no secret that Aboriginal peoples in Canada, no matter where they live, face unique health challenges. They experience higher rates of diabetes, heart disease, tuberculosis,

> HIV/AIDS, and many other diseases. Infant mortality rates are higher and life expectancy is lower than in the general population (1).

Powwow dance provides increased physical fitness for an entire community because of the wide range of dance styles and the element of audience participation. As Daystar/ Rosalie Jones explained:

> There is a kinaesthetic benefit both for the observer and for the person who is dancing . . . I think the dances that we're doing [and] in the way we are doing them now, we have dances for people who are younger and more agile, and we have dances for those who are more of an age. I think that is a benefit in itself that there is a dance for whatever stage of life. I think, for instance, toddlers, when they're trying to walk and trying to dance, it's improving their coordination, and for the older person, it's definitely having an effect on their metabolism. It improves their circulation and they become stronger from just doing the dances. And of course, they are in a community of people dancing, which definitely has benefit for the community, for the individual in the community. I believe that these are aspects that the Western world has lost.

Rulan Tangen shared this appreciation, saying, "I always admire in powwow dance the different ages, and sizes, and body types."

Physically participating in a dance or powwow is how we learn the dance steps. Often children learn by literally following behind the footsteps of older dancers and adults. This is an Indigenous way of learning through experience or learning by doing. Not only do we follow the role models in our life in terms of spiritual values, but also physical movement in the dance

circles. This way of learning allows for a deeper understanding and embodiment of the teachings. I remember dancing at my first powwow as an adult, and feeling like a child taking their first steps, trying to learn by watching, experiencing, and following.

Participating in Indigenous dance provides us with the opportunities to connect with our environment and to reconnect with the earth, which is part of our physical wellness. During the summer, powwows are usually held outdoors, often near First Nations communities, providing opportunities for dancers to gain an understanding and appreciation for different environments, as they renew their relationships with the earth, wind, water, sun, moon, animals, and plants. Lisa Odjig, Anishinaabekwe from Wikwemikong and two-time world champion hoop dancer, suggested that this interconnectedness with the environment is part of traditional views of well-being and health:

> We are dancing and connecting with Mother Earth/Nature. When we dance, we are taught to dance, sing, and pray for each other, peace, the land, animals, birds, good health, the list goes on and on . . . It's for the good and health of the earth, people, air we all breathe, water we drink and bathe [in], and for all living creatures. (3)

This is also embodied in the hoop dance, in which the dancer progresses through many different shapes, reminding us of stories of origin, and our relationships to eagles, flowers, and butterflies, to name a few, thereby demonstrating how everything in Creation is interconnected. When we travel to powwows in different nations, we witness the diverse experiences on the land that are reflected in different aspects of culture through stories, protocols, music, and food. While observing powwow outfits, we also begin to distinguish the

diversity within First Nations through the beadwork, patterns, designs, and colours as well as shells, feathers, hides, and furs utilized in different territories.

Indigenous dance companies and individual dancers, touring to different Indigenous nations and territories, often collaborate with Indigenous dancers from other nations, exchanging traditional stories and teachings to create site-specific work. This work provides opportunities to learn about diversity within Indigenous communities as well as to exchange similar interconnections and understandings of the environment.

Another way that Indigenous dance provides a healthy and safe environment is by creating and enforcing alcohol and drug-free spaces for Indigenous peoples. For Muriel Miguel, participation in Indigenous dance and cultural activities with her family was a way to keep her out of trouble. She stated: "I think if I didn't have [Indigenous dance] I would be out in the street and into all kinds of things." Aroha Crowchild, who has worked with youth at risk for many years, also noticed that if the youth are kept busy, there is less opportunity for them to get into trouble. She said that this benefit of Indigenous dance is one of the goals of her dance company—keeping people as busy as possible: "not to say that mischief isn't there, not to say that everybody is perfect and lives by those rules, but we can only have a goal and we can only work towards it." For Bruce Smoke, the reality is that there is still substance abuse among Indigenous dancers and singers today. He says that it has a lot to do with peer pressure and not respecting the traditions, which depends on where and how you learn your culture. For Jerry First Charger, supporting those going through substance abuse issues is part of his role as a hoop dancer:

> It’s not our place to judge it . . . You know, when somebody gets drunk or whatever and they say, “Gee, you just gave up. Why would you go and get drunk?” It’s like when somebody is down in a fight, and you go there and kick them some more. You know, they’re already feeling like crap, the worst thing to do is go and tell them, “Why are you such an idiot?” (14).

Transforming the physical through dance, wellness, connection to family, and environment, as well as sobriety, allows for the creation of new knowledge by bringing the old teachings into our personal lives and into the contemporary world; this helps in the renewal of cultural practices. Anishinaabekwe scholar and author, Dr. Leanne Simpson, shares a quote from one of her Elders, Gdigaa Migizi (Doug Williams, Anishinaabe): “. . . It is up to each new generation to reinterpret and to breath[e] new life to our teachings” (“Circles” 9). Jacqueline Shea Murphy explains that Indigenous dance goes beyond recitation, “not only exploring a step into the past, but also reviving and re-creating it” (“Lessons” 138-39).

One example of renewal is Jerry’s understanding of the hoop dance which continues to unfold facilitating the creation of new knowledge, which he explains is an essential aspect of Native cultures as living and moving cultures:

> Native culture is a living moving thing . . . We are not stagnant to say we are one way traditionally . . . That’s always how it’s gonna be . . . if we’re a culture that’s a living culture . . . The stories will go with you—[you will] go through them and you’ll pick them and basically your own story will come out of that.

For Rulan Tangen, creation of new knowledge and understanding occurred as she began to use her contemporary and modern dance training to explore traditional Indigenous stories, as opposed to Jerry who used traditional stories and dance to explore contemporary issues. While they have unique experiences and perspectives of Indigenous dance, they are both able to fuse traditional and contemporary knowledge and stories. Rulan began her dance career with ballet and modern dance and was introduced to powwow dance later on. She admitted:

> I kept those worlds separate on purpose because when I tried to merge the worlds of my professional dance career and powwow, at that time it wasn't a good mix . . . so my attempts to bring modern dance to the reservation, that was not welcomed in.

Instead, Rulan danced and choreographed team dances during a time when powwow dancing on stage was considered controversial and team dancing was just beginning at powwows. This was the first dance company she founded—an intertribal group composed of mostly Lakota youth from Lower Brule. The company was called Maka Chante, which means 'heart of the earth' in Lakota. Maka Chante travelled to powwows performing team dancing, and in 1999, they were recognized at Six Nations Powwow for their team dancing. Rulan explained that Raoul Trujillo, the original choreographer for the American Indian Dance Theater, was one of the first to use powwow dancers on stage. The dancers responded saying, "we don't do the same step at the same time, we have to do it when we feel [it]." Rulan explained that Raoul "also did some gestural stuff . . . taking his background in theatre and dance and bringing it into the powwow circle." Rulan said that later, in New York City, she was "trying to translate these ideas and all these rich cultural stories, beyond my powwow dance, to express them, and I just felt like I couldn't do it because I had to be with a group, and they had to be Native." It wasn't

until her participation in the Chinook Winds Aboriginal Dance program at Banff, working with Raoul Trujillo and other Indigenous dancers, that she experienced the merging of contemporary and modern dance with Indigenous cultures. Rulan described her experience working with Raoul Trujillo saying, “all the other things that have been placed by dance on its own—the spiritual, the intellectual [and] emotional . . . [were] amplified in this form because now it had [as its] base . . . culture and [an Indigenous] identity.” It was her experience with Raoul that inspired her to continue with the creation of new ways of sharing Indigenous stories using contemporary and modern dance forms while developing her own unique style of dance—creating, sharing, travelling, performing, and teaching. Rulan now travels throughout North America and the world with her company, Dancing Earth Contemporary Indigenous Dance, which uses “ . . . Indigenous dance and related arts to encourage and revitalize awareness of bio-cultural diversity through artistic expression for the education and wellness of all peoples” (Dancingearth.org, “About”).

Transformation of the physical is inevitable as we practice and follow the teachings of Indigenous dance—embodying Indigenous cultures and creating relationships that transform the world around us—enabling us to respond to the adaptation and recovery of Indigenous dance cultures. Dance allows us to use our experiences and unique perspectives to develop our own ways of sharing the knowledge we have received as we begin to support building the capacity within our communities, advancing the process of decolonization and restoration so that we may mobilize the emotional. When we physically reconnect with our bodies and the land in a good way, we can heal the colonial intergenerational and ongoing collective trauma

we face and start to reconnect with others, including our friends and family, our communities and nations—leading to healthy interrelationships and emotional wellness.

1.3 Mobilizing the Emotional

Physical transformation, dancing, and 'walking the walk' in terms of traditional teachings, allow us to form relationships with others and take responsibility for our lives. *Mobilizing the Emotional* begins with the restoration of identity and living according to our own cultural beliefs. Overcoming colonial mindsets rooted in patriarchy, individualism, consumerism, and other concepts that are out of alignment with Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing and being, allows us to approach relationships in community from a much safer, healthier, and ethical space. Upon learning that Otonabee (an Anglicized version of Odenabe), the name of the river that flows through Michi Saagiig (Nishnaabeg people who live or dwell at the mouth of a large river), Nishnaabeg territory, means the river that beats like a heart, Dr. Leanne Simpson writes:

> I began to think about what the word *ode* [heart] means to me as a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabekwe. I thought of how *oodena* means city in our language, and one interpretation of the conceptual meaning of that word is 'the place where the hearts gather'. I thought about how Odemin Giizis is June, or the moon when the heart berries (strawberries) are ready. I pictured these odeminan, or heart berries, and their runners connecting the plants in a web of inter-relationships, much like cities. I then remembered that, according to Nishnaabeg Elder Basil Johnston, *Odenauh* refers to nation, which led me to think of our nation as an interconnected web of hearts. (*Dancing* 94)

Mobilizing the emotional involves community connectedness and positive relationships; this can occur when we work together from a common understanding toward a common goal. Our cultures often provide this in terms of values and purpose and much more. Simpson continues: "On a deeper philosophical level that heart knowledge represents our emotional intelligence, an intelligence that traditionally was balanced with physical, intellectual and spiritual intelligence" (94). Emotional intelligence is embedded in a multitude of ways in Indigenous dances, such as through stories, practices, in beadwork, and, as I was taught, in each bead itself.

Through Indigenous dance we are able to develop our emotional intelligence and create interrelationships as we learn, practice, travel, share and teach, building and re-creating an "interconnected web of hearts." Dancing itself becomes a way to mobilize our communities, inspiring individuals to join in the circle, and encouraging us to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, communities, and nations. Indigenous dance and powwows are a collective experience, and this shared experience creates interrelationships in many ways. Through many years of participating in Indigenous dance, we are able to accumulate understandings that provide spiritual, physical, and emotional guidance in our lives. As Lisa Odjig shared:

> The hoop dance gives me strength, healing, courage, pride, teachings, and a stronger identity of who I am as a proud First Nation woman. The dances connect me spiritually to our ancestors, history, songs, stories, and heartbeats of the drum. I'm not dancing alone, even if I'm the only one you may see dancing. The dances, songs, and ceremonies are gifts and prayers that can help give us guidance and strength.

Mobilizing the emotional also can involve community events. Simpson shares her experience of participating in a community procession, which included the Indigenous people of the territory—the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. Describing a procession of dancers, artists, singers, drummers, community leaders, Elders, families, and children, celebrating the first Ode'min Giizis (Strawberry Moon) Festival on National Aboriginal Day, June 21, 2009, in Nogojiwanong ("the place at the end of the rapids" / Peterborough, Ontario), she writes:

> We wove our way through city streets, streets where we had all indirectly, or directly, experienced the violence of colonialism, dispossession and desperation at one time or another . . . We were celebrating our nation on our lands in the spirit of joy, exuberance and individual expression (11).

Simpson describes the event as a transformative act of mobilization for participants as it created a space for decolonization and resurgence through strengthening relationships with one another and celebrating their cultures. That day, Simpson was also reminded of the shame and humiliation of colonization:

> To me, this colonial shame felt like not only a tremendous burden to carry, but it also felt displaced. We are not a shameful people. We have done nothing wrong. I began to realize that shame can only take hold when we are disconnected from the stories of resistance within our own families and communities. I placed that shame as an insidious and infectious part of the cognitive imperialism that was aimed at convincing us that we were a weak and defeated people, and that there was no point in resisting or resurging. I became interested in finding those stories of resistance and telling them so that our next generation would know (14).

These stories of resistance and pride are present in Indigenous dance within our traditions; these stories continue in spite of a colonial history that outlawed Indigenous dance and our cultures. Colonial narratives often inflict pain and shame. By decolonizing the spirit and transforming the physical, we reclaim who we are as individuals so that together we can reclaim who we are in relationship with each other. As Spirit River Striped Wolf shows, the intergenerational trauma, such as that inflicted in residential schools which operated until as recently as 1997, has resulted in shame and lack of trust that negatively impacts the social capital within Indigenous communities (7).

Shame, self-esteem, and disconnection are some ways that colonization and assimilation continue to obstruct the emotional intelligence of Indigenous peoples, making it difficult to work through challenges in life. Dr. Jeffrey Reading, the Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Health Research at the University of Victoria, writes: "The Aboriginal suicide rate is two-to-three times higher than the non-Aboriginal rate for Canada and, within the youth age group, this rate is estimated to be five-to-six times higher" (1).

It is urgent that Aboriginal people, especially youth, are reconnected with Aboriginal dances and stories, to restore their innate intergenerational resilience and pride. Rosa John has seen first-hand how Indigenous dance can help with emotional well-being:

> One of the things that powwow dance effects really, really strongly is emotional well-being. For instance, people who have been depressed or suicidal have seen the circle as a place to heal, as a place to be accepted and to not have to pretend or not have to be anything [other] than who they really are, you know what I mean? That feeling of, "I

don't matter" and "I'm worthless," the feeling that makes them want to commit suicide,

I think that dance really helps that part of the healing process, the emotional.

When you participate in Indigenous dance, you are included and acknowledged for who you are, which contributes to emotional wellness. In many mainstream places, Indigenous peoples are excluded, ignored, or marginalized, and this can have negative emotional impacts.

Indigenous dance and culture help to shift the focus from negative to the positive, a concept of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin discussed by Dr. Michael Hart who quotes Nehiyaw elder, Joe Cardinal: "If the positive aspects of the self are taken care of, the negative side will die a natural death" (45). Emotional well-being for Indigenous dancers is an integral aspect of performance, as Aroha Crow Child states: "If you dance from the outside-out, you will only touch people's outsides, so you have to learn to dance from the inside-out, so that you touch people's insides" (4). One way dance helps emotionally is that we learn compassion for others and are reminded to be thankful for our physical health. As Aroha Crowchild has often said, the goal when her children began to dance was to dance for those who cannot dance, especially for her eldest son who was born with cerebral palsy and has been in a wheelchair his whole life. We feel a greater purpose when we are working with and for community, not just ourselves. We reclaim our connections with family, community, and nation by dancing together; the act of dancing in community itself is an act of mobilizing the emotional.

Mobilizing the emotional is needed in order for a mature adult to be responsible for their own life and to take care of the responsibilities of having a family. Bruce Smoke, a men's traditional dancer and singer, shared his experience of how dance helps him cope with the stress of being a cultural leader, father, and grandfather:

> . . . All problems disappear, major money problems or vehicle problems or something, but as soon as you go and dance, everything's gone, disappears . . . You could be sad or down or something but when you go dance, if your dancing with your heart then . . . you'll feel better.

This emotional wellness is also experienced in the work of contemporary Indigenous dancer and choreographer Geraldine Manossa:

> . . . Getting involved in dancing and working with the dancers is the best feeling . . . [It's] like, I feel so good, I feel so free, so . . . If I'm holding on to [negative] stuff . . . [I] just get ill and sick, that's what happens. I feel healthy when I'm dancing and moving, using my body. It's part of that well-being . . .

Both Bruce and Geraldine use physical movement as a way to release emotional stress and worry.

The process of learning, growing, and being through Indigenous dance allows the mobilization of knowledge. Don Kavanaugh shared his understanding of the practice of art and dance:

> It's the art itself, the practice that's meaningful, the thing that you do, the items that you work with, the images you create, the stories that you tell, that's what's important, in my understanding, that's what's important, that's what people need to share. And it's not the person themselves that's upfront, but it's the stories they carry, the practice that they bring forward . . . those are the things that are important, not the individual themselves, the individual is just the carrier of these practices or the art.

The creation of knowledge and the sharing of knowledge through stories, images, and creations are the purpose. They are what make our art and dance practices relevant, from the steps, stories, and embodiment of practices and values to the images and colours of our outfits and beadwork. Over the years, the focus has sometimes changed. Don shared the example of a Anishinaabe drum group. In the 1970s, they began to change the drum group name from *drum* to *singers:* "It's not the drum anymore, we've forgotten about the drum, kind of like put it aside and said, 'I'm the singer, I'm the one that's important'." The appearance is that the group has changed its focus, which can be interpreted as out of alignment with the collective purpose of a drum group. For Geraldine Manossa, her process of choreographic work echoes this idea that the art is more important than the artist. During a rehearsal she said, ". . . somebody asked yesterday about getting stuck." She explained that this happened while choreographing *Cipayak E Nimihitotow* (the Cree name for the Northern Lights meaning 'the sprits are dancing in the sky'), based on Louise Halfe's book *Blue Marrow* (1994). Giving an example, she replied:

> . . . I think the work flowed . . . Just keep recognizing that this work is rooted in something deeper than ego, you know, deeper than all those things that we come into contact with. I think that's what helped keep the work going. You know, our ancestors are very powerful and I believe that they supported the work along the way, in the form of recognizing language, in the form of recognizing what that language means, and how it teaches us how we need to treat each other. How we can work together. And I'm human . . . I mean, I get tired and grumpy and all that sort of stuff, but I think overall . . . [it's] remembering those teachings about how to treat each other, and how gentle we really are with each other. I think that really existed in the process . . . it's just an

> interpretation of the philosophy, of the language, and trying to recreate those images and that feeling on stage, as a dancer, as a choreographer, and to share that . . .

Highlighting the meaning behind the dance rather than the dancer themselves makes Indigenous dance especially important for upholding our responsibilities of ensuring cultural knowledge is passed on to younger generations. Our responsibility is not only to those beside us and in our community now, but also to our ancestors, and often for the benefit of future generations who may not have even been born yet. One has to be emotionally mature, putting others before themselves.

For Muriel Miguel, Indigenous dance served as a way to teach about Indigenous culture during a period when Indigenous peoples were thought of as a dying people: “In New York City, a social studies teacher said that all the Indians were dead, their people were dead and their culture was dead.” Muriel got together with other Indigenous students, forming a dance troupe called “The Little Eagles” to perform in schools and teach that Native Americans and their culture were still alive. “The Little Eagles” are known today as “Thunderbird American Indian Dancers.” They continue to share and promote Indigenous cultures through dance. They took on the responsibility of sharing with community while also countering the colonial narrative of the dying ‘Indian’ with the living culture perspective held by Indigenous people, which is a key part of resilience and emotional intelligence that allows us to survive through challenges and a world of constant change. The act of physically dancing and performing was a type of mobilization into the community that directly challenged colonial narratives, and this was done as a collective group.

Indigenous dance today continues to be an important teaching tool for Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. As Rosa John shared:

> . . . Our children were experiencing bigotry and prejudice in school. It was through our dances and our stories that were able to teach the kids that were harassing them to not do that anymore. We were able to use our culture to teach non-Native kids so they wouldn't pick on our kids. And what happened was our kids ended up becoming almost like super-stars because they started having mini powwows at the school. There were other [Native kids at the school] but they didn't know enough about their culture. So when my kids started talking about why they wore braids and why we were never around [because] we were going to powwows every weekend, the other kids said, 'Well I'm Indian too.' So they started coming out, being brave and proud . . .

This experience mirrors what Simpson wrote, regarding the process of mobilizing communities to create "interconnected web of hearts."

Rosa shared another experience that illustrates how teaching Indigenous dance can grow from individuals to families and communities:

> After working with my own kids and teaching them the dances and the stories and things like that, we found that other Native kids wanted to learn them too, and so we started going around teaching other youth. Actually, we started in this community right here. Hiawatha [First Nation] is actually where we started working with youth. When we first got here in 1991, they told us that the drum hadn't sounded here in a hundred years. So when we heard that, my husband said, "That's just way too long and that needs to change." So when he said that, we started talking to the families. The families

> here have been really good to us. They were kind to us and generous. So we decided to help out. We started teaching the kids here and then the parents started joining in. And then the kids said, "Well, you know, we want to dance at the powwow, we want to have outfits." So my husband and my kids, and some friends of ours, the Smoke family [Alderville First Nation], we all started helping. Melvin would make bustles and we would all help to make outfits, and [then] they had their first powwow.

In forming her company, Red Thunder: The Next Generation*,* Aroha Crowchild taught Indigenous dance not as an end in itself but as an instrument for promoting wellness in youth:

> When we started our company, we were trying to develop good people and good leaders, and the dance was the medium that we used to helping to develop good people. So it was a medium we used, it wasn't the be all and end all. It wasn't like, alright, you're aiming to be the best dancer. What we were doing was we were using dance as a way to say, we want you to be the best person for your people you can be. So we came out as using dance as the medium, not using dance as the goal.

Despite not seeking to train good dancers, but rather, good people, many of her dancers have moved on to various careers in the arts. She has trained several dancers who have gone on to become World Champion hoop dancers, including Lisa Odjig, Quentin Pipestem, and Alex Wells.

Responsibility is an important aspect of relationship-building in community. If we have not done the spiritual healing and decolonizing, changing our actions, and embodying our traditions, we cannot form healthy connections with others. As Dr. Michael Hart writes, "It is through taking responsibility for their own personal healing and growth that individuals will be

able to attain Miyo-Pimâtisiwin" (44). For Aroha Crowchild, being responsible is part of her role as artistic director:

> I ensure that whenever we say or do anything on stage that I've done my homework, and that I've learnt as much as I can, and always open to learning much more about Native culture than I know already. So I really work hard and try never to have kids do things or say things that they don't actually know themselves.

Taking the responsibility of representing cultures and stories can bring community together. Authentic representation brings people together, draws people in, makes people want to listen, learn, and watch.

Mobilizing the emotional begins when we live from our hearts and begin to fulfill our responsibilities. Through the process of mobilization, we disseminate knowledge of our cultures in a meaningful way within a contemporary society. This meaningful work requires emotional well-being so that we can effectively work together as communities and nations in a "web of interconnected hearts." Through emotional interconnectedness, we encourage future generations to continue through Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin—seeking the good life, toward the healing of individuals, families, communities, and nations. Feeling safe and supported is an important step in being ready to learn; this includes cultural safety. Specifically for Indigenous peoples, when we are safe, we are able to heal through wisdom.

1.4 Healing through Wisdom

Healing through Wisdom occurs in the culmination of the previous processes of decolonizing the spiritual, transforming the physical, and mobilizing the emotional. As Dr. Leanne Simpson writes, ". . . in order to access knowledge from a Nishnaabeg perspective we need to engage

our entire bodies: our physical beings, emotional self, our spiritual energy and our intellect" (*Dancing* 42). Dr. Nicole Bell says that "Elders . . . have stated that, in order for Aboriginal people to have strong communities there must be strong individuals first," which means developing into a whole person—someone who is strong spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally (38).

We encounter learning, growing, and our purpose in life when we make our own choices that are congruent with who we are as individuals. This is why understanding our spiritual self, which includes culture and identity is so important. Dr. Michael Hart explains that people are seen as good by nature, and must constantly strive to maintain this goodness, finding the good in everything around them: "It is these processes that support the view that while people are mainly in the state of *being*—the experience of being alive and seeing the goodness in all of life as it is experienced—they are also in a state of *being-in-becoming* – the active seeking of one's purpose" (47).

The practice of Indigenous dance is transformative in a way that leads to healing and wisdom. We can only understand this if we practice the dances and teachings. As Aroha Crowchild said, the process of Indigenous dance is not an end in itself. Learning to dance is a process of learning, growing, and actively seeking one's purpose—Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin, as explained by Dr. Hart. Once an individual has attained a certain level of understanding of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin, they are then ready to help others in their journey of healing, learning, and growing.

Healing is an essential aspect of self-determination and sovereignty. As Dr. Kiera Ladner says, "Community wellness and healing are intricately tied to contemporary demands for self-

government" (88). After examining literature that looks at the relationship between governance and communities in crisis and/or community well-being, Ladner writes: "Looking at this literature as a whole, it is evident that there is a definitive correlation between self-determination and community well-being, and that self-determination may be a determining factor in enabling/ disabling communities in crisis and understanding resiliency" (92-93). This is congruent with what Dr. Hart says in regard to Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin:

> When the cycles directly involving people are in harmony, people are utilizing their volition—hence power—to help themselves heal, learn and grow. Cyclically, this leads people to a greater access to power and can also support other people in their healing, learning and growth (53).

Through self-determination as individuals, working together in communities, and honouring diversity within our nations, we are working towards sovereignty—this is the process of *healing through wisdom*.

Healing through wisdom is achieved when we are able to live a 'good life' in all areas. This starts with the spiritual, learning *who we are*, as individuals and as First Nations. Then we learn *what to do* by practicing the dances and embodying the teachings and history; the drum helps us connect to our friends and family, to our own body, and to the environment. Following our heart, or mobilizing the emotional, shows *how to do it*: we must work together and we must have purpose. Once we have had the practice and experiences of mastering each of these areas of our life, we gain wisdom and healing. When there are many individuals living a good life, the community, as a whole, benefits, and sovereignty for the nation can be more easily maintained and uplifted.

Chapter 6: Conclusion & Discussion:

Where are we going? And how will we know when we get there?

Today, as in the past, Indigenous art, dance, history, and culture remain interconnected. "The arts in traditional [Indigenous] society were inseparable from culture and remain so today. The whole of culture – beliefs, traditions, relationship with the universe, created works – provides the source of art" (Rossignol & White 74). After analyzing my own personal journey and the experience and knowledge gained from it, as well as that of co-researchers, historical figures, and traditional stories, I was able to see *how* Indigenous dance created pathways towards Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin. These personal stories and interviews, combined with secondary research and writing on Indigenous Dance, the Medicine Wheel, and other oral traditions, have helped to answer my research question—How does Indigenous dance contribute to the health and well-being of those who practice it, in terms of spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental well-being? Authentic participation in Indigenous dance leads to well-being in a holistic way, and authentic participation means a variety of things, including respect, relationships, responsibility, and reciprocity with family, friends, and community. Relationships that honour the traditional transfer of knowledge from Elders to children, so they can see and embody those teachings leads to a good life. Watching Elders who try their best to live and act according to traditional values, morals and protocols carried within and taught through experience, stories, dances, music, language, ceremony and more leads to wellbeing. With this spiritual foundation in early childhood, youth can physically embody, by practice and direct action, the knowledge shared with them. This enables them to become healthy adults able to take on the responsibility of family and community life. This experience of guiding your family and

community down a good path, comes with it's own learning and wisdom. This path towards Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin was intentionally destroyed, interrupted, and targeted by colonial policies and disconnection of children, families, Elders, and communities, all of which makes supporting well-being through re-connection so much more important.

Healing and well-being are interconnected with self-determination. The ability to choose our own identities and ways of life, without pressure to assimilate or the burden of carrying racist and negative stereotypes, allows us to focus on what is best for ourselves. Often, Indigenous people are swimming upstream and fighting against the current, which is aimed at excluding, ignoring, and erasing our cultures, identities, and histories. Traditional stories and oral histories sustain our core values and beliefs that guide us to make healthy choices towards Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin; these are often carried through in the actual practices of Indigenous dance and culture. Cultural teachings inspire action, physical movement, and dance, and guide us in making choices that counteract colonial destruction and assimilation, uplifting Indigenous identity, healing, and self-determination. Acknowledging one's distinct culture and identity ignites the spirit; it can become a strong motivation—the spark and passion that leads to action and transformation. This is why re-creation and resurgence of Indigenous dance and cultures are so important to create healing. Personal stories and experiences fill in the details of the research and history, providing insight and deeper understanding of Indigenous dance and Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin, showing us that living a good life is vital to resurgence.

Indigenous dance is interconnected with the many aspects of well-being represented in each direction of the Medicine Wheel that all need to be in balance for us to move forward toward healing and *the good life*. The Integrated Medicine Wheel shows how decolonization

and resurgence are interconnected. Concentric circles demonstrate how Indigenous well-being is not just individual ; we must also connect and contribute to our family, community, and nation. Indigenous well-being is also about 'growing outwards'—not just 'growing up' as an individual as we are taught in the Western view. Indigenous dance has been, and still is, used as a way to strengthen communities and individuals. The fact that Indigenous dance was specifically targeted and outlawed by governments as a strategy for colonization is a testament to its strength in ensuring cultural survival. Despite these systematic attempts at erasing and controlling Indigenous dance, the stories, practices, and traditions around Indigenous dance remained intact and have transformed throughout the years to become relevant today, remaining an integral part of our living cultures. Indigenous dance provides a space for healing, re-connection, resurgence, and self-determination for dancers today. Through dance and movement, we can awaken ancestral memory and cultural knowledge carried within our bodies in order to learn and re-learn our identity.

The wisdom of Elders, senior artists, and co-researchers such as Aroha Crowchild, Jerry First Charger, Daystar/ Rosalie Jones, Don Kavanaugh, Edna Manitowabi, Muriel Miguel, Geraldine Manossa, Karen Pheasant, Liz Osawamick, Bruce Smoke, Rulan Tangen, and many others, are key to ensuring the continuation of Indigenous dance, music, and culture. We give thanks to all those who came before—those who struggled and persevered to maintain and carry forward Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. It is up to us as the younger generation to take up the responsibility of seeking this knowledge so that we may continue to re-create the dances and the stories they carry from our own understandings and perspectives in order to pass them on to future generations. In terms of Indigenous dance, seeing youth

continue these traditions serves as an indication of the success of our practices. When younger generations continue the dances and continue to re-create the dances—both traditional and contemporary—the circle will be complete, and the Medicine Wheel will continue to move. When the children and youth continue to find relevance, inspiration, knowledge, and healing within Indigenous dance practices, we will know we are headed in the right direction. This can only happen if we continue to dance, embodying the stories and traditions, and continuing on the path of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin ourselves, leading the younger generations so that they can follow in our footsteps. As Aroha Crow Child (Māori), said:

> I am my ancestors . . . I am the children of our ancestors, that's who I am and that's what dance and powwow allows us to be, the children of our ancestors so we can live on forever . . . We are very proud of who we are and where we come from, so any opportunities we have, for the next generation to be part of us is just wonderful . . . That's what you're looking for, you're looking for your people to live on, but not only to live on, to contribute, you know, to contribute to the well-being of the earth, to contribute to the well-being of people as a whole.

The images and stereotypes of simplistic cultures do no justice to the complexity and sophistication of our Indigenous dance practices, cultures, and identities as Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States. We already know this, as many of the respected dancers and artists interviewed here have shared, and as our history and the stories of our ancestors have shown. In the face of ongoing colonial pressures, we will still stand up and dance together in our own power and self-determination. As we continue to choose to be ourselves, with courage and pride, seeking a good life, we can be confident that our youth will continue to follow us

forward. Like when a stone is thrown into a lake, we can see the ripple effects of our actions, and as we live by example, share with others, and teach our children, we will see the ripple effects continue to re-create strong and healthy nations. I can already see this path forward when I look at my children and the experiences they have at such a young age—experiences that I did not have. When I look back to my parents' and grandparents' generations, I see that their struggles were not taken for granted as I live up to the teachings, traditions, and practices that they ensured were carried forward. As the hoop dance teachings say, we have both beauty and struggle in life. Pukawiss share this in his original intention for the creation of the hoop dance: it is about balance and continued movement. We cannot all spiral into destruction forever—at some point, we naturally spiral back into healing, both at an individual level and on a collective level. When we piece together the fragments of what we thought was lost or gone, we can sometimes build something stronger and healthier.

As the history of Indigenous dance and the lived experience of co-researchers demonstrate, Indigenous ways of living, knowing, and being are often based in affirming life and promoting well-being, while colonization is often still focused on destruction of languages, cultures, environment, land, and animals. If living *the good life* is about learning, growing, and being, then the freedom of self-determination and sovereignty are essential. To live within systems of oppression that constrict our ability to be ourselves only permits certain knowledge and does not allow for growth beyond colonial expectations; it is not supportive of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin. *The good life* must increasingly focus on the affirmative actions of Indigenous dance as a spark that ignites change in many areas of an individual's life, creating a ripple effect to those around them. Culture and identity, the spiritual aspect, is thus one of the most

important areas to keep intact and uphold. We will know when we are where we want to be not only when self-determination is a reality, but also when the movement of the Medicine Wheel begins in childhood— when all our young children are raised with the cultural teachings and practices from birth; when our youth are practicing and embodying the teachings through dance as well as through their actions that lead to a good life; when adults can have healthy strong relationships within their communities and fulfill their responsibilities; and when Elders have a place to teach the nation, passing on their knowledge to the younger generations, not only on a family level but on a community and nation level as well. When the Medicine Wheel moves freely and easily from childhood into the elder stage of life and is a choice available to all through self-determination, we will know we are where we are meant to be on the journey of Ê-nitonahk Miyo-Pimâtisiwin.

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APPENDICES

Interview Guide:

1. How long have you been dancing?

2. What style(s) of dance do you participate in? And what is your primary dance style?

3. What are the traditional stories and teachings associated with the dance style(s)?

4. How do these traditional stories/ teachings relate to your life and experiences today? In other words, do these stories and teachings still have meaning in today's world?

5. Why do you think it is important that our/your ancestors have continued these dance traditions, stories and teachings?

6. Why is it important for you to continue practicing these dance traditions?

7. Have you taught traditional Native dance to youth? If so, how does it affect them? What kind of changes to you see in them?

8. How does this/these dance style(s) relate to Physical wellbeing? This includes our diet, our environment, and how we listen to and honor our bodies. The physical addresses issues such as diet, substance abuse, fitness, and our environment.

9. How does this/these dance style(s) relate to Mental wellbeing? The mental consists of our thoughts, it is intellectual, learning, questioning, inquiry, and open mindedness. Therefore it encompasses education, employment, and income.

10. How does this/these dance style(s) relate to Emotional wellbeing, which may include our feelings, our awareness of them, balancing the positive and negative, and peace of mind? The emotional also deals with self esteem, depression, suicide, and social relations.

11. How does this/these dance style(s) relate to Spiritual wellbeing? The spirit is the essence of who we are as individual human beings. The spiritual involves participation in ceremony and issues related to culture and identity.
    (Please do not feel obligated to share any ceremonial and spiritual experiences and teachings you are not comfortable sharing at this point).

12. In your experiences are there any benefits of participating in First nations dance in terms of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, in addition to what has already been discussed above?

Biographies of Co-Researchers

Aroha Crow Child (Māori) is the artistic director and co-founder of *Red Thunder: The Next Generation* based out of Tsuu'Tiina First Nation in Alberta. Aroha has worked with at-risk youth and adults, and travels with her children who are both Tsuu'Tiina and Māori, performing Native and Māori dance and music, internationally.

Bruce Smoke (Anishinaabe, Alderville First Nation) has been drumming for over thirty years and is a champion men's traditional dancer. His family drum and cultural group, Smoke Trail, has travelled internationally, offering traditional singing and dance performances. They also travel extensively to powwows as competitive singers, dancers, host drum, and invited drum. Smoke Trail's debut CD, *A Long Red Road*, was nominated for Best Powwow CD- Traditional at the 2011 Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards in Winnipeg, and won the award for Best Traditional Powwow Album at the 2011 Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards in Toronto.

Daystar/ Rosalie Jones (Pembina Chippewa, Blackfeet) is the Founder and Artistic Director of *Daystar: Contemporary Dance-Drama of Indian America* founded in 1980, the first dance company in the U.S. created with all-Native performers, specializing in the portrayal of the personal and tribal stories of Indian America. She holds a Master's degree in Dance from the University of Utah with postgraduate work at Julliard School in New York City. She has studied numerous Indigenous dance styles and has studied modern dance with Jose Limon and Hanya Holm.

Don Kavanaugh (Anishinaabe, Lake of the Woods) is a men's traditional dancer who became involved in theatre in 1996 while working as the Executive Director for the Lake of the Woods Ojibway Cultural Centre. Don received his Bachelor of Arts, Indigenous Learning Major from Lakehead University. He is currently a Director at Oshki-Aa-yaa' and Mino Bimaadiziiwin Foundation: Good Life for Young People, which uses the arts to promote the dreams and goals of Anishinaabeg youth.

Edna Manitowabi (Odawa/ Anishinaabe, Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve) is the head woman for the Eastern Doorway of the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge. She is nationally known as a Traditional teacher, ceremonialist, drum-keeper and grandmother. She is a researcher of traditional medicines and was instrumental in the re-introduction of Traditional teachings and ceremonies in Peterborough, Ontario and area. Edna founded the Aboriginal Women's Symposium and initiated Indigenous Performance Initiatives at Trent University.

Elizabeth (Liz) Osawamick (Anishinaabe, Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve) is a jingle dress dancer and teaches language and culture to all ages from daycare centres to university courses. is an Anishinaabe Midewiwin-kwe community leader, Water Walker/activist, jingle dress dancer, devoted parent and professional teacher. She is President of Anishnaabemowin Teg, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, teaching and developing Anishnaabe language and cultural pride. A leader of the Kawartha area Water Walks under the guidance of Elders Dr Shirley I Williams and Nookomis Josephine Mandamin, Liz has dedicated her life to her people, her language, the lands, and the waters.

Geraldine Manossa (Nehiyaw, Bigstone Cree Nation) has received her M.A. from the University of Lethbridge, her thesis is titled "The Roots of Cree Drama" (2002). Geraldine currently teaches Indigenous performance, storytelling methods, and traditional expressions at the *En'owkin Centre* in Penticton, British Columbia. She has performed as a contemporary and traditional dancer as well as a choreographer.

Jerry (JJ) First Charger (Nitsitapi, Blood Reserve), a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy in Southern Alberta, has been hoop dancing for over fifteen years and holds a B.A./ B.Ed. from the University of Lethbridge. Jerry has worked as a counsellor with urban youth and at elementary schools.

Karen Pheasant (Anishinaabe, Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve) is a renowned jingle dress dancer, author, researcher, and educator. Karen is an Assistant Professor at Mount Royal University in the Treaty Seven region. She is cross-appointed to the Department of General Education, Office of Teaching and Learning, and the Department of Humanities–Indigenous Studies. She is also in completion of a PhD in Educational Policy Studies/Indigenous Peoples Education with the University of Alberta.

Lianna Tootoosis (Anishinaabe, Walpole Island) is a graduate of Trent University and has been a traditional jingle dress dancer since age three.

Lisa Odjig (Anishinaabe, Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve) is an internationally respected hoop dancer. She made history in 2000 for being the first and only woman to win the title of *World Champion Hoop Dancer* in the Adult category from the annual *World Championship Hoop Dance Contest* in Phoenix, Arizona; in 2003, she won the title for a second time. She has

performed at the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards, Canada Day on Parliament Hill, Calgary Stampede Grandstand Show, Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, and the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards.

Lowell Yellowhorn (Piikani First Nation) was raised around Blackfoot ceremonies, language, and culture. As a young boy, he travelled across the U.S. and Canada as a grass dancer and is now a drummer and powwow singer. He holds a B.Sc. in Environmental Science from Salish Kootenai College, and is completing his M.Sc. in Environmental Science at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario.

Muriel Miguel (Rhappahanock) is a founding member and Artistic Director of Spiderwoman Theater, which includes family members Gloria Miguel, Lisa Mayo, and Murielle Borst-Tarrant. Muriel is a director, choreographer, playwright, actor, and educator. She has directed almost all of Spiderwoman's shows consisting of over twenty original works for theater they have written and produced since their debut in 1976. In 1997, she was awarded an honorary doctorate in Fine Arts from Miami University in Oxford.

Marrie Mumford (Métis/ Chippewa Cree) is Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Arts and Literature and Director of Nozhem: First Peoples Performance Space at Trent University. She has a BA from the University of Alberta and an MFA from Brandis University in Boston. She has worked extensively in Canada and the U.S. in professional theatre.

Nimkii Osawamick (Anishinaabe, Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve) is a champion hoop dancer, men's fancy dancer, and emerging actor. Nimkii recently received his high school diploma and is the son of Liz Osawamick.

Rosa John (Taino) is the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of *Kehewin Native Dance Theatre* alongside her husband, Melvin John (Nehiyaw, from Kehewin First Nation in Alberta). Together with their children, they travel internationally, performing Native dance, music, storytelling, and theatre, as well as conducting workshops, presentations, and teaching. Rosa has a long history in Indigenous performance and has attended the *Native Theatre School*.

Rulan Tangen (mixed heritage) is the choreographer and director of *Dancing Earth: Contemporary Indigenous Dance Creations* based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She has international experience in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Mexico, and South America as a choreographer, performer, teacher, and lecturer.